



SECTION: ARTICLES

About teaching: what students say in Didactics at the FAE-UFMG degree course¹

Acerca da docência: o que dizem os estudantes de Didática na licenciatura da FAE-UFMG

Sobre la enseñanza: lo que dicen los estudiantes de la Didáctica en la carrera FAE-UFMG

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ABSTRACT

The text aims to discuss data produced as part of a qualitative study carried out at the Faculty of Education, which received funding from the Minas Gerais State Research Support Foundation (Fapemig). It is based on semi-structured interviews with nine students from different educational backgrounds, enrolled in the Didactics subject at a public educational institution. The aim was to get closer to the students' conceptions, checking to what extent they relate the theories and concepts brought up in the subject in their statements. The Didactics classes are intended to encourage debate about teaching and its conceptions. The paper considers the importance of professional training developed in undergraduate courses and the focus on teacher training. However, the results show that traditional conceptions of teaching prevail and that previous experiences have a direct influence on the choice to

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become a teacher and the representations that undergraduates carry about it, overlapping with the content discussed in the subject.

Keywords: didactics; teacher training; undergraduate.

RESUMO

O texto pretende discutir dados produzidos no âmbito de uma pesquisa de natureza qualitativa, desenvolvida na Faculdade de Educação, que contou com o financiamento da agência de fomento Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais (Fapemig). Assentam-se em entrevistas semiestruturadas, desenvolvidas com nove estudantes de diferentes áreas de formação, matriculados na disciplina de Didática em uma instituição pública de ensino. Pretendeu-se uma aproximação das concepções dos estudantes, verificando em que medida relacionam as teorias e os conceitos trazidos na disciplina em seus depoimentos. As aulas de Didática pretendem potencializar o debate acerca do ensino e suas concepções. Considera-se no artigo a importância da formação profissional desenvolvida nas licenciaturas e o foco na formação docente. Entretanto, como resultado, verifica-se a prevalência de concepções tradicionais de ensino e constata-se que as vivências anteriores influenciam de modo direto a escolha pela docência e as representações que os licenciandos carregam sobre ela, se sobrepondo ao conteúdo que foi discutido na disciplina.

Palavras-chave: didática; formação de professores; graduação.

RESUMEN

El texto tiene como objetivo discutir los datos producidos como parte de un estudio cualitativo realizado en la Facultad de Educación, que recibió financiación de la Fundación de Apoyo a la Investigación del Estado de Minas Gerais (Fapemig). Se basan en entrevistas semiestructuradas con nueve estudiantes de diferentes niveles educativos, matriculados en Didáctica en una institución pública de enseñanza. El objetivo fue aproximarse a las concepciones de los alumnos, comprobando en qué medida relacionan en sus enunciados las teorías y los conceptos abordados en la asignatura. Las clases de Didáctica pretenden fomentar el debate sobre la enseñanza y sus concepciones. El artículo considera la importancia de la formación profesional desarrollada en los programas de licenciatura y el enfoque en la formación de profesores. Sin embargo, los resultados muestran que prevalecen las concepciones tradicionales de la enseñanza y que las experiencias previas influyen directamente en la elección de ser profesor y en las representaciones que los estudiantes de grado tienen sobre ella, superponiéndose a los contenidos discutidos en la asignatura.

Palabras clave: didáctica; formación del profesorado; graduación.

INTRODUCTION

During undergraduate studies, teacher training encompasses, in every specific degree course, different curricular designs aimed at preparing students for their eventual teaching practice. In general, at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), some of the pedagogical courses are offered by the Faculty of Education (FaE), but that does not mean that this part of the training cannot be complemented in different ways at the students' original units.

Among the most common subjects in this area are Didactics, Sociology of Education, Psychology of Education, Educational Policy, Teaching Practices, and Internships. Within this context, there is a total of 12 Didactics classes (MTE-101) offered by the Department of Teaching Methods and Skills each semester for teaching degrees (there are others for the Pedagogy course). The courses are offered in the morning, afternoon and evening, and enrollment generally totals 40 students per class. The classes are heterogeneous in many aspects, such as age group, gender and race. In addition, we have to bear in mind that the students come from different degree courses and are in different stages (semesters) of their original courses. A group of eight permanent professors is responsible for the subject of Didactics, all of whom have a doctoral degree in Education at a minimum, and they split this work. We highlight that, due to the principle of university autonomy, all professors have the freedom to organize the management of the subject according to their own orientation and research profile, as long as the syllabus is preserved.

We collected⁴ the statements analyzed in this text at the end of the Didactics course in order to investigate if the concepts discussed were somehow reflected in the students' answers. It is worth noting that topics are organized into interconnected units during the course. In the first unit, the portrayal of teachers and the role of teaching is discussed, and then students try to distinguish the main aspects that underline each of these approaches to the teaching process (traditional, technician/behavioral, humanist, cognitivist/constructivist and social-historical). In the second part, which integrates curricular and operational aspects, they deal with the curriculum and with how cultural diversity takes questioning into didactics and the school. In the last unit, operational aspects such as teaching objectives, planning and assessment are worked on. All these points are dealt with in relation to the relationship between teacher and student, mediated by knowledge.

The selected materials for the course are varied and consist of texts (papers, books, reports, short stories, and chronicles), videos (lectures and interviews) and films (fiction and

⁴ One of the authors is the teacher of the subject and coordinator of the research project "Knowledge about teaching and the construction of didactic skills in didactic classrooms", which is being carried out from 2022-2025 with the support of the co-author, an undergraduate student (BDCTI-Fapemig), who took part in the class in previous semesters.

documentaries). Academic activities are carried out individually and collectively, in a hybrid group (considering the various areas), and range from discussing the teaching approaches of schools to creating lesson plans and an interdisciplinary teaching exercise.

Teacher training in higher education requires students to reflect on their school career and how their life experiences, their repertoire, facilitates or hinders them in entering the subjects of this academic field. We found that when students arrive at the course, they carry preconceptions (preconceived notions) about didactics, school, and teaching. Their previous experience limits their understanding of teaching to the expository lesson; the classroom is understood only in its classic, traditional design, with students lined up and the teacher at the front. Students often repeat these acquired notions as if they were definite truths and expect the course to be able to provide formulas for effective teaching – without, however, questioning what this effectiveness might be. Invited to reflect on theories about teaching, they often distrust the validity of the theories presented to them.

Marli André (2008) highlights the lack of research on the Didactics classroom. One of the objectives of this study is to contribute to reducing this gap. In this paper, we focused our attention on an excerpt, the testimonies of students who undertook the subject in the second semester of 2022. We wanted to identify the extent to which the construction of their knowledge in the topic of didactics would be present in their statements. It should be noted that the testimonies were collected between November 2022 and January 2023, that is, in the quarter immediately after the end of the course. We therefore expected their answers to call back to the content worked on during the course, which was not the case most of the time. The undergraduates gave semi-structured interviews about their past at school and their choice of teaching as a future profession. They also tried to make a brief assessment of the subject, but the concepts, themes, authors, and problems discussed in the course were not common references prevalent in their answers, as we will indicate later.

This discussion is part of a qualitative research project funded by the Minas Gerais State Research Foundation (Fapemig), which focuses on the contribution of the work carried out at the university, and specifically in the teaching of didactics, to the training of teachers for Basic Education. In the following section, we present some conceptualizations of the field of Didactics, which have a bearing on the work of teacher training. Next, we present some of the testimonies of undergraduate students which demonstrate their anxieties and doubts about their future in teaching.

LECTURING, TEACHING AND DIDACTICS

This paper is part of a research about the Didactics field and its importance in the education of undergraduates. We have briefly discussed the perspective of the work carried out in the subject in order to situate the reader in the context of the production of the research data. We have tried to delimit our understanding of didactics, the importance of its contribution

to teacher education and the construction of teaching professionalism. About the concept of teaching, according to the dictionary, it refers to “the action of teaching; the exercise of teaching profession; the quality of being a teacher. Etym. rad. v. lat. *docere*; to teach, instruct, show, indicate” (HOUAISS, 2001). However, teaching encompasses other specificities, which go beyond the scope of the definition given by common sense. We note that the work of teaching does not only refer to the classroom or to transmissive teaching from a traditional perspective. It goes beyond that and includes other activities inherent to education. In general terms, teaching can be defined as any act of accomplishment in the educational process (OLIVEIRA, 2010).

The exercise of the role of teacher is conditioned by a set of specific actions instituted by the traditional school model. The profession of teacher has to take a myriad of contexts and backgrounds into consideration, and it is essential to take that diversity into account while teaching. As such, “it [the act of teaching] is internally segmented according to the social order in which it is inserted, but it is also segmented by the existing hierarchies between social orders” (MORGENSTERN, 2010, p. 2). According to Morgenstern,

we should not underestimate the differences that exist, for example, between the work of a teacher in a public school, an elitist private institution, a university research institute, or a popular education initiative. Each of these social organizations, be it that of bureaucracy, science, business or of an NGO, presupposes a conformation of the individual to certain professional types that are dominant in that sphere and, at the same time, neutralizes others that are not (2010, p. 2).

Among all the factors related to the concept of teaching, we will focus here on the “act of teaching” (ROLDÃO, 2007, p. 94). As Silva (2010) states, teaching encompasses the preparation of teaching plans, the selection of content, the construction of methodologies and the assessment of students’ learning, among other actions. Roldão (2007) reminds us that the act of teaching, when based on traditionalist approaches, has the character of transmitting content. However, reinterpreting this notion, the author takes on an updated perspective, which sees the concept of teaching as an action of mediation, with the aim of making others learn. Under this perspective, we can understand the role of teaching, as Alves and Libâneo (2012, p. 40) point out,

as a mediating activity to promote the formative – affective, cognitive, ethical, aesthetic – encounter between the student and the object of knowledge, that is, the student’s active relationship with the topic, highlighting the role of the real conditions available for the realization of such activity.

We therefore believe that teaching is intrinsically linked to learning. Therefore, the central point takes into consideration that there is more than one active subject and that both are situated in a context, which means that the acts of teaching and learning are interrelated.

Becoming a teacher

We understand Didactics as a specific field of study that deals with teaching (in all its multidimensionality). Maria do Céu Roldão (2007, p. 95) defines teaching as “making someone learn something (which we call curriculum, whatever the nature of what we want to see learned)”. Her definition highlights the relational aspect of teaching, focusing on the *teacher-student-knowledge* relationship in the classroom. It takes into account both the range and the complexity of this phenomenon. This field therefore focuses on operational aspects; in other words, it aims to study the different components and aspects of teaching, as well as the theories that have been built up about teaching in general. However, as Roldão (2007, p. 95) warns us, these definitions are still incapable of conceptualizing the act of teaching and, in order to understand the complexity of this action, we need to enter the field of “teaching professionalism”. In the case analyzed in this study, the understanding that guides the teacher’s planning is based on the notion of professionalism.

We understand that each profession has its own professionalism, which is made up of the knowledge, skills, abilities and values that professionals must possess in order to carry out the specific task that falls to them. In this sense, we can talk about the professionalism of doctors, lawyers, architects and of teachers. We therefore use this term to describe the set of knowledges, skills, abilities and values that are necessary for professional teaching. Undergraduate students are in the process of building their professionalization, in other words, of becoming professionals, and their professionalism is under development.

It is worth pointing out that the group of (professional) skills that applies to teaching and, more specifically, to the management of the act of teaching, includes extensive learning, which manifests itself throughout the person’s formative trajectory, not just in the formal training of the university (the professionalization), but much earlier. Individuals learn about teaching as students throughout their entire time at school, usually at least 12 years. But it is not only their experience as students that informs them about teaching; in fact, for some authors, a person’s entire biography is an integral part of his or her professionalism (AMBROSETTI; ALMEIDA, 2009). Thus, it makes sense to think that the values that professionals carry with them in their work have been built and acquired throughout their lives, and not just in the relatively short time that they devoted to their academic training. Francisco Imbernón (2017, p. 44) also reinforces the importance of the beginnings of professional socialization, which happens in childhood, when individuals enter school, for the construction of this knowledge. For this author,

the solidification of professional knowledge begins with the personal experience that is carried over from childhood, from being students to wanting to become teachers; in other words, [it encompasses] their school and personal biography when they reach teacher training. Spending so many years in the educational institutional process leads to a certain way of

seeing education and constitutes a first and rudimentary professional socialization.

In addition to the already mentioned aspects, we would like to draw attention to the fact that there is a larger domain that incorporates individuals' values, knowledge and skills, that is, their own culture. Teachers' cultural background is part of their teaching. More than that, we would say that it is from this background that they build the professional values that constitute their professionalism. This baseline, the cultural background, constitutes a foundation. This foundation, however, acts both as a limit and as a facilitator, giving multiple senses and meanings to the individual's formative path, as we will see in the testimonies collected. In addition, professionalism will also be made up of the knowledge built up in the experiences and the responses that subjects offer to the demands presented to them. Last but not least, an aspect that cannot be forgotten in the narratives and demands related to teaching in the context in which it is inserted is that fact that it is "not only what subjects know, but also what is attributed to them by the discourses and social and political demands around them [that] constitutes their professional identity" (EITERER; CRUZ, 2022, p. 37).

This means that the professional identity of the individuals who choose to be teachers involves their entire range of cultural experiences, all their life experiences, and not only the contact with school and university. We will focus, however, on those constructed at school. These experiences are shaped by various factors, as Romero *et al.* (2007, p. 15) state:

When students arrive at the university, they bring with them a background experience built during the thousands of hours spent in a classroom. This long and intense period has given them "practical knowledge", images and beliefs about what is expected of a student, about school subjects... and about the act of teaching – an act that, logically, they have experienced from their side of the desk, while many underlying decisions, dilemmas, problems, and uncertainties are often left out of their sight. As a result, this learning by observation tends to reinforce, for example, the idea that teaching a subject consists of explaining or showing a syllabus that is simply there, given and configured beforehand, as "natural" as disciplinary division itself, and that feeds intuitive conceptions of teaching based mainly on the teacher's personality (more or less affectionate, cordial or tolerant).

In conjunction with the factors mentioned above, the type of contact individuals have with school during their student years should also be taken into account. There is a big difference between public and private school students. All of them have intersections that need to be considered – for example, private school students from the south of the city and private school students from other regions, students who attended schools in peripheral, highly vulnerable regions and students who studied in public schools in more centralized regions. In this respect, we can see that the significance of the subject's school experiences permeates social class relations. Therefore, the individuals who arrive at the university bring with them all these experiences and meanings built up in their own trajectories. And throughout the course, these impressions begin to form part of their training as educators.

METHODOLOGY

With the aim of analyzing and understanding the processes of teacher training understood as professionalization which students from different undergraduate courses at UFMG undertake and the construction of their professionalism, we conducted interviews with some students at the end of the academic semester. The goal was to understand what they think about what it means to be a teacher and about the teaching work, and to see, after the mandatory curricular course in Didactics, to what extent the concepts, authors and themes covered in the subject are present in their discourse. To this end, we conducted interviews with nine students (one man, seven women and one non-binary person) from different courses – Language Studies (five), Biology (one), Visual Arts (one), Theater (one) and Geography (one) – of the morning or afternoon shifts, who took this mandatory course in the second semester of 2022, at FaE/UFMG. With this, we sought to establish links to the subject from the data found.

Given that individuals' biography plays a part in their teaching, we designed the questions in an attempt to get to know the students' profile. We collected data such as color, gender, occupation, origin, location, age group, and degree course. Participants answered 16 questions, divided into three topics: school career; thoughts about teaching; and perception and opinions about the subject of didactics.

Interviews took place both in person, in the office at FaE, and remotely, online, by means of videoconference. They were recorded using an app on the smartphone of the research assistant, which is the co-author of this paper, and then transcribed by her. All participants gave their consent by signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF) after reading it carefully. We then proceeded to schedule the interviews according to the interviewees' availability. The interviews lasted an average of 30 to 40 minutes, and the analysis was carried out together with the teacher of the subject, the coordinator of the research project. In order to preserve the identity of the subjects, we opted to use fictitious names, chosen by the participants themselves.

Table 1 shows some important information about the profile of participants:

Table 1 – Profile

Name (fictitious)	City	Age	Color	Degree course	Member of undergraduate research project	Wants to be a teacher	Teaching experience
Aurora	Lagoa Santa (metropolitan region)	22	White	Visual Arts/Bachelor's	No	Yes	Arts lessons to public school students
Bruna	Belo Horizonte	19	White	Language Studies/Licenciante's	No	Not certain yet, but thinks about it	no, only as part of the Didactics course
Camila	Contagem (metropolitan region)	23	White	Geography/Licenciante's	No	Yes	No, only lectures about environmental education in schools in Juiz de Fora
Erick	Belo Horizonte	20	Black	Language Studies/Licenciante's	No	Yes, but prioritizes becoming a writer	Yes, tutoring
Fernando	Belo Horizonte	24	White	Biology/Licenciante's	Yes	Yes	Yes, private english lessons
Luma	Contagem (metropolitan region)	21	White	Language Studies/Licenciante's	No	Not certain yet	Yes, English lessons, as a private tutor and in an English school
Mari	Belo Horizonte	25	White	Language Studies/Licenciante's	No	No	No
Meibi	Belo Horizonte	22	Black	Theatre/Licenciante's	No	No	No
Tamara	Contagem (metropolitan region)	26	White	Language Studies/Licenciante's	No	Yes	Yes, computer classes and Portuguese classes as trainee

Source: elaborated by the authors.

As we can see, this is a group of young people, the majority of whom are white, aged between 19 and 27. Among these, less than half, specifically only four, answered “yes” to the question about wanting to be a teacher, a fact that is surprising given that most of them are licenciante’s degree students. This is noteworthy, even though our sample is small, especially because it reveals students’ insecurity about their future profession. We note that the sample is made up of only those which we were actually able to contact by telephone, out of the 15 who initially volunteered for the interview.

In order to collect and analyze the data for this qualitative research, we resorted to the semi-standardized interview, according to Flick (2009), and Bardin's (2016) content analysis. The construction of the interview is based on understanding the “subjective theory of the interviewee about the subject under study” (FLICK, 2009, p. 149). With this, we sought to understand what undergraduate students think about teaching and about the educational work in the course they are studying, since they produce particular knowledge on these topics. In addition, we used an interview guide of “open questions” (FLICK 2009, p. 149), “answered on the basis of the knowledge that the interviewee has immediately at hand” (FLICK, 2009, p. 149). The composition of questions was based on hypotheses that served “the purpose of making the interviewee’s implicit knowledge more explicit [...] by intentionally formulating questions based on scientific theories on the topic” (FLICK, 2009, p. 149).

For the content analysis, a “set of communication analysis techniques that uses systematic and objective procedures to describe the content of messages” (BARDIN, 2016, p. 44), we carried out a pre-analysis through fluctuating reading, which is capable of generating

intuitions and establishing dialogic relationships to our theoretical structure, which in turn allows us to create propositions and new hypotheses. Next, in line with Bardin's (2016) perspective, we set out to treat the collected corpus, which we categorized using the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative analysis software. 10 codes were established to assist in the analysis and verify parts of the interviews that refer to the following topics, relevant to the research: (i) training process; (ii) being a teacher; (iii) contributions of Didactics; (iv) occupation; (v) type of student; (vi) remarkable life experiences; (vii) being able to teach; (viii) relationship with school/school space; (ix) previous teaching experience; (x) references in teaching. To carry out this step, based on the "rule of representativeness" established by Bardin (2016), we extracted a representative part from the whole to create a sampling space which, in turn, is composed of nine students from Didactics classes.

In addition, the methodology has qualitative analysis characteristics based on Bardin (2016), who suggests the importance of carefully selecting content through categorization. As such, qualitative analysis "can work on reduced corpus and establish more discriminating categories, as it is not linked, as a quantitative analysis, to categories that give rise to frequencies high enough for calculations to be possible" (BARDIN, 2016, p. 114).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

With regard to the desire to teach, when we analyzed the interviews, we saw how much of a challenge it was for the students. Of the nine interviewees, only four said they were studying to become teachers. Another three are still unsure or have teaching as a second option, and two said they are not thinking about this professional career. For example, one of the interviewees said: "No, because I think it's difficult. I think it's a very complicated profession. It requires a lot more than love, a lot of willpower. Even more so in the country we live in. I think it's complicated" (Meibi, Theater).

We identified a tone of discontent with the profession, related both to the social discredit of the career and to the experiences in the school environment. In contrast with the previous answer, we selected the justification of one of the interviewees who wants to be a teacher because she has an optimistic view of the school environment and the profession:

I want to be a teacher. I think it's mainly because I really like the teaching environment itself. I really like the educational environment, I feel good about it and the work I do, you know? The idea of teaching and studying also really appeals to me. So I like learning and teaching. So, I think... that's my main point. It's the possibility of teaching and learning, and the environment, which I think is one in which I can develop positively. [...] my ideals, as long as I believe in education as a form of liberation and not in the sense of freedom to save someone, but of perception of the world, of... you acquiring knowledge and... you building your own perception of the world. Not that I'm necessarily going to bring this to someone else, but... it's only

that I seek this for myself in education, and to participate in this process for others (Tamara, Language Studies).

In the speech transcribed above, we see a positive and comprehensive perspective on the act of teaching.

About being a good student, we received answers that deserve closer attention. In general, they are quite similar. All of them apparently see themselves as good students, but more than that, the answers include evaluation criteria, that is, what they think is a good student. All participants began talking from the point of view of behavior and performance, of the grades obtained, to define themselves as a good or bad students. Let's take a look at Aurora (Visual Arts): *"I wasn't considered a nerd, but I was an exemplary student in terms of behavior and grades, yeah... my average was around 80%, yeah... 70 to 80% in grades. In elementary school and high school too."*

We understand that the concept of a good student is close to the idea of students capable of above-average results in exams and students who know how to behave in the classroom. Thus, participants pointed to the expected model, the typical student. In contrast, we noticed that one of them considered another aspect, the social aspect of the school: *"Yes. In general, I always had a very satisfactory performance, both academically, you know, in terms of grades etc. and in terms of sociability in school"* (Tamara/Language Studies).

When sociability is brought into focus, the role of students is "transformed". They start to see themselves as an integral part of that space when they establish relations not only with their teachers, but with their classmates, the staff and the school community in general.

As for significant life experiences the students had during their school years, we found that regular classroom lessons were not mentioned. The episodes that prevail in their memories are those related to special circumstances, such as visits, laboratory activities, games or competitions: *"Maybe the last sports competition I took part in in the ninth grade"* (Maria, Language Studies).

Let's look at another example:

like, once we made a life-size chessboard in the PE class. Man, I thought it was incredible, because we had to dress up as the pieces, paint the whole floor... and, wow, it was really cool! We made shields to be the pawns, it was really cool, really cool, these little things were really important, you know? (Luma/Language Studies).

There are reports of some moments that marked them in other ways. They were painful, difficult experiences, such as in this case, when the student mentioned racism: *"At school, I suffered a lot of racism. So it was... it was during... my whole life, right? But there was one period that was very significant, so... hard to forget!"* (Meibi, Theater).

In this other one, we see the experience of confronting other forms of intolerance:

Another one that really stood out for me was a specific teacher, who was the first teacher I had any problems with in my life. He proposed debates. He was a teacher of religion studies. He proposed debates, but he didn't accept students having opinions that were different from his. And I disagreed a bit. I really liked the dynamics of debates and, because of that, I ended up having a lot of problems, because I went to the principal's office several times because of opinions that differed from his" (Tamara, Language Studies).

Regarding the relationship between their school experiences and their education, participants said that these experiences influenced them in different ways. Sometimes they provided a sort of counter-model, as can be seen in the following statements: *"I think that, like, even unconsciously, we try to reproduce what was good for us, and I think that if you're really involved in that process, you'll want to avoid what wasn't"* (Luma, Language Studies).

As we mentioned earlier, previous contact with school has helped to form the foundation for their perceptions about teaching. It provided information on teaching approaches, methodologies and other factors linked to student learning. The undergraduate students we interviewed have not yet examined this background as future teachers. The four-year time at the university, with a one-semester course in Didactics, proves to be a short time to act on this examination and on the reconstruction of these views:

Remembering a bit about when we were students helps us, you know... to form a notion of a professional who can reach students in the best possible way, you know? So, I think: "Oh, I remember that! When I was a student, this never worked, it never helped me at all!", "Oh, what the teacher did here helped me a lot, I can try to reproduce that with my students." So I think that yes, I think that this analysis of our time as students can help us train as professionals, you know? (Erick/Language Studies).

I think the teacher shapes... he has to shape himself according to the class he's in. But he can't give the same lesson, for example, to several classes. There are some classes in which the teacher will be able to explain a topic in, like, 50 minutes, and there are others in which he won't be able to do the same. So I think the students who are there shape the teacher. So, as a student, I think I play an active role in how the teacher is going to be, or something like that. (Maria/Language Studies).

The verbs *reproduce* and *shape* help us to think about the reflection of these previous experiences on the participants' future teaching activities. They are linked to a given understanding of the classroom and teaching. The teachers speak (they act), the students listen (they copy etc.). The tasks and roles of both are well defined and distinct. The choice of vocabulary reveals the conception of teaching that most commonly circulates among students. It is usual to choose terms such as *minister* to refer to teaching, to the didactic act. Expressions such as *applying tests* and *measuring what the student has absorbed* appear

frequently in their texts written in the classroom. This conception resists revision when presented with other conceptions of teaching.

In addition, the students carry with them the contributions of their first classroom experiences as teachers. Aurora (Visual Arts) said:

By being a teacher, I've become a better student and vice-versa: by being a good student, who is always trying to improve, I've become a better teacher. I believe and I see that being a good student makes me an equally better professional.

And this means that occupying these two positions – student and teacher – allows for a more comprehensive view. People who are preparing to teach begin to take a more critical look at teaching and learning. And this observation can lead to questions such as: “What kind of teacher am I becoming?”, “What kind of teacher do I want to be?”

In bachelor's degree courses, it is very common to come across students who feel insecure and unconfident about their first experiences in the classroom. Many of them still feel that they do not know enough or that they will not be able to face the challenges of the job. When it comes to what they feel about teaching someone something, we found that, of the students interviewed, only a few had already had their first teaching experience. As Fernando said, “*the first few days were... a bit scary, you know? Quite scary! I was afraid of teaching wrong, I kept thinking about it a lot*” (Fernando/Biology).

In addition to fear, the students reported satisfaction despite the challenge:

And in the classroom it was... it was very challenging. In fact, there were wonderful moments when I felt fulfilled, and there were also moments when I felt extremely challenged and affronted by the students' behavior (Aurora/Visual Arts).

They all mentioned difficulties and insecurities in this sense. Among those who have not yet taken up the position of teacher, we quote the words of one student: “*I still feel very weak, very, very... I keep thinking 'wow!' Sometimes it seems like it's going to be good, but then, in general, I go back to 'Wow, but I don't think it's good yet.'*” (Camila/Geography).

As we can see, the relationship between teaching and being able to talk about the subject in question reappears:

I think that depends on the topic. There are topics that I know I'm..., I'm more relaxed to talk about, so I'll be able to speak calmly and I'll be sure of what I'm saying. In short, I think that sometimes there is a certain insecurity, obviously (Maria/Language Studies).

We also noticed two implicit points of view in the answers about being able to teach. The first is that many students linked their insecurity and lack of ability to the theoretical content

they have to learn in the degree courses they are enrolled in, as we saw in the previous paragraph. They still refer to the idea of traditional, transmissive teaching. The second point we noticed is that other interviewees linked insecurity and fear to a lack of experience. In this context, for them, practice gradually guarantees new ways of conceiving teaching, as we see in Fernando's response (Biology):

Today, yes. In the beginning, I had a lot of doubts, you know? I doubted myself a lot. But today I think I'm capable of teaching. But it's also something that comes with practice, right? As you go along, you feel more confident. When you see yourself being able to do things, you know? To teach and explain things. That makes you feel more confident about doing it.

As we have seen, the management of the act of teaching is generally understood in a single way, even though they have had contact with theories that question this approach. The students do not seem to view the teacher as a professional who organizes and triggers learning processes, in an intentional and planned management which can be organized in different ways than just oral exposition. Throughout the 15-week course period, discussions about teaching approaches other than the traditional one were carried out, but we found that the experience of teaching at schools, most of which work under a traditional model, is so well established that it imposes itself and is not shaken by an introduction to the pedagogical theories discussed in the course.

Lastly, we have a reflection on the contributions of the subject of Didactics to participants' undergraduate education. It is important to note that all of them said that it was important for their education. The most cited contributions were the different methodologies covered throughout the course. Other students expected to learn how to "possess didactics", but ended up being surprised by the concept of didactics:

Before I joined, I didn't even really understand the name of the course. Then I remember that XXX talked about what didactics was in this field of... of meaning, you know, which would be the exercise of studying, it has to do with studying. Basically that, options about the strategies you have for studying. And I had never thought about it in this way, that didactics would be like this (Camila/Geography).

When asked to rethink the concept of didactics, some said they felt lost, like Bruna (Language Studies):

Yes, I think it's a very... thought-provoking subject. And it really changes our conception of the things we see, especially and obviously of the word didactics, which we use in a way, you know... without pausing to understand what it is and also the importance of knowing how to do things, how to teach, you know. And that it's important to value that.

Students expect to find a course with operational outlines, with an emphasis on technical processes. When they are asked to reflect on different conceptions of teaching (on the importance and function of the school, on the conceptions of the teacher, the curriculum and the student) as well as on the different projects for society that are linked to them, they feel out of place and uncomfortable. They feel that the course does not provide them with the tool they had hoped to find. The time dedicated to reflecting on teaching seems too short to lead them to establish new conceptions about teaching. However, we end on an optimistic note, based on our understanding of the collective dimension of work at school, and the positive dimension of the subject, presented in Aurora's (Visual Arts) observations:

Absolutely, completely in fact, because there were topics that we debated in class, and I ended up reflecting on this a lot in my experience in class. So, I'd already had half a term, a term, six months in fact, a semester, yeah, in the classroom without thinking about didactics, so much so that my interest in enrolling in this subject was precisely because of the experience. When I started to really study didactics, which were such different subjects and teaching models that I didn't know, it was... Paradigms came into mind, and it was... I thought: 'I can break here or I can do it differently'. I tried it a few times. Sometimes it worked, and others it didn't. And I also discovered that it doesn't just depend on me. The texts, the activities developed and especially the final assignment, which was the interdisciplinary group presentation, was what made the most for me. There I got the reasoning right in my head and there I understood, like, a certain part of what it is to be... what it means to be an educator.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In this text, we sought to present research carried out in a course that has a controversial place in teacher training. Given this scenario, we started from a position of acknowledging the importance of the vast contribution made in the accumulation of over more than 50 years of debates in the field of Didactics, which can be checked in the work group (GT) 04 of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (Anped). In this text, however, we have made a specific selection, focusing on what we consider to be a gap in this field. We dealt specifically with students who were taught Didactics at the undergraduate level, collecting their testimonies at the end of the semester.

Considering that professional teacher training happens at the undergraduate level, we understand that teaching is at the heart of this career. Based on this principle, we discuss some of the main challenges facing the training of future teaching professionals, which come to light in the subject of Didactics. Among them, the following stand out: the preconceptions built up throughout the students' school life; the teachers' professionalism, which is made up of values and knowledge acquired throughout their biography; the undergraduates who arrive at the Didactics subject hoping to find tools to successfully transmit content; and finally, the students' move to a position of reflection on teaching, which includes rethinking

teaching from other theoretical models, different from the traditional one, and requires time and dedication from them.

In their statements, the participants showed insecurity about whether they will stay in the profession and whether they will be able to teach or not. Those who had good teachers or positive experiences at school are more willing to take on the challenge. Their testimonies show that their thoughts are deeply rooted in the school culture they have acquired throughout their lives, and that a notion of teaching based on the traditional model prevails, without there being much room to question their beliefs. The Didactics course, however, proved to be a kick-start for them to question these conceptions in the future.

It is important to emphasize that the interviews were carried out at the end of the course and were intended, among other things, to identify the extent to which the students reflected back on the themes, concepts, approaches, authors and problems dealt with during the course. Nonetheless, we would like to point out that this dialogue did not take place as intensely as we had hoped. Some of the participants referred to the pedagogical approaches studied in a superficial way in their answers, which, in general, were more strongly anchored in their school experiences. We therefore realize that the training of undergraduates as future teachers needs to provide more powerful opportunities for them to review their conceptions and pre-established notions.

Based on the Didactics students' statements, we concluded that, at this stage of their development, generic views on the profession still prevail, given their previous school career and little internalization of the theoretical concepts studied so far. In short, although the students pointed out the dilemmas and challenges they face given their personal and social context as well as the education system, they also indicated an interest in the teaching profession and a desire to be agents promoting learning and change.

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