

The teaching option in Pedagogy students: analysis of their funds of knowledge and identity


La opción docente en estudiantes de pedagogía: análisis de sus fondos de conocimiento e identidad

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Background

Education in Chile faces significant challenges requiring qualified and committed professionals to ensure educational excellence. The systematic decline in student enrollments and a diminishing interest in pursuing teaching careers will result in a shortage of educators by 2025. Therefore, there is a need to advance educational policies that address alternative avenues of recruitment and selection aimed at identifying vocational interest in pedagogy and a commitment to contributing to educational transformation. It is crucial to advance in strengthening professional identity and valuing the teaching profession.

Aims

This research aims to explore and acknowledge the spheres of influence that drive students -specifically those enrolled in Primary Teaching Pedagogy- to choose teaching from the perspective of funds of knowledge and identity.

Method & procedures

The study was designed employing a descriptive, qualitative, and interpretive research approach framed within a socio-constructivist perspective. Combining two techniques from the multi-methodology of the extended autobiographical approach ensures a comprehensive understanding and exploration of identity through the students' voices without pursuing the generalization of findings. We employed intentional sampling, considering the homogeneity of the programs as well as their location in the Araucanía Region. The corpus comprises 1,275 minutes of interviews involving 22 first-year students enrolled in the Primary teaching programme at two universities affiliated with the Consejo de Rectores de Universidades Chilenas (CRUCH). The students voluntarily agreed to participate in the study; pseudonyms were assigned to them and numbers to the universities to safeguard confidentiality. To conduct the semi-structured interviews, we requested to first represent in the "Significant Circle" the activities, places, and individuals relevant to their career choice. We conducted a process of theoretical coding, following the construct of Funds of Knowledge and Identity proposed by Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014). This construct was operationalized into five dimensions: geographic funds of identity, practical funds of identity, cultural funds of identity, social funds of identity, and institutional funds of identity. Afterwards, we conducted a content analysis based on the construction of codes and subcodes, which we analyzed using the Dedoose software for qualitative studies.

Results & discussion

In the Significant Circle, we identified the spaces, contexts, and practices that influenced the participants' decision to choose pedagogy as a career. We found that social funds of identity are the subcode most frequently mentioned in identifying the relevant individuals for opting for teaching, followed by practical, institutional and cultural funds, where we recognized the cultural knowledge and values of family upbringing practices. The subcode with the lowest frequency corresponds to geographic funds of identity, which mention specific places related to vocational choice.

Conclusion

From the perspective of Funds of Knowledge and Identity (FdC/I) is possible to recognize the visions and dialogues that emerge around identity construction in the choice of teaching. It implies acknowledging the experiences and cultural practices that students bring with them from their family, social, and cultural environments and how they contribute to constructing their identity as individuals and future teachers. Indeed, students initiate their professional development with clarity and understanding of their role in society and how to contribute to education. It allows them to reflect and establish a meaningful connection with their profession by recognizing how their circles of influence are linked to their career choice. On the other side, institutions such as churches, schools, and other social organizations, whose connection with the community can play a crucial role in shaping values, beliefs, and motivations to face the challenges of the profession. In this sense, it is necessary to assume that the manners of teaching and training teachers can be diverse, and can challenge our educational system due to its homogenizing nature. Therefore, it is imperative to reconsider teaching training programs from the diversity of their participants, trainers, contexts, and educational approaches, where each student has the space to build their unique teaching style and incorporate their experiences into training and the curriculum. Including FdC/I in initial teacher training programs would allow the recognition and appreciation of diversity, promote intercultural education, increase pedagogical relevance, and strengthen the identity and vocation of future teachers. It could constitute an initial step towards eventually incorporating students' FdC/I into teaching practices in schools, thus promoting their participation.

Keywords: funds of knowledge and identity, initial teacher training, primary education pedagogy, significant circle

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