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Accompanying Teachers in Training: Tutors' Discourses on Pedagogical Practices in Context

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ABSTRACT

The professional training processes within the undergraduate programs must be mediated by qualified teachers, with a broad theoretical background and significant recognition. These statements are the basis of this research article that aims to understand the stories of tutors who accompany the pedagogical practices of teachers in training at a public university in Norte de Santander - Colombia. The methodological approach is oriented from the qualitative-interpretative paradigm using focus groups as a data collection technique. The conclusions of the study show that teachers who assume the monitoring and mediation of practices within the degree programs must be directly linked to the current context of the educational system in which they perform their work activity, given that in it they can be in constant assertive feedback regarding the teaching role, which can be observed in the practice classrooms of trainee teachers.

Keywords: pedagogical practice; teachers in training; tutoring in context; training; training

INTRODUCTION

The training of future teachers has become a pragmatic, holistic and complex exercise in the face of the evolution of today's society since their work is established within a universe of heterogeneous and multilateral possibilities where the context of the students served becomes the pedagogical landscape that affects the teaching-learning process (Chaparro *et al.*, 2018; Aguilar, 2018). Because of this, an affirmation: pedagogical practice is integrated between playfulness, theoretical foundation, research and didactics that have an impact on teacher training (Gamboa, 2017). Even so, this statement becomes an epistemic problem for undergraduate programs, given that they are in constant evolution, it is not stable and requires multiple capabilities to address the various problems that may arise.

Therefore, reflecting on these aspects is a necessary and vital task for the qualification of the educational and professional processes that are taught within the programs focused on teacher training (Hernández-Suárez *et al.*, 2020; Díaz-Güecha *et al.*, 2020). But the such an analytical process should not only be estimated from properly theoretical aspects but also requires the voices that are in charge of the teacher training processes within the practice scenarios. This has repercussions on what Prada *et al.* (2019) mention when they define pedagogical practice as the set of activities for learning, that effectively achieve the proposed objectives and have replicability and demonstration power. In this sense, good practices have to be innovative but also develop the capacity to incite others to replicate and adapt them to their context (Niebles-Núñez *et al.*, 2019). This set of activities contemplates the use of appropriate didactic resources, the design of didactic strategies and the evaluation of learning (Prada *et al.*, 2020).

It is necessary to take into account that, to achieve such formative processes, the pedagogical practice must be analyzed succinctly and completely, so that it interweaves several possibilities for the promotion of education. Thus, “A good formative evaluation system is indispensable since it is the one that best allows knowing the progress of students' learning, their achievements and their difficulties, i.e., diagnostic, formative and summative” (Prada *et al.*, 2019, p. 140). However, this review has repercussions on how strategies are established in professional training programs to promote good practices in teaching, didactics and evaluation itself. Therefore, “A good pedagogical practice should consider two important aspects within the teaching planning process: the design of a didactic strategy and evaluation” (Prada *et al.*, 2019, p. 140). In this sense, it can be affirmed that “practice, as a socio-historical and intentional activity, must be in a constant process of redirection; that is, it must be assumed with critical social responsibility” (Leal *et al.*, 2022, p. 395)

However, some elements that have been permeating the educational exercise have qualified the teaching-learning process within the degree programs, since they broaden the didactic spectrum in such a way that the strategic possibilities are qualified. There, teacher training has required professionals who not only address the curricular and pedagogical aspects in a theoretical manner but have implied the linking of elements of technology and its possibilities (Prada *et al.*, 2022; Avendaño-Castro *et al.*, 2021; Contreras-Colmenares & Jiménez-Villamarín, 2020). There it can be observed how Avendaño *et al.* (2021) affirm that ICTs are a key element in pedagogical practice to enhance the development of competencies, learning processes, selection, and didactic strategies that promote knowledge construction and learning assessment through active or collaborative learning environments that favor meaningful experiences with ICTs. In this sense, it is essential to recognize the modifiability that the use of technology has generated within the formative process of teachers (Hernández *et al.*, 2019), being the pedagogical practice, the spatiality that involves theory and school challenges (Ríos, 2018).

Thus, teachers in training and their tutors sponsor the pragmatic recognition of technology as a formative epicenter that guarantees autonomy, collaborative work and access to information that expands the knowledge of the area in which they are trained (For this reason, the development of ICT competencies from standards and guidelines, guarantees a planned, relevant and responsible integration of these technologies. It also provides educational institutions in charge of teacher training with the necessary and relevant pedagogical, didactic and methodological guidelines to plan and build training programs that provide all the necessary tools to teach using these technologies (Gamboa *et al.*, 2018, p. 259).

However, there are some incidental aspects within the formative process of the students who are professionalized within the degrees. There are some incidental aspects within the formative process of the students that are professionalized within the bachelor's degrees since they demarcate the path through which the different epistemic and analytical foundations of the profession are assumed. This aspect is determined by mentioning that:

Pedagogical practice is conditioned by six fundamental aspects: 1) The necessary synergy between teaching professionalization and humanistic vocation to configure oneself as a teaching subject, 2) The teaching experience and the biographical itinerary as mechanisms of self-training of teachers, 3) The critical analysis of realities and the ability to transform their environment as fundamental competencies

of the teacher from praxeology, 4) Research as a determining factor of good practices, 5) Praxeology as an opportunity to improve the teaching task, based on processes of revision, action, evaluation, and 6) The homogeneity of the curriculum as a limiting factor for good pedagogical practices, and 7) The homogeneity of the curriculum as a limiting factor for good pedagogical practices (Leal *et al.*, 2022, p. 395-396)

Each aspect has an impact on the formative reality of future teachers insofar as it not only sponsors the theoretical recognition of pedagogical processes and their main systems of knowledge conduction but also takes into account the intersubjective relationship, the population context in which the practice itself is carried out, the critical and investigative attitude within the professional field, the conduction of reason as the fundamental epicenter of teaching (Pérez-Díaz *et al.*, 2020) and the curricular elements that are constantly expanding in the face of school reality, teaching work and the meaning of education (Gleason & Rubio, 2020; Vanegas & Gamboa, 2022; Vanegas *et al.*, 2022).

Professionalization within bachelor's degree programs, in short, requires teachers who sponsor each of the six aspects within their mediation of knowledge, given that they have a significant impact on how teachers in training qualify their classroom strategies and their professional role. Therefore, the practice scenarios are a constant intervention between the theoretical and the investigative. They have become an open door to innovative experiences that ratify the need to transform the pedagogical, didactic and ludic elements from the systematic recognition of the context in which the professional work is performed (Rincón *et al.*, 2022), being the practice the path that leads to the qualification and sophistication of the teacher in training. This is assumed:

In the learning most intensely perceived by students, [since] they are mainly related to practice, which is a key element for professional socialization and, consequently, for adequate development of the identity of future teachers (González *et al.*, 2019, p. 38)

In addition to this, they may adjust elements of reflection on the pedagogical task, facing the interventions that are sponsored within the professional training process and the contexts where the practice is carried out. In addition, the teachers who facilitate the training processes, as a result of their experience, provide indispensable elements for the analysis and research on the pedagogical processes that every graduate must assume. Therefore, “Reflection on the students' learning process and the teaching practice itself is the best possible way of lifelong learning, especially when it is done with rigor and with the help of valid techniques and instruments” (González *et al.*, 2019, p. 38).

Also, the context delimits the real panorama, where teaching practices become a possibility of professional qualification since they allow to partially explore the reality of the educational system. In addition, the school context not only allows delving into the consolidation of routines within the pedagogical task, but also contributes to the consolidation of curricular readjustments, the modifiability of pedagogical structures in planning and qualifies classroom processes in terms of knowledge mediation processes (Contreras *et al.*, 2019). It is stated that:

The schools where the internships take place should be able to collaborate, as far as possible, in the organization of the subject, the planning of the intervention, the training contents to be developed and the evaluation and supervision systems, especially if the aim is to establish a balance between institutions where both feel involved and committed to the process (Rodríguez-Gómez *et al.*, 2017, p. 233).

This leads to generating a resignification of mediation or what is the same: new possibilities to ratify the teaching exercise, its challenges and its possible new fields of action, being the professional practices

and the teaching accompaniment in the formative cycle, indispensable elements for the general understanding of the current educational reality (Barrientos *et al.*, 2018). Everything is possible if “proposing another rationality to contemporary challenges, seeking an educational practice based on social and human development budgets that contribute to environmental preservation and equity” (Costa *et al.*, 2015, p. 4). It follows that “practice is not a hierarchical, immovable structure, with a series of steps, on the contrary, it is the set of actions developed by subjects who react and act according to countless physical, individual, collective and contextual factors, among others” (Esquea-Gamero, 2017, p. 174). Therefore, according to Fernández *et al.* (2018), the expected characteristics of effective teaching practices must be based on empirical evidence (p. 5). Evidence that has an impact on the formation of new educational channels that make the pedagogical practice [something that] does not constitute a final event, but a generator of new knowledge that consolidates it as an object of research, as a scenario of relationships, interactions and intersubjectivities that configure the educational act (Esquea-Gamero, 2017, p. 175).

Meanwhile, the consolidation of training spaces must be emphatic in recognizing pedagogical practices as scenarios of confluence between academia and educational institutions, leaving an open and consensual channel that allows generating open and purposeful discussions of the teaching task and the challenges for new teachers (Martínez, 2016). Therefore, it is important to have:

The possibility of establishing a stable network of centers over time, where teachers and managers are satisfied to be part of it, and the university is convinced and confident that these centers have the necessary conditions to promote student learning (Rodríguez-Gómez *et al.*, 2017, p. 244-245).

In that direction and from everything mentioned up to this point, it is necessary to emphasize that this dissertation space was born from the approach and the linkage of the teachers in charge of the pedagogical practices of the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education of the UFPS, who expressed their ideas about the role of the teacher, of the teachers in training and the school reality. This focus group expressed multiple postulates that will be described throughout this qualitative work, which seeks to offer a detailed look at the role of the teacher who trains teachers within the aforementioned university program.

METHOD

The process of analyzing qualitative sources has an important impact on the way of analyzing the data and outlining the findings since they are composed of each of the participants' perspectives on what is being investigated. Therefore, the relevance of this work lies in the intimate, selective and personal information provided by the participants. Therefore, it is necessary to mention that the subject was approached from the application of semi-structured interviews in which each person who answered the questions outlined his or her position concerning the understanding of the pedagogical practice.

From this it is relevant to highlight that the interview is defined by Angrosino (2012) as “the act of perceiving the activities and interrelationships of people in the field environment through the five senses of the researcher” (p. 67), sponsoring the possibility of integrating a broad debate where participants expressed their worldview against the educational context, their role within the formative process of teachers in training and the repercussions that the pedagogical practice has within the university professionalization. The interview can also be taken as the:

(...) face-to-face encounters (peer-to-peer conversation) between the researcher and the informants are encounters aimed at understanding the informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations, as expressed in their own words (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996, p. 101)

This allowed the information provided in the data collection process to be emphatic, truthful, convincing and taking into account all the elements that the participants experience daily in their role as teachers.

For this research process, the teachers assigned to the Bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education at the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander were taken into account, specifically, those who mediate the practice in pedagogical skills development in the III semester and the formative scenario called to practice in Context in the IV semester. Thus, in quantitative terms, there were only 4 teachers who participated in the interviews and who, from their mediating role within the program, have been interweaving the practical training fields of the teachers in training.

On the other hand, the context in which the data collection was carried out has an impact on the findings, since each of the teachers currently work in schools in the metropolitan area of Cúcuta, which has a significant impact on the data provided in each of the interviews, as it gives a complete picture of each of the categories that were taken into account when analyzing the interviews.

To make the information that was addressed in the interviews with the teachers useful, it was essential to delimit two categories and four subcategories as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Categories of analysis.

Categories	Subcategories
PP: Pedagogical Practices	D: Didactics
	RE: Educational Retreats
EI: Early Childhood Education	FT: Theoretical Foundation
	CE: School Context

Each one of these composes the different links that were coded within Atlas Ti 7.0 to be able to mesh each one of the participants' perspectives. In sum, the first category is made up of two elements: the teaching role of the interviewed samples and the formative process they mediate within the degree in early childhood education at UFPS. This seeks to understand education as an unfinished scenario that is constantly evolving in the face of the modifications that arise in society, which can be observed in didactic and pedagogical terms. The second, on the other hand, seeks to establish those doctrinal elements within pedagogy in general that have an impact on the provision of educational services in early childhood, in addition to taking the school context as a starting point for innovation and curricular adjustments that are constant within the formative process of infants and to which the teaching practices of the graduates in training and the teachers interviewed must be adjusted. Thus, the set, in general, opens a discussion-oriented to the analysis of the meaning of pedagogical practice in three aspects: that of the sample that accompanies the professional training, that of the teacher in training who receives the programmatic contents of the degree and the general context in which the pedagogical work is carried out.

RESULTS

To present the results, the review of the arguments presented by each of the participants of the sample will be taken into account, where the arguments, the appreciations, their epistemic approach and each of the views regarding the qualification of the pedagogical process that they carry out within the

Bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education at the UFPS were taken into account. All this was organized based on two major categories, namely: *pedagogical practices and early childhood education*.

The pedagogical practice from the counselors' discourses.

To address the category of pedagogical practice, the units of analysis were coded in two subcategories: didactics (D) and educational challenges (RE), which were coded based on the arguments provided by the practice leader teachers. Among the most important findings referred by the participating teachers was the relevance and contextualization of the micro-curriculum of each pedagogical practice course, being this one of the main challenges of teacher training, as they argue that:

The practice of pedagogical skills development as the first link in the process, gives all the academic support to the student because in practice it seeks to understand the educational system of Colombia, recognizing each of the evolutionary stages of the human being from processes and established mediations, thus articulating the teaching practice and institutional regulations (1:7).

These stories lead to infer that the importance of didactics to implement methodological tools that allow the development of competencies of teachers in training from the field of early childhood education support what Yarza (2011) and Amaya et al. (2020) point out as the didactic change in the levels of education compared to conventional educational institutions to go to a true education that refers to contemporaneity as one of its fundamental pillars.

Similarly, another aspect associated with the didactic processes in teacher training is the relevance of the accompaniment and monitoring of the training processes articulated to the curricular guidelines taking into account that they become a methodological orientation guide that must be contextualized to the characteristics and objectives of the academic program, since as mentioned by one of the teachers: “it is determinant to demarcate a route where the minimum compliances are found, where the scenarios are defined and the characteristics and elements of each one of the practice processes are differentiated, oriented to continuous improvement” (1:10).

This would allow the practice to comply with the proposed objectives and to have the training process throughout the professional cycle, thus avoiding changes in the dispositions or erroneous interpretations of each practice process, since the whole training line is determined for all with precise orientations.

In this sense, it is important to have as a key reference the denominations and characteristics established by the Ministry of Education on the degree programs, since the practice guidelines must be differentiated according to the type of degree from its field of action. This is evidenced in the participants' arguments such as:

Although there is a regulation already established and defined by the University for the Faculty of Education that regulates the pedagogical practices of its graduates in training, this regulation must differentiate the key elements of each of the degrees, going from the generality of being a graduate to the specificity of the graduate's area of training. (1:61)

Likewise, in didactic aspects, it is essential to recognize that the generation for which students are prepared in their educational work is a different generation, an interconnected generation:

Students must learn about virtual learning tools, but this learning must be oriented by example, so tools such as Pixton, PowTune, Canva, and Inshot, among others, were used, and they have had to do class

exercises, but using Pixton, which is to create a comic book, they create the comic book and explain what they have to explain through the comic book (1:31)

These discourses can be interpreted from authors such as Bombini and Martinez (2018) who point out that the relationships between the different media (written, visual, sound, audiovisual and multimodal) that operate in the production and use of digital educational materials must be understood to train teachers from the experience in digital technologies and thus avoid future resistance to digital resources.

Early childhood education and pedagogical practice

To approach the category of Early Childhood Education from the codification of units of analysis, the Theoretical Foundation (FT) and the Educational Context (CE) were established as subcategories, thus allowing differentiating the components of theoretical and practical training within the pedagogical practice, which allowed this to be the result of field research from the reflection and interpretation of the same. In this sense, the teachers stated that “the initial point of the pedagogical practice should be oriented to knowing the dynamics of the teaching role, since this experience is the basis of their work and the type of teacher they are going to become” (1:18), starting then with formative processes of being where they can “recognize themselves as graduates in a system with concrete guidelines and expectations for their role, taking the characteristics of the system and the context as elements that help them to strengthen their role as teachers” (1:35).

Likewise, the conceptualization of the early childhood educator should be a transversal aspect in each of the pedagogical practices, consolidating spaces that allow the documentary and bibliographic review of the advances in early childhood education, the challenges, the progress and others, as mentioned by the teachers

The specific work of early childhood education should be reviewed in an extracurricular manner, it could be based on in-depth workshops that provide more guidance from the standards of the educational system in terms of the administrative, managerial and operational aspects of teaching (1:62).

Finally, the institutional regulatory structures must open spaces for continuous improvement and self-evaluation of processes, spaces that allow the review of progress and difficulties in the training process, for this, in the words of the tutor teachers “the practice regulations should be reviewed at the end of each process and establish versions that allow the review and monitoring of the process to update it based on the new educational regulations” (2:7).

CONCLUSIONS

It is imperative to have clarity on those formative aspects of practice for teachers and students who are professionalized within the degree program in early childhood education at UFPS, aspects such as compliance with the micro-curricula that make up the methodological, theoretical and research reality of the subject, engage in a constant dialogue with the progress and new perspectives in education.

In the same way, it is important to recognize the school evolution after the social modification brought about by the COVID-19 sanitary measures, which has generated a discussion channel in the educational sector with the didactic means that implement virtual tools for learning in the classrooms.

It is also necessary, to highlight the constant and formative accompaniment in each of the practice subjects, since they are determining elements in the teaching qualification of the teachers who mediate the processes and the professionals who come to the classrooms of the degree.

It is essential to recognize the need to broaden the scope of this work to another professional training scenario, to validate the fundamentals of each area that permeates education. Therefore, the difference

between the degree programs, how each one of them has been organizing the components of teacher training and their distance from the objectives pursued by specific education in childhood issues, should be taken into account when making careful observation of the different views that the areas have of the educational system.

Reflect on the construction of communities of practice to generate networks of teachers that influence the understanding of education as a whole and not as a heterotopic space, to generate common pedagogical processes. There, it is imperative to broaden the sample towards those points in common and of a transversal nature that would manage to generate a new panorama on the challenges of teachers who train educators within the different degree programs, regardless of their specific area.

Recognizing the theoretical foundations of early childhood education as a basis for teaching aimed at the early years of schoolchildren as an epistemic element that would sponsor the possibility of opening the intersectoral debate with other disciplines that complement the field.

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