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A Teacher's Personal-Emotional Identity and its Reflection upon the Development of his Professional Identity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to show how the professional identity of a teacher is built upon personal and emotional traits. Those traits determine his willingness to blur the emotional distance between teacher and student, thus shaping school as a fuller environment. The study revolves around three issues: (a) knowing and acknowledging students; (b) sensitivity towards the use of students' proper names; and (c) positive sense of humour in the classroom. On the understanding that teaching identities may be interpreted from a narrative approach, autobiographical research will support our study. The conclusion is that a teacher's professional identity is highly influenced by his emotional identity.

Keywords

Life History, Teaching Awareness, Class Diary, Pedagogical Humour

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A Teacher's Personal-Emotional Identity and its Reflection upon the Development of his Professional Identity

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The purpose of this study was to show how the professional identity of a teacher is built upon personal and emotional traits. Those traits determine his willingness to blur the emotional distance between teacher and student, thus shaping school as a fuller environment. The study revolves around three issues: (a) knowing and acknowledging students; (b) sensitivity towards the use of students' proper names; and (c) positive sense of humour in the classroom. On the understanding that teaching identities may be interpreted from a narrative approach, autobiographical research will support our study. The conclusion is that a teacher's professional identity is highly influenced by his emotional identity. Keywords: Life History, Teaching Awareness, Class Diary, Pedagogical Humour

Factors encouraging the creation of safe spaces in the classroom (Merieu, 2004) as well as an affective, motivating and conversational teaching/learning process, include those related to the enhancement of positive emotions among the students, not only because such ties strengthen a supportive learning environment (Evans, 2004; González-Calvo & Fernández-Balboa, 2016; González Calvo et al., 2014), favour the inclusion of students with special needs (Rutherford, 2016), and help solve serious situations such as bullying (Jungert, Piroddi, & Thornberg, 2016); but, also, because they are essential for the professional development and identity of teachers (Brooke, 1994; González-Calvo & Fernández-Balboa, 2016).

Education researchers claim that education policies and curriculum act as powerful discursive resources which define qualified and professional practice (Gerrard & Farrell, 2014). In spite of this, a teacher's perspective focused on technical skills and centred on what they best control is not sufficient. Teaching must consider personal aspects such as: enthusiasm, flexibility, affection, humour, honesty and sensitivity, among others (Hen & Sharavi-Nov, 2014; Yan, Evans, & Harvey, 2013).

In this sense, the central argument of our study explores the role of personal and emotional identity in teaching, because it is known that teaching is an emotional practice (Fried, Mansfield, & Dobozy, 2015) and becoming a teacher is an emotional experience (Karlsson, 2013), mainly because teaching is a social practice.

As far as we know, there are no academic studies focused on the connection between novice teachers' identity and their personal and professional identity. This fact alone could justify the present research as long as it expands the boundaries of knowledge and pays attention to (and raises) new questions in the field. Moreover, as this study shows, personal identity relationships have the potential to impact, either positively or negatively, on teachers' professional identities, especially at the early stages of their professional development, when teachers' socialization is still being constructed and, therefore, teachers are most vulnerable. This is another important reason for studying this connection.

Teacher's Personal and Professional Identity

Identity refers to who or what someone is, and teacher identity is well acknowledged to play a significant role in teacher development (Izadinia, 2015; Stenberg, Karlsson, Pitkaniemi, & Maaranen, 2014). Many researchers share a common notion that identity is a changing, active process and that teacher identity is influenced by a range of external experiences, such as life experiences (Flores & Day, 2006), and internal experiences, such as emotions and personal factors (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). According to Sachs (2005), teacher identity “provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of how to be, how to act and how to understand their work and their place in society” (p. 15). Thus, the teacher self is constructed through the social interactions that teachers have in a particular social, cultural, historical and institutional context, so the search for understanding personal identity involves the connection of emotion with self-knowledge. Therefore, not only the consideration of the relationships is important for an understanding of teacher emotions, but also cultural, relational and institutional aspects need to be taken into account (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

Teacher identity is the result of a progressing dialog with students, parents and colleagues. In other words, it is constructed through the interaction between their personal experiences and the social, cultural and institutional environment (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). In this sense, teachers' emotional and professional identities are essential as they are believed to strongly determine teachers' professional development, in terms of how they teach, how they interact with their pupils and how they approach educational changes (Yan et al., 2013).

So, it is important that teachers identify how their emotions inform the ways that their feelings increase or limit possibilities in their teaching, and how these emotions enable them to think and act differently, because they play a key role in the construction of teaching identity (Fried et al., 2015).

For all these reasons, it is necessary to study teacher's emotional experiences and identities, because teaching is not just a technical enterprise, but is inseparably connected to teachers' personal lives (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). As Shapiro (2009) states, through the expression of emotional identity, teachers can develop greater reflexivity, stronger solidarity and bigger sensitivity toward their students.

Emotional and teaching identities does not mean belonging, but instead they are something that one has or has not. They are something multiple and shifting that means a series of needs, values, experiences, feelings and capacities built along the individual personal and professional experience, creating a sense of identity (Korthagen, 2010).

Narrative inquiry in our study aims at getting full comprehension of the development of the teacher's personal and professional identities. Through this life history we approach his reality, studying the manner in which the teacher experiences and interprets it. This method compromises the particularity, symbolism and context of the story voiced here. Only thus, will we be in a position to understand the teacher's personal traits and the place and importance achieved by his profession.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were answer two principal questions: (a) In what ways is the teacher's practice and professional identity determined by his personal and emotional experience? and (b) How can teaching identity be built and understood through autobiographies?

Methodology Participants

The participant in this study was a novice PE teacher in public Primary and Secondary Education. His narrative interest began during his initial professional training, where he was asked to examine his “subjective warrant” as a PE teacher (Dewar & Lawson, 1984). He did so by writing a detailed autobiographical account that, besides merely capturing the main antecedents and reasons for wanting to teach PE, also enabled him to analyse crucial educational issues, such as prejudice, fear, feelings, values, choices, and expectations, and professional relationships. As a result of this initial autobiographical exploration, the participant realized the usefulness of deeply engaging in bio-pedagogical praxis (Fernández-Balboa, 2009). Upon getting his first teaching job, he committed to writing a long-term diary in order to record and examine his professional experiences and his own professional “self.”

In 2006, having completed his degree in PE’s Primary Education, he undertook a second Degree in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences (for Secondary Education). Once completed, in 2009, he passed the qualifying exams for public school teaching in Primary Education and obtained his first position as a substitute teacher during the academic year 2009-2010. Also, that year, he started his Ph.D., which he completed in 2013. In 2010, he also passed the qualifying exams for public school teaching in Secondary Education and obtained a job as a substitute high school teacher for the academic year 2010/2011. In 2011, he accessed a permanent post at a public primary school. Also, since 2010/2011 to the present, he has worked intermittently as a university part-time Junior Lecturer and researcher. He is one of the co-authors of the present article.

Although, due to his Ph.D. degree, the participant may be seen as an outlier with regards to the majority of beginning PE teachers, it may be noticed that 4/5 of the data were gathered by the participant before obtaining his doctorate. His journaling stemmed from an early interest in studying and improving his own teaching much before the actual starting of this study. Therefore, it can be said that while the Ph.D., did provide the participant with a better array of intellectual, methodological, and epistemological skills for undertaking this research study (in terms of constructing the study’s conceptual framework, design, and trustworthiness procedures), during most of the process of data collection and in terms of relating with families/guardians, he fitted the profile of a beginning teacher with the typical “induction shock” symptoms, struggles, tribulations, and concerns of this developmental stage (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1999). It is relevant to point out that the teacher spent most of his school years in a private, religious school, which had a negative, adverse effect which marked him deeply. The teachers’ poor implication, as well as the dismissive attitude showed by them, resulted in his lack of interest for education. Despite his eagerness to learn, read and understand, as a child, he remembers school as leading him to apathy. He wouldn’t regain his curiosity until university. It is then when his past experience motivates him to using a different teaching methodology, centered on showing interest towards the students through the implication of teachers and the communication of values such as equality and respects.

Data Collection

The data in this study emerged from a longitudinal (self-)reflective teaching diary kept by the participant over. The investigation compiles the following diaries: Practicum (year 2005/2006), Primary (P) (years 2009/2010, 2011/2012), Secondary (S) (year 2010/2011).

Teaching diaries are useful methodological tools for teachers in order to stimulate their critical, reflective processes and help them broaden their perspectives regarding the myriad of factors and events in classrooms (González-Calvo & Fernández-Balboa, 2016). Diaries also contribute to deepening teachers’ analysis of their own professional identity (González-Calvo

& Barba, 2014). Furthermore, researchers tell us that the construction and theorizing of professional identity is positively influenced by longitudinal (self-)reflective narratives, especially when adopting a critical perspective (Fletcher & Temertzoglou, 2010). In this sense, this reflective tool can be considered as an important constituent of participant's professional identity formation (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

Life story has also been used as a way to collect and organise data, and mainly, to make it meaningful. The study of teachers' narratives is, in the last years, being seen as essential to understand the teachers' thinking, culture and behavior (Craig, 2014). In this context, the use of life story and narratives are a powerful tool for teachers' professional growth and can improve teachers' self-understanding and social-emotional competencies (Pérez-Valverde & Ruiz-Cecilia, 2014).

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed several stages. First, the diaries were subject to a double process of content and categorical analyses regarding the (a) factors that either enhanced or hindered teacher-family relationships, and (b) aspects concerning the effects of such patterns on the participant's professional identity (Riessman, 2008; Sparkes & Partington, 2003). According to Polkinghorne (1995), these analyses can be carried out inductively (i.e., by allowing units of data to logically emerge from the narrative sources) and/or deductively (i.e., by departing from category systems previously established in the literature). In this study, both processes were applied.

Once these factors and aspects were identified, data underwent a second round of longitudinal analysis in order to identify: (a) changes both in the relationships and in the participant's identity; and (b) the possible roots of such changes. All the analyses rounds finished after reaching "saturation" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

In order to avoid bias in the selection and classification of the data; provide logic and coherence to the analysis; uphold ethical research standards; and reach credible, reliable, and transferable results and conclusions, the researchers sought the advice from another qualitative research expert (Riessman, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

Threats to Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data collection process was achieved through: (a) the depth and length of data collection; (b) peer debriefing; and (c) an audit trail. Above, we have already commented on the depth and length of data collection. As per the other two strategies, peer debriefing was jointly undertaken among the participant-researcher, the second co-author, and a third external research auditor (the last two with more than twenty years of experience in qualitative methodology) in an effort to bring a different combination of subjective knowledge skills so as to facilitate the examination of methodological process, generate feedback concerning the accuracy and completeness of the data collection and analysis, and enhance the credibility of the study. As for the audit trail, it was used in order to establish research confirmability and quality. It consisted of: (a) a "physical audit trail" (i.e., describing the research process, dating and categorizing all the diaries written over five years, and making available to interested parties the reduction and analysis notes and materials related to the researchers' intentions and dispositions); and (b) of an "intellectual audit trail" that assisted the researchers in reflecting on how their thinking evolved throughout all the stages of the study (see Carcary, 2009, p. 16).

These methodological strategies enhanced the data's coherence, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, 2009; Riessman, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

Results

This study reveals three sets of factors affecting the relationships between the personal and professional identity. They also reveal two distinct phases of development of the teacher's professional identity: the first one, during his years as a student, characterized by conflict, doubt and disenchant; and the second one, as a teacher, marked by a positive, expectant and successful shift in enhancing a positive attitude towards learning and creating an environment of mutual trust, worried principally about three key issues, used here as the three categories for the investigation: (a) sensitivity toward the students' (re)cognition; (b) sensitivity towards the use of students' proper names; and (c) a (good) sense of humour as a teaching tool.

Sensitivity Toward the Students' (Re) Cognition

Although institutions enforce other priorities, teaching is not merely a rational profession, but also a fully emotional and bonding activity (Fried et al., 2015). Teachers learn to internalize the roles assigned to them by school culture all throughout their own experiences as students. Despite that, knowing and approaching each student's singularities and circumstances is indispensable for our teacher who, at this present moment, aims at dealing with them not only as learners, but also, and primarily, as people. This requires being able to avoid prejudice, because the moment a teacher gains a first impression of their students, or gets previous information about them, he will tend to deal with them according to this first impression, while the students will try to meet the teacher's expectations. Therefore, the best way to know and acknowledge the students is to avoid other teachers' suspicion and give them a chance of being treated according to what they are like. This is something our teacher is aware of during his training:

Our tutor focused on the most troublesome students, those we must be more careful with. I have not paid much attention to her. I do not want to feel constrained in class. I want to get to know the students by myself. (Practicum Logbook. January 2005)

This quote holds another key to many of the direct factors that negatively affect the relationships between the teachers and the students: sometimes the initial stages of the teachers' practice are contaminated by prejudices regarding students, a fact that hinders the establishment of an appropriate pedagogical atmosphere.

The first time as temporary teacher in Primary Education, he insists on getting first-hand knowledge of his students, convinced that each person has the right to start anew, to break away from the moulds we have built over time:

I would be a poor professional if I followed the opinions of others, without giving people a chance to show themselves as they are, to be fully understood. (P. September 2009)

Be it as it may, there is no denying that a crucial factor in the relationships' success between the participant and the students was his commitment and persistence in critically

analyzing his own beliefs and actions, while never giving up on his attempts to establish relationships based on mutual trust between the teacher and the students.

Even though the teacher does not want to be carried away by other teachers' beliefs, his perspective leads him to "a defence of teaching as an individual enterprise, rather than a collective action useful for every teacher" (P. September 2009).

When moving from Primary to Secondary School, our teacher remembers the advice given by other teachers and relatives about the necessity of appearing tough before students. These recommendations often respond to the image of youth provided by mass media-associated with insubordination, violence and mockery of the teaching profession. These ideas began to materialize on the first days in Secondary School:

I had been told about disrespectful teenagers who, at the earliest opportunity, rise up against the teacher (...) Even though I would not like to become authoritarian, today I imagined myself acting that way in order to lay the foundations of the student-teacher relationship. (S. September 2010)

This quote reflects how this situation gradually undermined the participant's self-confidence, both at a personal and professional level. This attitude led to feelings of fear and discomfort:

The students looked rude and loud-mouthed. I even had to face defiant looks. Ideas such as "What would I do if a student confronts me?" "how can I manage conflict situations?" come to mind (...). (S. September 2010)

Presuming such personal traits in the students made the teacher feel uncomfortable towards his work. Influenced not so much by his personal experience but rather by the professional culture, was becoming a hostile teacher, and distancing from the image of a close teacher who believed in people. Therefore, in fear of losing the control of the class, he adopted a friendlier attitude:

I started the lesson quite tense but, as time passed, I felt more and more at ease. I have made a big step forward in my relationship with the students. I hope they have seen me closer, more human and less bitter. (S. September, 2010)

This change in behaviour was due to a discussion with an older, more experienced colleague who made him believe another reality, more positive and hopeful, was possible.

My colleague encouraged me in this new experience in Secondary School. As a teacher, he is calm, though strict, always polite with students and, sometimes, even a little fatherly. I have witnessed how students like and admire him, so I imagine things can turn out good, despite my negativism. (S. September 2010)

This conversation not only changed his position regarding education, but also taught him a lesson: the stress suffered by the teacher, as a result of perceiving education as a daily battle against students, leads them to withdrawn from the experience. Thus, we must avoid seeing teaching as a war. That is, our educator believes that life as a teacher can be more rewarding if they establish and maintain a good relationship with the students. To enable this, it is essential to get the best possible knowledge of students, both academically and individually. Students must feel they are seen and respected by their own teachers. Consequently, on the premise that good interpersonal relationships may be built upon personal

factors, it becomes a teacher's daily duty to make students feel important, recognized and valued in class. In this sense, effective teaching and learning is necessarily affective.

Under this premise, the teacher becomes convinced that "life as a teacher can be more satisfactory if the relationship with the students is good and solid" (S. October, 2010).

To favour this acknowledgement, the teacher strengthens an equalitarian dialogue with his students, showing interest towards the different perspectives, values and behaviour among the students. Therefore, he can emphasize equality and dignity of students in the classroom.

A trust-based dialogue allows the students the chance to release feelings of anguish and expressing their emotions. I can ultimately reveal my will to help and accept students despite their problems. In this way, equality and dignity are acknowledged inside the classroom. (S. November, 2010)

A strong teaching vocation and high motivation levels are important ingredients of success and yet, these are not always sufficient for young educators to overcome the difficulties they encounter in their initial phase of professional induction. Thus, a socio-critical aspect of the teacher's professional identity is set up. He shows a great disposition to listen to the students and favours a democratic, participative and committed education. An aspect which allows the students and the teachers to explore, investigate, question, act and reflect in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Sensitivity Towards the Importance of Using Students' Names

Van Manen (2008) says that "every student needs to be observed, noted. To be noted is to be known" (p. 37). For a student to be known and observed, it is essential that the teacher uses their names. In fact, our educator understands that the name gives an identity, something which links us to space and time, and also to a set of relationships that help us build this personal identity.

For our teacher, school remembrances bring back bitter memories of a time when the teachers did not notice him, as if he were someone totally alien and different, whose name was not even worth remembering:

The teacher would always call me by a wrong name to ask me come to the blackboard. On one occasion, I remained in my seat, unfazed, and when he asked me again, I told him this was not my name. He replied he did not mind, and asked me to immediately go up to the blackboard. I did mind which name he used, but did not insist. (Life history)

On other occasions, some teacher's disdainful attitude resulted in a lack of interest for school in general and the subject they taught in particular:

There was a teacher who would always call me, contemptuously, "the next." At that time I was very interested in the subject he taught, Philosophy, and even considered the idea of taking this University degree. However, this teacher's attitude made me abandon the idea. (Life history)

These quotes show that mistaken expectations placed upon the students lead to unnecessary tensions, affect negatively the student's personal identity and cause demotivation.

School curriculum is an essential part of the educators' job (Gerrard & Farrell, 2014), which makes them focus, almost exclusively, on making students learn the most in an effective

way (Chan & Ross, 2014), but which can lead them to go unnoticed in class. This is the situation our teacher undergoes as a student, what makes him convinced that regulating the pedagogical practice only on the basis of politic and curricular decisions cannot possible guarantee learning. There must be room for other type of ethical, moral and emotional reflections that will shape his professional identity.

I am aware that teachers' socialization tends to favour effectiveness rather than emotions and bonds. However, I clearly remember when, for the teachers, I was just an "invisible student," some nameless body. Therefore, I do not want to focus exclusively on the curriculum. I know very well that schools today demand teachers who are strict and reflective, but also able to offer the students their best, ensuring a secure learning environment characterized by acceptance, respect, warmth and empathy. To achieve this, it is essential to get to know each student truly. (P. November 2009)

These early experiences of educational failure are the source of a powerful conviction:

I want to become a teacher but, above all, I want to be a different teacher. I want the students to enjoy different experiences from the ones I had. (Life history)

For our educator, the teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and practice of social and emotional skills in order to achieve the kind of balance that encourages all students to learn, work and reach their fullest potential. In this sense, our educator thinks that "students tend to have a lower perception of those teachers who do not know them" (S. January 2011).

For the educator, learning his students' names is the first responsibility in knowing who they are:

Calling students by their names involves respect, helps them feel recognized as somebody important to me, and helps to include all students—even shy students—in class routines. [...] calling them by their names means that, when learning, we are all together. (P. September 2009)

Within the context of the Spanish school system, being the tutor of a group strengthens the relationship between the teacher and the students, thus enhancing the teaching-learning process. These students' names are more easily remembered. However, learning them all is a difficult task and some kind of challenge before the class:

On the way to the gymnasium, I greet the students by their names. I know only a few, but I want to learn them all as soon as possible. I have promised my students that I would have learnt all their names by the end of the week. (S. September 2010)

Paradoxically, the names of troublesome students are easier to remember, whereas well-behaved students are less visible. This supports Van Manen's idea (2008) that the quiet, easy student, might be deprived of the teacher's care for a long time:

There are still some names I cannot easily remember, mostly those of well-behaved students. I already know the noisiest ones, but it is still difficult for me not to mix up some other students' names and faces. (S. September 2010)

Our teacher puts into practice several strategies to remember names, understanding that all the students deserve an equal treatment. Otherwise the teacher's honesty could be questioned and the relationship with the students may become ineffective:

I do not want them to believe that, because I know some names and not others, I have got my favourites. I would not like to be the kind of teacher who shows preference for some students. (S. September 2010)

Verifying that emotions enable a better teacher-student communication implies an approach to students which is not always easy:

Today, during the break, I addressed a student and asked her name. She immediately got defensive, as if she thought she had done something wrong. I explained that I just wanted to remember her name, but she did not look convinced. (S. September 2010)

At present, the teacher reasserts the importance of names as the first thing we learnt about the people we daily interact with; it is their first sign of identity, as well as a personal, sincere way of approaching the other. As the unique word that identifies us, it defines us and makes us stand out. The name is our letter of introduction in such a way that, when the teacher pronounces it, he rescues us from oblivion. When this happens, the students' faces illuminate: the teacher cares about them and gives them what they are looking for: recognition. A teacher who knows their students' names shows, not only that he knows them, but also that he recognizes them, tells them apart from others and allows them to enter into his personal realm.

A (Good) Sense of Humour as a Teaching Tool

Various investigations note that a sense of humour favours the relationship with the students, improves communication, reinforces the students' focus and interest, and even improves their outcomes (Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Liu, 2011; Hackathorn, Garczynski, Blankmeyer, Tennial, & Solomon, 2011; Wanzer, Frymier, & Irwin, 2010). Despite the evidence, given the emphasis on academic excellence and intellectual performance, speaking out in favour of the use of humour as potential activator of the teaching-learning process, might seem out of proportion. In fact, it is not unusual to place teaching within a serious, formal framework, under the premise that, otherwise, the school would be encouraging immature attitudes and teachers' inefficiency as educators (Garner, 2006).

Our teacher's intention on using humour is not to avoid boredom, but rather to stimulate the students' interest while, at the same time, forging closer interpersonal links. However, at the beginning of his career, overwhelmed by the necessity of maintaining classroom discipline, he looks cautious when showing his feelings:

I was surprised when a student asked me: "Why is it that you never laugh?" I asked her if she really thought I never laughed, and she replied that she had never seen me. I was worried. I wanted to appear as a happy teacher and, apparently, I was not giving that image. (P. September 2009)

A similar situation takes place during his experience in Secondary School:

One of the students started dancing in a very comical way, so I could not help laughing out loud. I listened to them whispering "he has laughed." I asked them

what was so strange about that. The most daring student said it was almost like a miracle. (S. November 2010)

The students themselves make him become aware of this reality, so that he tries to change his attitude in order to transmit this idea of a cheerful teacher, pleased with his work. This step forward requires sufficient self-confidence as to truly show oneself.

The change in my attitude has had consequences, not only in my teaching, but also in me as a person. [...]. It is really worth learning in an environment where humour can find a place. (S. May 2011)

Using humour in class requires approaching and getting to know the students well. This entails a previous working plan which must include a thorough analysis of what happens in the classroom, so as to be coherent with it.

Humour in the class must be handled carefully. I only use it when there is an atmosphere of mutual trust. I must approach them carefully, listen to them attentively, and show respect, so that they feel each of them counts and matters. When the relationship teacher-student is strong enough, I feel comfortable to use humour as a resource. (S. December 2010)

Additionally, the teacher is aware that humour must involve a comfortable, honest relationship for him and for the students too. According to him, “smiling to a pupil when you do not feel like doing it, generates a fake feeling; and the problem is that the pupil perceives this truth easily” (S. January 2011). Therefore, he understands that using humour as part of the teaching-learning process does not mean telling jokes constantly:

I do not intend to force comic situations, but just to tell anecdotes, connected to what we are talking about, that they may find amusing. (P. January, 2011)

As well, our teacher knows that there is humour that works and humour that doesn't work, that is, humour is not either positive or negative. Our teacher aims at using humour positively. It seems clear that, as Huss (2008) suggests, one must use healthy humour, not just to make students laugh, and obviously, not in the least liable to make others feel offended. On the other hand, destructive humour requires the use of intelligence to harm and destroy confidence. It is precisely this destructive humour, cruel and disdainful, that our teacher remembers from his days as a student:

I remember some teachers who had a cruel and harmful sense of humour, especially one who constantly humiliated and insulted us before the whole class. Students were afraid of him. (Life history)

These experiences proved that not all teachers are prepared to introduce humour in the class. Those less sure of themselves, who tend to consider the laughter of children as a way of defying their authority, risk using humour in a negative way, thus undermining the students' self-esteem. McCourt (2009) explains this wonderfully:

My teacher jokingly said that I looked scruffy [...] when my classmates laughed, I hated them all. I also hated the teacher, because I knew that, from that moment on, I would be known as *scruffy*. (p. 38)

As a Primary Teacher, he witnesses a similar situation:

One of the most polite students has been very restless, even threatening some of his classmates. He told me that the rest had laughed at him because the teacher had told him that, with a spot on his nose, he looked like a clown. (P. March, 2010)

Humour in the classroom also works as a social lubricant. It releases tension, eases communication with the students and facilitates the establishment of wider social networks (Dziegielewski, Jacinto, Laudadio, & Legg-Rodriguez, 2003):

In the moments where we laugh together is when I really feel I connect with the students. I feel close to them. Laughter improves interpersonal relationships and makes me feel a more affective and effective teacher. (S. March 2011)

It is not so much a question of humour being a miracle against all the failures, but rather of using it to abandon the traditional way of looking at things and adopting a wider perspective that allows us to question the seriousness in them. For our teacher, “laughter and humour are compatible with fear and sadness; and to laugh one must overcome those feelings” (S. June 2011).

Discussion

This article explored the interrelationships between personal and emotional factors and the development of professional teaching identity. For our teacher, the professional identity means adjusting the development of the different phases undergone: first as a student, then as a teacher student, and finally, as a teacher. More specifically, the paper used narratives where the teacher explains how he fits in the system and among students, with the idea of exploring and making sense of the emotional factors of his work throughout his first years of profession.

Regarding our first question (In what ways is the teacher’s practice and professional identity determined by his personal and emotional experience?), the results of this study revealed that personal and emotional factors play an important role in the development of the professional identity, especially at the very beginning, being that a sensible moment. Bearing in mind the difficulty of talking about affection and emotions within our profession (Pennac, 2009), this article shows how the teacher’s identity is not only built through technical aspects of his profession. If the student does not feel loved and valued, then the pedagogical relationship is unreal and does not make teaching easy and pleasant. In this case, the early experiences of educational failure are significant from a pedagogical point of view. They awaken the educator’s desire to become a different teacher, one who can provide students with better educational experiences than the ones he had. According to Mishler (1999), the educator “grounds identity claims in early experience” (p. 49). In this sense, being a good teacher involves “remembering your earlier days as a student. To keep those memories of when you were in the classroom” (Logbook. June 2011). This idea reinforces Korthagen et al. (2006)’s conviction that *the way* one teaches has a higher impact on the students than *the what* one teaches.

The results are in accordance with the findings of González-Calvo et al. (2014) and González-Calvo and Fernández-Balboa (2016) who found that experiences and circumstances in the personal lives of teachers are intimately linked to the performance of their professional identity. Thereby, as a teacher gets a better knowledge of himself - remembering what and how

he has lived, defining his educational aspiration, his perspective on others and what he expects from them-teaching is then connected with what he feels and expects as an educator. For that reason, it seems fair that human relationships, honest attitudes and emotion, take part in the Curriculum training of teachers. This would enhance the sensitivity of teachers towards the emotional needs of students, thus respecting human dignity. In any case, we all build our history day after day, and, in the case of teachers, we are also responsible for building other people's history.

In fact, it has become clear how the teacher aims at creating a secure and a climate of trust, where students can expect acceptance, respect, and friendliness on the part of the teachers. An environment with room enough for emotion and feelings, where one can teach not only cognitive aspects, but rather those that constitute a person as a whole. For example, as we explained above, caring about learning the students' names gives our teacher credibility as a professional strongly committed with them (Roper, 2005). Besides, it improves the learning-teaching process (Carpenter, Fontanini, & Neiman, 2010). According to Pennac (2009), "a teacher calling you by your name is like a new awakening [...] a tiny instant in which the student may feel he, and no other, exists for me" (p. 115).

On the other hand, this study provides evidence of the social nature of teaching (Zembylas, 2003), considering teachers' emotions are dependent on the nature of the relationships established with their students and other social experiences. So, an important element of teachers' identities is linked to their experiences of school. Actually, the experiences that we have outlined, take on a different meaning for the teacher, approaching us to a full understanding of who he is, and where his acts, values, choices and ideas on education, come from (Izadinia, 2015). In other words, by exploring the development of emotions, acts and thoughts, teachers can return to emotional experiences that have been forgotten within themselves (Fried et al., 2015). In that sense, we have witnessed the teacher's concern to build trust, understanding and equality in the classroom, allowing every student to feel satisfied and proud of what they are. He thus becomes aware that learning has little interest if it does not result in a long-lasting influence on the students' way of thinking, feeling and acting.

At the same time, this study has verified that humour used with positive intentions contributes to creating a good classroom atmosphere (Meeus & Mahieu, 2009), provided it is used without offending anyone. Moreover, our study is in accordance with Torok et al. (2004), proving that an appropriate use of humour is liable to create a relaxed, playful and safe atmosphere in the classroom. That is, humour is a magic swivel that enables meaningful learning. In Van Manen words (2008), "the humour used by a cheerful teacher who strongly believes humour is important, benefits both the teacher and the child" (p. 209).

In this way, a teacher who knows how to manage his emotions can establish better relationships with students and, also, regulate their emotions in healthy ways that facilitate positive classroom outcomes (Kremenitzer & Miller, 2008; Williams, Childers, & Kemp, 2013). Although society asks teachers to be competent, dominant and emotionally stable, the relationship between the teacher and pupils is facilitated whenever they love and respect each other, and laugh together.

On the other hand, using students' names, while they use the teachers' name in return, as well as showing a sensitive attitude towards them, manifests empathy and promises sympathy. It is also an evidence for familiarity and trust, while holding everyone accountable for equating positions in the classroom and committing, honestly, to (re)cognizing what is special in every person (Carpenter et al., 2010; Van Manen, 2008).

As for our second question (How can teaching identity be built and understood by means of autobiographies?), we have seen how the narratives are an exceptional methodology for exploring emotions and teacher identity (Pérez-Valverde & Ruiz-Cecilia, 2014; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). If we want to understand the process of (re)construction's of an identity,

narratives are a great tool to explore the way discursive circumstances provide the building of a teacher's identity. Narrative inquiry is, then, in an important sense "doing" identity work (Pérez-Valverde & Ruiz-Cecilia, 2014)

According to Zembylas (2003), "it is impossible to discuss identity construction without considering the meanings of our experiences" (p. 223). In this sense, narrative inquiry has proved a useful tool to understand and reflect upon the teacher's educational and attitudinal patterns. This situation suggests that it is necessary to raise the awareness of teachers towards their critical thought, and to reawaken a professional identity oriented towards the sharing of ideas, experiences and new pedagogical actions, among others. Moreover, narratives have two ways: on the one hand, they make the teacher aware of his teaching practice; on the other hand, they require a wide perspective of the first years of teaching. Furthermore, in this case, the narratives are not limited to the teacher's own thoughts. Quite on the contrary, they start a dialogue with scientific literature.

So, these findings are relevant for teacher education. It is possible that, thanks to narratives, teachers and student teachers have the time and opportunities to reflect on issues which affect their work, such as their personal beliefs about the emotional nature of teaching. As well as, since these narrated school scenes, free from hierarchic and normative discourses, help to give a face and a heart to theories, making way for a more emotional pedagogy.

Conclusions

Teachers have clear perceptions about what *good teaching* is, based on their own previous experiences (Stenberg et al., 2014). This is mainly because learning to become a teacher is an emotional enterprise. The aim set out for this study was, then, to share how teacher's emotions can trigger self-transformation. Thus, our study clearly showed how the emotional identity of the teacher affects attitudes and practices regarding teaching and learning. Besides, beliefs and emotions influence the way in which a teacher defines aims, tasks, needs and problems. In other words, there is a strong influence of emotions in teaching and in the relationship with students based on the premise that, if a teacher wants to teach a subject, it is more important to know the student than the subject itself.

For this reason, this paper offers a different reading on teaching, which adds to our understanding of the effects between professional and emotional identity. Moreover, it also adds to the field of psychology and sociology of education, by demonstrating how the professional identity of a teacher is built upon personal and emotional traits. The results presented in this paper also warrant a continued concern for the discursive links between needs, values, experiences, feelings and capacities built along the individual personal and professional experience. These findings might offer alternative discursive resources and opportunities for helping to deconstruct and reconstruct traditional ways of teaching. Some of the ideas shared in this article may give teachers a chance to develop effective teaching qualities, and also, to search how emotions and personal identity are traced in their particular histories in different ways, therefore changing the hegemonic cultural, social and political structures around the school.

When considering the limitations of the current research, we must acknowledge that the personal and emotional factors described, as well as the ideas on education discussed in the article, are those of a particular individual. This fact could restrain the transferability of the study to a greater number of new teachers. On the other hand, emotional and personal teacher's beliefs about the teaching process play a basic role with regard to how he interprets information and experiences along his career. According to this study, the experiences lived as a student, determine the educator's pedagogical practice as a teacher, and put forward some important ethical dilemma inherent to this profession. Moreover, personal beliefs gain their potential from

personal experiences and, because of this subjectivity, beliefs are seldom open to criticism or assessment.

As a future research line, we will try to establish a link between the educator's professional identity and a gradual evolution of his personal and emotional identity. The close relationship between personal and professional aspects within a field like teaching seems relevant when it comes to understand the teacher's development of experiences, attitudes, satisfactions, perceptions and commitment with the profession.

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