



Research Article

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Unveiling the Professional Identity of University Educators: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The formation of a university professor's identity is a complex process, which begins with academic training and evolves through professional practice. This study explores the experiences that shape the identity of university teachers, focusing on personal, social and professional perspectives. Through the qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews with 10 participants with an average age of 50 years, the research revealed significant factors. It found a correlation between female gender and preference for teaching careers, as well as the substantial influence of parental guidance on career choice, driven by considerations of economic stability and familiar work environments. In terms of personal identity, the testimonies underscored the influential role of parental expectations in career decision making. Social identity was strongly influenced by family prestige and the broader social context. On the professional level, the research revealed that years of positive teaching experience contribute to the reinforcement of one's professional identity. However, it also highlighted the fluid nature of a university professor's teaching identity, subject to the fluctuations of positive and negative experiences encountered in daily practice. While these experiences can reinforce a sense of vocation and professional development, the lack of a cohesive teaching identity poses risks to the quality of educational services provided to students.

Keywords: teaching identity, university professor, personal identity, social identity, professional identity

1. Introduction

The identity of the university teacher is shaped by the experience and the academic role he/she plays (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2021; González Orozco et al., 2019). The importance of their educational role requires the application of teaching, evaluation, and practice strategies for the development of professional competencies. In this sense, one of the functions of the teacher is to encourage students to develop a critical, analytical and reflective spirit. In view of the above, the teacher's identity is a key element as it is a process that is built with the evolution of experience. The referents of the diversity of criteria are personal, social and professional identity (Gajardo-Asbún et al., 2020).

International studies show that the various quantitative and qualitative research approaches and systematic reviews describe that pedagogical practice connects with a way of life that permanently constructs and formalizes the identity of university teachers. Likewise, the development of professional identity during initial training is vital to cement professional performance. It is necessary to emphasize that identity is influenced by continuing education, sociocultural factors and the psychological characteristics of the individual (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2021; Morales Escobar & Taborda Caro, 2020).

In Chile, Andreucci-Annunziata & Morales Cabello (2020) indicated that teachers in training expect to develop and strengthen skills for classroom performance; however, supervisors expect professional experience and maturity to be valued within the training program, which have not been fully covered with the planned expectations. Likewise, teaching identity implies tensions between the personal and professional spheres during pedagogical practice, which need to be developed through reflective processes. Being necessary to rethink pedagogical practices in various contexts, for the construction of identity with the interaction of peers (Vanegas Ortega & Fuantealba Jara, 2019).

In this sense, Otondo-Briceño et al. (2021) identified professional episodes that conditioned the trajectories of university teachers. It should be noted that the basic aspects have been developed during the professional identity and have provided elements of analysis for the application of theory and practice. In Spain, (Falcón Linares & Arraiz Pérez, 2020) indicated that the characteristics of the academic identity of the teaching staff and its impact on the university have four aspects on the functions of the teaching staff: (a) teaching-learning process (b) role of the teacher (c) the social responsibility he/she performs and difficulties (d) teacher needs (Alonso et al., 2019).

In the same line, the construction of the professional teaching identity from training has two phases: formative experiences and case studies. Therefore, there is a need for teachers to assume an active role from the moment they enter the university, together with pedagogical accompaniment as a key element. On the other hand, the teacher's identity has two factors: the first comprises the profile of the student body, which involves interests and qualities. The second, the properties of initial training. Likewise, in the educational context, the evidence highlights the presence of women, no older than 25, denoting the perpetuation of the female gender. Another group does not show vocation for teaching, they use it as a labor option, evidencing that there is no good professional performance (Delgado-García & De La O Toscano Cruz, 2021).

In the educational field, the identity of the teacher is considered from two crucial perspectives. Firstly, there is the profile of the future education professional, which entails understanding interests, qualities, and the utilization of pedagogical strategies, teaching methods, and appropriate instructional resources to meet the diverse needs of students (Lizasoain, 2021; Roque Herrera et al., 2022). Secondly, the academic preparation of the future education professional plays a vital role, encompassing pedagogical skills and practical experiences that are fundamental for achieving efficient and effective performance in the classroom (Cordero Arroyo & Jiménez Moreno, 2018; Ramírez-Díaz, 2021).

Concerning academic training, certain demographic trends have been observed in relation to the age and gender of teachers. Notably, younger women under the age of 25 demonstrate a significant presence, while the majority of male teachers are over the age of 31 (Delgado-García & De La O Toscano Cruz, 2021). Furthermore, statistical information reveals the proportion of female

professors worldwide, highlighting that the positions held are often of lower rank within the university context. For instance, in Africa, women teachers in higher education represented 45.1% between 1995 and 2018. Similarly, in countries like Brazil, 41% of university professors are female. In Bulgaria, the figure is 54.7%, in India it is 44%, in Japan it is 24.8%, in Canada it is 41%, and in the United States it is 52.9% (Delgado-García & De La O Toscano Cruz, 2021; Ruíz, 2023; UNESCO - IESALC, 2021).

Moreover, it is worth noting the existence of educators who lack a genuine vocation for teaching and choose this profession solely as a career option, without a true interest in education. This phenomenon has negative impacts on the quality of the education they provide (Oliveira Rabelo et al., 2021; Raftery & Delaney, 2022).

In Ecuador, the findings show that the identity of university teachers is focused on the teaching role and later on research, as part of their academic work, highlighting that training is persistently built over time (Achilie Valencia et al., 2020). Likewise, in Colombia, teacher identity was analyzed through significant experiences. The results showed subcategories such as vocation, transformation and teaching experience, didactic and interpersonal competence (Escobar et al., 2020). On the other hand, research was conducted on the location and intersection of English pedagogy and teacher identity, here it was identified that English language pedagogy goes beyond university teaching (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021).

Berkenbroc-Rosito et al. (2021) indicate that the art of listening during initial teacher training contributes to teacher training in Brazil. Therefore, a valuable methodology of elaboration of oral and written narratives on biographies was applied. The conclusion was that there is an aesthetic dimension in the constitution of one's own teaching identity.

Likewise, in Mexico, the formation of the teaching identity is closely connected to the practice of teaching, acknowledging the value of identity from one's own experience (Madueño & Márquez, 2020). Furthermore, the stages of professional development through the narrative of cases, includes the difficulties and decisions made by the professional in the course of his or her professional experience (Villegas-Torres & Lengeling, 2021).

The antecedents recorded in Peru pointed out the social identity of education as a model that develops the identity of individuals and the social identity of belonging to a given context. In short, education builds societies with people who are more supportive, respectful and consistent with their actions (Guanipa Ramírez & Angulo Giraldo, 2020).

Consequently, education requires qualified and prepared professionals, capable of adapting to the changes and challenges of the modern world, in order to reconceptualize the teaching identity and find the meaning and coherent content of the pedagogical work. Therefore, the construction of the teaching identity must have a clear conception of the term identity, which is a subjective process that forms the conscience as a self-evaluation system that recognizes potentialities and weaknesses (Laiho et al., 2022). In addition, the teacher is characterized by docility, readiness for permanent evaluation and apolitical character (Cabalin et al., 2019).

In this regard, the definition of identity has been in the eyes of critics, because of the difficulties in understanding it, since its formation uses processes of change, reflection and observation in parallel. Therefore, it is not a static activity; it is a social and complex process (Mercado Maldonado & Hernández Oliva, 2010). In addition, its development poses a panoramic vision that includes the balance of the categories, personal, social and professional (Pillen et al., 2013). Personal identity is an evolutionary, gradual and different process, located in the guts of the subject, which in some circumstances is learned by doing and learning collaboratively (Lozoya Meza & Ocampo Reyes, 2019).

In this sense, the beginning of the career choice requires factors such as professional vocation and extrinsic motivations. In addition to the pressure of family, friends and parental approval (Araya-Pizarro, 2019), gender should not be left aside as a relevant and imperative element when choosing a career in education (González Alba et al., 2021). Identity is the social function that fulfills and is transformed according to the reality of a traditional society, which generates an identity crisis; which underlines that identity is linked to social commitment (García-Huidobro Munita & Ferrada-Sullivan,

2020; Tejada González, 2005). The implementation of public policies is necessary for the strengthening of professional ties with their own identity (Rossi & Hunger, 2020).

However, the professional identity is being deployed in the pedagogical practice as a specialist, teacher, tutor, professional in his or her area and manager (Esteves Pairazamán et al., 2020; Vitvitskaya et al., 2022). Also, in research programs for teacher preparation and quality (Montero & Gewerc, 2018; Suyo-Vega, Meneses-La-Riva, Fernández-Bedoya, Ocupa-Cabrera, et al., 2022; Suyo-Vega, Meneses-La-Riva, Fernández-Bedoya, Polônia, et al., 2022). In addition, there is a variety of resources to establish meaning to careers and make them meaningful (Cabrera Bellido, 2015). It is an active process that integrates customs or habits throughout life, and is marked by ruptures. The teacher who does not have a professional identity presents difficulties, they are only overcome by individual competencies (Vanegas Ortega & Fuantealba Jara, 2019).

Identity is understood as a critical reflective practice that, analyzes the development of teaching (Andrade-Stanzani, 2021), where confluence not only, the experiences as a university student, but also the processes of initial and permanent training, which can be positive or negative (Hernández-Ramos et al., 2021; Hernández Fajardo, 2021; Marcelo García et al., 2021) together with the permanent accompaniment in teaching practice (Esteves Pairazamán et al., 2019; Martín Cuadrado et al., 2021; Paredes-Labra & Melgar, 2021; San Martín Cantero et al., 2021) and the importance of years of experience must be recognized, because it offers a high mastery of the subject (Lizasoain, 2021). In addition, identity is a mixture of knowledge acquired from training and experience, which are integrated with the achievement of competencies such as: ethical commitment, research, innovation, permanent communication, autonomy and empathy with the student body (Monereo & Domínguez, 2014).

Therefore, we proposed the following research question: How is the identity of university professors perceived? To answer this question, it is necessary to investigate the teaching staff from three perspectives: personal development, social interaction, and cultural context. To achieve this, certain criteria must be established, such as academic training, which enhances the capacity for reflection, critical thinking, and cognitive skills; professional development, which addresses the needs and experiences of both faculty and students; and research ability, which fosters the advancement of knowledge.

The findings from the interviews provided new insights for constructing the university identity. From the question, the analysis of personal, social, and professional identity of university professors emerged. The research process is complex, and its dimensions or categories are susceptible to be developed in different measures and forms (Martínez Rizo, 2019). In this sense, the research generated new knowledge, structuring or restructuring new theories; which has great social relevance because it generates new concepts, in a dynamic digital stage that the university teacher lives (Sánchez García, 2014).

Finally, this research contributes to the development of university teachers, in the construction or reconstruction of what it means to be and practice teaching, in moments of critical incidents, recognizing that it is a professional endowed with specific knowledge (Marques da Silva et al., 2021; Vázquez-Martínez & Alducin-Ochoa, 2014).

2. Methodology

The research was developed through a qualitative approach, as a theory that presents great advances and conceived as a set of interpretive practices that make the world visible (Creswell & Miller, 2000; D'olivares Durán & Casteblanco Cifuentes, 2015). Qualitative studies begin with a previous approach to reality (Quintana Peña, 2006), strengthening the knowledge of the human being individually, and knowing their space in life; being a different and alternative approach for the generation of new scientific knowledge. Thus, it delves into subjectivity, but under the gaze of phenomenology and hermeneutics to extract valuable information from the existing reality (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Sánchez Flores, 2019).

Three techniques were used to gather information: (a) in-depth interviews, (b) life stories, and (c) recorded classes through the Zoom and Meet platforms. The in-depth interviews were categorized into three guiding categories established through a literature review, including systematic review articles related to university faculty identity (Cuadra-Martínez et al., 2021; González Orozco et al., 2019). Three subcategories emerged from the review: (a) Personal Identity, (b) Social Identity, and (c) Professional Identity.

Evidence was collected through life stories, which are essential strategies for obtaining data and understanding individuals' lives, levels of professionalization, and family relationships, providing a holistic view and delimiting specific mediations and processes (Nobre et al., 2018; Pujadas Muñoz, 1992) for reflective purposes (Hernández-Prado & De la Peña, 2021; Valobra, 2021).

The inclusion criteria established by the research team required participants to have a degree in education, which was verified through the Peruvian National Superintendence of Higher University Education (Sunedu) website, which validates information related to academic degrees. Additionally, the participants had to be currently active university-level teachers, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, working in either public or private institutions.

Another criterion was age, with a minimum requirement of 30 years, as most education professionals begin their university careers at the age of 17 or 18, complete five years of academic training, and then spend an additional two years for their bachelor's and master's degrees. Therefore, a minimum of five years of experience was required for this study.

Exclusion criteria included university teachers who also worked in primary or secondary education institutions, as their experiences in different educational levels could bias the interviews. This was to ensure the autonomy and respect of the interviewees, as the interviewer could not challenge or follow up on experiences outside of the university context.

Furthermore, a system of emergent subcategories was generated through the analysis of life stories shared by the key participants (Aguaded-Ramírez et al., 2020). The life stories focused on three moments: life stories from their place of origin, life stories during the project, and life stories in their current location (Abril Hervás, 2021; Aguaded-Ramírez et al., 2020; Hernández-Prado & De la Peña, 2021).

Recorded classes were observed and transcribed for analysis, providing insights into the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the individuals involved in the research. These instruments allowed for rich data collection (Sánchez et al., 2021). Qualitative research allowed for pre-, during, and post-data collection and analysis questions, recognizing the inseparability of the researcher and the research process (D'olivares Durán & Castebianco Cifuentes, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Sánchez et al., 2021).

The research spanned a period of eight months and involved recorded interviews conducted through the Zoom and Meet platforms. A total of ten key participants were included, following the principle of theoretical saturation (Almarza Franco & Pirela Morillo, 2017; Glaser, 2002; Páramo Morales, 2015). These participants were education professionals with various specializations: mathematics and physics (3), language and literature (2), history and geography (1), philosophy (2), and mathematics and computer science (2). This information was provided by the participants and verified by the research team through the official Sunedu website. All participants were currently teaching at various universities in the country, both private and public. The minimum age requirement was 30 years, and they were required to have a minimum of 5 years of experience.

The results revealed a redefinition of university faculty identity, which poses a challenge to be competent and sensitive to the real needs and demands of students. The research was conducted under a qualitative approach and utilized the Atlas Ti software as a valuable tool for analyzing qualitative data (García-Tudela & Marín-Sánchez, 2021; Rojano Alvarado et al., 2021; Varela-Ordorica & Valenzuela-González, 2020).

Atlas Ti is a technological tool used to analyze qualitative data, in this case, the responses obtained from the interviews. The "Identity" project was created, and the interviewee's responses were loaded into the software under the hermeneutic unit. Content analysis was then applied to

examine each response and establish codes and categories. The codes were assigned based on the established subcategories: Personal Identity (A), Social Identity (B), and Professional Identity (C), as shown in the Results section. Key words or recurrent expressions associated with the proposed subcategories were identified and coded in lists, such as A: a.1, a.2, a.3; B: b.1, b.2, b.3; and C: c.1, c.2, c.3. This coding in lists served as the basis for establishing conceptual networks such as "is associated with" and "is part of," visualized in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

The research team guarantees that the provided information is original and unpublished. During the execution phase, voluntary collaboration was sought from the faculty, who provided their informed consent (Suárez-Obando, 2016), ensuring compliance with ethical norms derived from ethical principles. These principles included autonomy and respect towards the interviewees, as reflected in the informed consent process, which indicated three important aspects: (a) the technique, which in this case was the interview, (b) the instrument, which consisted of an interview guide, and (c) the availability of the interviewee's time. Participation was voluntary, as expressed in one of the interactions with the study subjects (Table 1). Participants were free to express themselves based on their experiences and had the right to revoke their consent if desired. The principle of beneficence was upheld through ethical norms of confidentiality and anonymity, assuring each participant that the provided information would be used exclusively for research purposes. The acquired information was coded by participant number, gender, and years of experience (So5M17), indicating subject number 5, male gender, with 17 years of experience. The principle of justice was also considered by ensuring equitable access for key participants. The strategy was to include participants with years of experience in university-level education and exclusively from the field of education.

Therefore, professionals from undergraduate and postgraduate programs in national or private universities were selected to ensure reliable information. Finally, the principle of dignity was upheld by recognizing and appreciating each of the key participants, making them feel valued, respected, and acknowledging their valuable contribution to the research (Espinoza Freire & Calva Nagua, 2020; Réтали, 2017).

During data collection, the image and reputation of the key participants were respected (Carreño-Dueñas, 2016). The responses of the interviewees were coded and categorized, associating the codes with specific categories (González- Díaz et al., 2021; Vives Varela & Hamui Sutton, 2021). Table 1 presents the criteria, strategies, and activities undertaken during the various interviews to ensure credibility, transferability, reliability, and reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Table 1: Quality criteria developed in the research

Criteria	Strategy	Activities performed
Credibility	Prolonged engagement	The study subjects were asked to participate voluntarily by signing the informed consent form prior to the in-depth interview. At all times they were encouraged to freely express their opinions on the subject according to their experience.
Credibility	Persistent observation	The detailed observation technique was maintained throughout the study, using a checklist that showed the behavior of the interviewees in relation to what was expressed.
Credibility	Data triangulation	Once the information was obtained and the results were confirmed through the convergence of different theoretical perspectives, the study was developed through the comparison of theories that offered contrasting explanations regarding the studied category. In the first conception, it is mentioned that to build a teaching identity, it is necessary to have an ethical sense of being a teacher, as well as plans that organize the career and doubts that arise when choosing the profession (Linares & Pérez, 2020). The second conception suggests that teacher identity involves parallel processes of change, reflection, and observation. Therefore, it is not a static activity but rather a social and complex process (Mercado Maldonado & Hernández Oliva, 2010). A third position suggests that developing a teaching identity requires a panoramic vision that includes a balance between personal, social, and professional categories (Pillen et al., 2013).
Credibility	The triangulation of theories	The triangulation of theories allowed for the analysis of each key participant's responses according to the established questions, confronting them with the theories proposed in the introductory chapter. Reviewing the literature, analyzing the interviews, and comparing them with the theory strengthened the credibility of the results. A critical analysis was conducted to develop the discussion and conclusion chapters of the research.

Criteria	Strategy	Activities performed
Credibility	Member check	We ensured that the questions used were fully understood by the interviewees through confirmation.
Transferability	Thick description	Each response was carefully analyzed, considering age, origin, and length of service, opportunities, beliefs and gender. The responses were then contextualized to other areas to establish generalizations.
Dependability	Quality of results	The results presented were drawn solely from the data collected.
Confirmability	Audit trail	The documentation was analyzed exhaustively, avoiding gray literature. They were recorded in the Mendeley data manager, in coded folders for easy location. Responses were coded by gender and age, recording links with the date each interview was conducted.

3. Results

The category “Identity of university professors” was divided into three main subcategories: “Personal identity”, “Social identity” and “Professional identity”. After analyzing the life histories and developing the interviews with the key participants, the results of each subcategory are shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

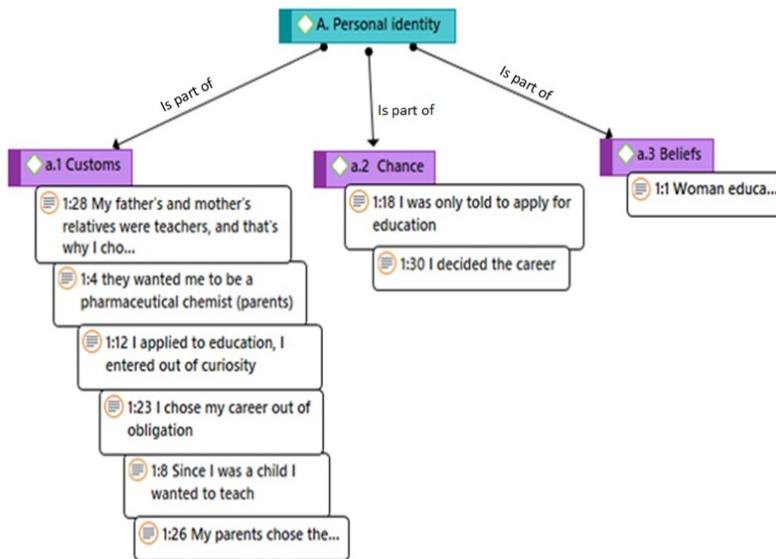


Figure 1: Personal identity

Figure 1 shows the subcategory “Personal identity” (A), which is distributed in three emerging subcategories: “Habits” (a.1), “Opportunities” (a.2) and “Beliefs” (a.3). These subcategories answer the question: What factors determined your career choice?

In the first emerging subcategory (a.1), it is visualized that the parents of the key participants chose the career of their youngest children (1:26; 1:28), believing that the lack of life experience makes them unable to choose a career that will pay them back financially and provide them with job stability.

In the second emergent subcategory (a.2), it is examined that the ingrained ideas of the past (1:30) for the socioeconomic standard were, nursing, education, secretarial, police and priest, depending on gender (1:1), a situation that is closely related to the third subcategory beliefs.

In the third emerging subcategory (a.3), it is observed that the beliefs were that, if you were a

woman, you had conditions or inclinations towards certain professional careers (1:1), becoming a topic of family discussion. The parents of the key participants come from the interior of the country.

These responses are consistent with the life histories of the key participants who expressed the close relationship with their parents and relatives, who in one way or another had an influence on the choice of career.

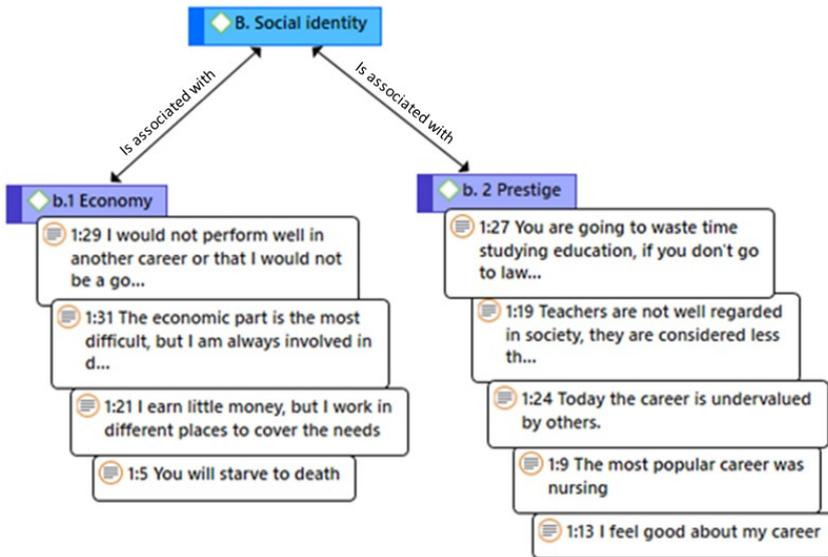


Figure 2: Social identity

Figure 2 shows the subcategory “Social identity” (B), which is distributed in two emerging subcategories: “Economy” (b.1) and “Prestige” (b.2). These emergent subcategories answer the question: What are the reasons for not choosing a career other than education?

In the first emerging subcategory (b.1), it is shown that the conception of moving away from the pre-established parameters of society leads to loss of time, endangering their future and to avoid the risk, they prefer to take away economic support for fear of failure (1:5) and the consequences are seen by their family environment because they work in different universities (1:21; 1:31).

In the second emerging subcategory (b.2), the prestige of the education career is visualized, it currently has a powerful influence on the formation of the student body; however, it continues to be devalued by those who do not understand the teaching process that involves among them many concrete actions and the practice of strategies for the development of skills. The results show that the education career has a lower level (1:27; 1:19; 1:24).

The life stories told by the key participants make us feel that, out of love and respect for their parents, they continued with the education career. After graduation, the salary expectations were different, so the need arose to continue to improve their education with a master's or doctorate degree. All the interviewees hold a doctorate in education.

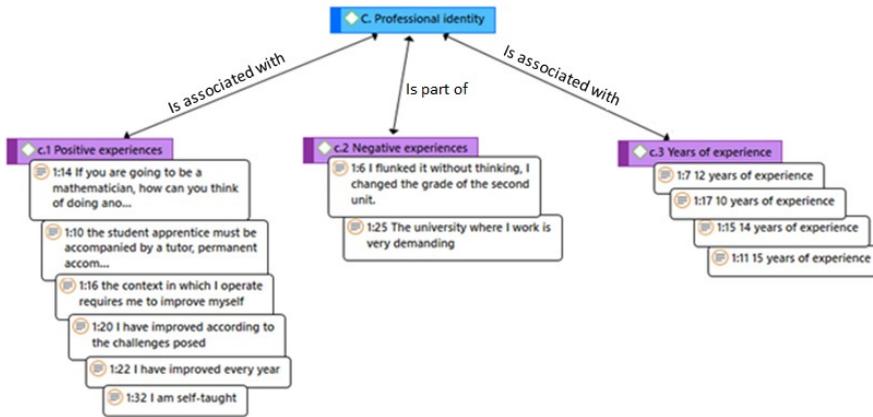


Figure 3: Professional identity

Figure 3 shows the subcategory “Professional identity” (C), distributed in three subcategories: “Positive experiences” (c.1), “Negative experiences” (c.2) and “Years of experience” (c.3). The emerging subcategories are answers to the question: Is forging a teaching identity a product of positive and negative experiences?

In the first emergent subcategory (c.1), it is visualized that academic training is essential to face emergent situations (1:14). In addition, the presence of the tutor or guide in the professional practices is highlighted, who must be present to accompany the formative stage, since there are aspects that are beyond the academic (1:10). Since the beginning of Covid-19, the teaching staff has been involved in teaching activities in a synchronous or asynchronous way, developing their own learning and using virtual media (1:32; 1:22; 1:20; 1:16).

Likewise, the negative experiences (c.2), make up the large identity group, because thanks to various circumstances, diverse profiles and learning were forged. One of the cases was learning to recognize the students with borderline intelligence, probably, in the basic educational levels, the parent is always present; but at the university level and behind a computer, the academic activity is complicated. Recognizing them and attending to them in time is a harsh reality that is not adequately realized (1:6; 1:25).

Finally, the years of experience (c.3) at the university level of the key participants, stand out before the improvement of teaching, perfecting their teaching strategies for their greater cultural background, becoming scholars of a subject, but always looking for the improvement of the student body (1:7; 1:17; 1:15; 1:11).

The life stories are the perfect complement in this section, since they allowed understanding the university faculty, in relation to the forging of professional identity. The positive experiences transcend to the student body, in the dedication to teaching, guidance and permanent tutoring of the assigned group.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the interviews and the analysis of the life histories, it is clear that the choice of the education career was through the family environment, parents or relatives who practiced the career (1:23), coinciding in part with the motivational dimensions for choosing a professional career (Araya-Pizarro, 2019). An emerging category is the feminization that associates, the education career with the female gender (González Alba et al., 2021), results that partly coincide with derivations of the identity of teachers in initial training (Delgado-García & De La O Toscano Cruz, 2021).

The education career does not enjoy the prestige of other careers, which is evident in the salary received by university professors. When choosing the career, they were aware that the educational system, with its public policies, was not going to provide them with all the comforts, but despite this, they have continued to improve themselves as part of their professional commitment (García-Huidobro Munita & Ferrada-Sullivan, 2020; Tejada González, 2005).

Positive or negative life experiences, stand out in the exercise of the professional career, being necessary the permanent accompaniment (1:10) to improve teaching competencies (Andreucci-Annunziata & Morales Cabello, 2020; Falcón Linares & Arraiz Pérez, 2020; Martín Cuadrado et al., 2021; Paredes-Labra & Melgar, 2021; San Martín Cantero et al., 2021), to avoid negative experiences (1:25), which finally harm the professional with adverse side effects (Marcelo García et al., 2021). Situations presented in the student body with low cognitive ability or at the limit, which are not easily recognized, therefore, the faculty is in permanent updating (Montero & Gewerc, 2018).

The key participants have on average more than 10 years and less than 16 years of experience (1:7; 1:11; 1:15; 1:17), as stated by research that indicates that teachers with more than 10 years of experience are qualified as outstanding, competent and knowledgeable of the subject (Lizasoain, 2021), coinciding with research where it is highlighted that experience is built over time and permanently (Achilie Valencia et al., 2020; Madueño & Márquez, 2020; Villegas-Torres & Lengeling, 2021). In addition, teachers face the new challenge of virtuality, where they bring out their identity (Gajardo-Asbún et al., 2020). These statements highlight the work with professionalism and generate perseverance and continuous improvement in the student body.

In this regard, it can be said that university professors have a direct influence on the students who are forming their professional careers. The experiences and the baggage of knowledge are a source of inspiration to the new generation, being necessary the continuous updating and specialization. The key participants have university experience of 10 to 15 years and their chronological age averages 50 years, who recognize that they are at the forefront, but they still have much to learn. It should be noted that university teachers perceive that they have few skills in the use of technology, which are surpassed by students, who have greater access to information, but few are interested in understanding it. In addition, the academic training of 30 years ago differs from today, but there are still unchanged values that they are unable to understand, such as punctuality, democracy and solidarity that teachers try to transmit through the virtual environment.

The sample selection was carefully conducted to ensure representativeness. We employed specific criteria based on age, gender, and relevant characteristics. This allowed us to capture a range of perspectives and experiences within our chosen group. Regarding the research focus and context, our study aimed to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals in a specific context. By employing qualitative research methods, we sought in-depth insights and rich descriptions that could shed light on the nuances of the phenomenon under investigation. In such cases, a smaller sample size can be sufficient to achieve research goals and provide valuable qualitative data.

It is important to note that our study reached data saturation within the sample size of 10 participants. Data saturation occurs when additional participants no longer provide new insights or information relevant to the research question. This indicates that we achieved a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and ensures the trustworthiness and generalizability of our findings within the chosen context. While acknowledging the limitations of generalizability due to the small sample size, it is worth mentioning that our study contributes valuable insights to the existing knowledge in the field. We have contextualized our findings within the relevant literature and have observed similar patterns and trends reported in prior research with comparable sample sizes.

Finally, in correlation with the testimonies, identity is redefined as a construction for awareness, development of specialized competencies, and use of technology, innovation and creativity. Likewise, it is important to include permanent research, academic production to face a highly competitive educational system at a global level, since the work performed brings with it, recognition and

satisfaction for the actions developed. Likewise, the study of age was a limiting factor in redefining the concept of identity, to broaden this concept, it is necessary to include professionals of different ages. Therefore, further research on university professors and the multimodality inherent in reconstructed dialogues, comparing age and gender, is suggested (Gallucci, 2021).

The study provides valuable insights into the redefinition of university faculty identity and the challenges faced by education professionals in meeting the needs and demands of students. This understanding can inform educational institutions and policymakers in developing strategies and interventions to support faculty members in their roles.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the value of reflection and self-awareness among education professionals. By engaging in the process of sharing life stories and reflecting on their experiences, faculty members can gain valuable insights into their own identities and practices. This can lead to personal and professional growth and improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

As for the limitations of the study, such as the small sample size and contextual specificity, underscore the need for further research in this area. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples, including participants from different contexts and disciplines, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of university faculty identity and its implications for practice.

5. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

5.1 Author Contributions

All authors listed have equally contributed to the work and approved it for publication.

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