### Teachers in training; post-pandemic challenges in the professional practice

## Docentes en formación; desafíos de la práctica profesional en la postpandemia

CHÁVEZ-ALBA, Romelia†\*, ORDÓÑEZ-SUÁREZ, Teresa, CHÁVEZ-ALBA, Enied Cuitláhuac†\* and MARTÍNEZ-ROCHA, Diana Itzel

Escuela Normal Superior Federal de Aguascalientes "Profr. José Santos Valdés" Escuela Normal de Atlacomulco "Profesora Evangelina alcántara Díaz"

ID 1st Author: Romelia, Chávez-Alba / CVU CONACYT ID: 587323

ID 1st Co-author: Teresa, Ordóñez-Suárez / ORC ID: 0000-0002-2137-3485, CVU CONACYT ID: 680401

ID 2<sup>nd</sup> Co-author: Enied Cuitláhuac, Chávez-Alba / ORC ID: 0000-0001-7847-1839

ID 3<sup>rd</sup> Co-author: Diana Itzel, Martínez-Rocha / ORC ID: 0000-0002-5975-4128

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**Abstract** 

### This work is significant because it systematizes the experiences of 20 students from the Normal in the first professional teaching practice journey, developed in the 8th semester of their teaching training. For its elaboration, the action research method was considered, whose phases and methodological operations were nourished with individually and collective contributions by the secondary school. Those inputs were compiled during the implementation of the programmed didactic situations, taking as a reference for its categorization the dimensions of teaching practice. Indicated by Fierro, Fortuol and Rosas (1999), by considering that teaching practice is a professional activity that involves a diverse and complex network of relationships between people, the educational relationship with students is, the fundamental link around which other relationships are established, when carried out within a social, economic, political and cultural context that influences them, determining demands and challenges, especially at this time, when the coronavirus pandemic SARS-CO-V2, has caused diverse dynamics and moods that significantly impacted in the development of teaching and learning processes.

# Professional teaching practice, Reflective teaching, Dimensions, Action research

#### Resumen

Este trabajo resulta significativo porque en él se sistematizan las experiencias vividas por 20 estudiantes normalistas en la primera jornada de práctica profesional docente desarrollada en el 8vo semestre de su formación. Para su elaboración se consideró el método de la investigación acción, cuyas fases y operaciones metodológicas fueron alimentadas con insumos que de manera individual y por escuela secundaria, se compilaron durante la implementación de las situaciones didácticas programadas, tomando como referencia para su categorización las dimensiones de la práctica docente, señaladas por Fierro, Fortuol y Rosas (1999), por considerar que la práctica docente es una actividad profesional que involucra una diversa y compleja trama de relaciones entre personas, siendo la relación educativa con los alumnos el vínculo fundamental alrededor del cual se establecen las otras al realizarse dentro de un contexto social, económico, político y cultural que la influye, determinando demandas y desafíos, sobre todo en este momento, cuando la pandemia del virus del SARS-CO-V2, ha provocado dinámicas diversas y estados de ánimo que impactan de manera significativa en el desarrollo de los procesos de enseñanza y de aprendizaje.

# Practica profesional docente, Enseñanza reflexiva, Dimensiones, Investigación acción

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<sup>\*</sup> Author Correspondence (E-mail: gmoncada@uadec.edu.mx)

<sup>†</sup> Researcher contributing as first author.

#### Introduction

#### Problem statement

Students in the 8th semester of the Bachelor's Degree in Teaching and Learning Spanish in Secondary School (LEAEES), are still developing the competences explicit in the graduate profile, especially those that refer to the professional and disciplinary field, in this sense the course "Service Learning", offers them multiple opportunities to achieve it, as long as they permanently deploy the attitudes suggested by Dewey (quoted by Liston, D. and Zeichner, 1993), for a reflective teaching; the first one referred to intellectual openness, that active desire to attend to more than one point of view, to pay attention to different possibilities and alternative, alternative and reflective teaching. and Zeichner, 1993), for reflective teaching; the first refers to intellectual openness, that active desire to attend to more than one point of view, to pay attention to different possibilities and alternatives, to ask themselves recurrently why they do what they do in class. The second refers to responsibility, which involves careful consideration of the consequences of the action they take, and the last, sincerity towards themselves and towards what the profession demands of them in real terms.

In this sense, the documentation of the experience lived by 20 students was carried out through inputs that were recovered both individually and by the secondary school, during the development of the professional practice days in the post-pandemic of SARS-CO-V<sub>2</sub>, because it is certain that these exercises will help them to develop the attitudes of reflective teaching, focusing their attention both on their own professional practice, and on the social conditions in which it develops and address the critical factors that are specific to their role.

#### Theoretical/referential framework

In this experience, the concept of teaching practice set out by Fierro, Fortuol and Rosas (1999), which alludes to a social, objective and intentional praxis, loaded with meanings, actions and knowledge, is emphasised as a fundamental reference point, which enables the development of teaching and learning processes in which teachers and students participate fundamentally in their role as subjects who intervene and interact, without leaving out other agents involved such as educational authorities, parents, curricular, political, institutional, administrative and normative elements.

Reference is also made to the concept of good teaching practices (Gazzo, 2020), understood as the set of actions carried out by the teacher to promote the learning of his or her students, to train them integrally and to favour complex cognitive processes. These good practices can become the main mechanisms that an education system has to achieve its goals.

The position of De Lella (1999, cited by García Cabrero, et al, 2008), by conceiving teaching practice as the action that the teacher carries out in the classroom<sup>1</sup>, especially referring to the process of teaching in order to provide students with the expected learning in accordance with the objectives and contents established in the curriculum, with the same premise that teaching is an activity carried out by a specialist who has knowledge of the disciplines he/she teaches, of his/her students and their learning processes, as well as of didactics, of the contexts, needs and conditions experienced by his/her students.

The fundamental referents of the study are the professional and disciplinary competences explicit in the graduate profile of the LEAEES, (SEP, 2018), the former referring to the type of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to exercise the teaching profession at the different educational levels,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It should be understood that, in post-pandemic times, when we speak of the classroom we are referring not only to the physical space in which the teaching and learning processes could take place, but also to the virtual spaces that are part of school life.

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The first ones refer to the type of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to exercise the teaching profession at different educational levels, delimited in the psychopedagogical, socio-educational and professional fields, while the second ones highlight the type of knowledge that each teacher needs to acquire in order to deal with the contents of the curriculum, its advances in the field of science, pedagogy and its didactics in the fields of academic training. At the same time, they define in a determined way the theoretical, heuristic and axiological knowledge proper to the speciality, discipline or field of attention in which the students will specialise.

In the specific case of the degree in Teaching and Learning Spanish, the subject of this study. The graduate profile states that students will use their knowledge of Spanish and its didactics to design learning situations according to the characteristics and contexts of the students with whom they carry out their professional practice, without losing sight of the didactic and pedagogical approach on which the teaching and learning of Mother Tongue (Spanish) in secondary school is based, In addition, using the Social Practices of Language (SLP) as the vehicle that will enable the achievement of the expected learning and the development of communicative skills, assuming the evaluation as a tool that allows monitoring the learning processes and its evolution as a future teacher. In this sense, Molini, J., & Sardi, M. G. (2022, p. 27) point out that "When evaluation is included in the deployment of the didactic proposal, it becomes formative, because it makes valuable contributions both for the teacher -who can readjust his or her teaching proposal- and for the students -who become aware of their learning".

It also requires the ability to manage collaborative and inclusive learning environments to foster the comprehensive development of students from the subject they teach, innovate in their teaching practice, act with civic, ethical and legal values and principles inherent to their social responsibility and their professional work with an intercultural and humanist perspective.

establishes that in It also their performance they must use their mother tongue appropriately and responsibly in order to be competent users, work to acquire mastery of the units of linguistic study that allows them to encourage reflection on the language in the students they teach. They must also develop the ability to organise thought, understand and produce oral and written discourse specific to the different SLPs, open up spaces to promote aesthetic appreciation and literary creation in the school community and in their environment, thus broadening their socio-cultural horizons and implement various projects to recognise, value and make ethical use of the linguistic and literary riches of their environment.

### Methodology

There were several reasons why the action research method was chosen to systematise the experience. The first of these is because it is considered to be an instrument that can generate social change and educational knowledge about the social and/or educational reality in which future teachers develop, giving them autonomy and power over their professional practice and the factors underlying it; it is participatory, following an introspective spiral; collaborative, creating self-critical communities of people who participate and collaborate in all phases of the research process; systematic learning process, induces it theorising about and tests practice, and it involves recording, collecting, analysing one's own judgements, reactions and impressions of what is happening, among other processes, which can lead the students participating in the process and the teacher trainer to become researchers of their practice.

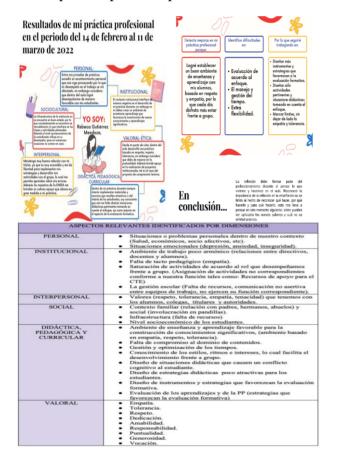
The process through which the experience was developed considered four phases in which the methodological operations described below were carried out:

Phases	Activities	Times	Methodological operations
Planning	Developme nt of didactic situations	01 to 11 Februa ry 2022	Retrieve LSPs to be carried out with secondary school students.
Implement ation	Developme nt of didactic situations with secondary school students	14 Februa ry to 11 March 2022	Retrieve characteristics of the groups of students
Monitoring	Data retrieval		Understanding of contents in which the expected learning is broken down.
Reflection	Data analysis	14 to 13 April 2022	Design of strategies, materials and resources to develop the didactic situations and evaluate their results.

Table 1 Phases and methodological operations of the research

Source: Own elaboration based on the contributions of Latorre, A. (2005)

Development, discussion and results. Based on the inputs collected by the students during the first day of professional practice and the representation made both individually and by the secondary school, it has been possible to develop the experience presented here.



**Figure 1** "Representation of data individually and by secondary school"

Source: Diagrams elaborated by Rebeca Gutiérrez M. and team from Escuela Secundaria Gral. No. 11

The analysis of the data collected during the follow-up phase made it possible to identify strengths and weaknesses that are present in each of the dimensions of teaching practice and thus to recognise the challenges that need to be addressed in the next didactic intervention, as they are explained below:

Personal dimension. From the point of view expressed in the introductory paragraphs, the systematisation of the experiences lived by the students is considered in the first place the personal dimension. They see themselves as individuals with qualities, characteristics and difficulties; with ideals, projects, motivations and imperfections that can be overcome with the support of the different actors involved in their training and mainly with the self-analysis derived from a reflective professional practice.

In this sense, there are two sides of the coin; on the one hand, there are those who express different health, economic and socioaffective situations, such as depression, anxiety, insecurity, emotional management, among other problems, both of a family and work nature, task saturation, inadequate management and lack of organisation as critical factors that have negatively influenced the expected performance; however, on the other hand, there are those who express progress in the effective self-regulation of these factors, converting them into opportunities that support the improvement of their professional practice.

What is significant in the analysis is that they have fully identified the factors that teachers experience from this dimension and their influence, they have learned to capitalise on them for improvement, this shows that they are being trained as professionals who reflect on action and in it build new work strategies, new ways of searching, new theories and categories of understanding to face and define these problematic situations, new theories and categories of understanding to confront and define these problematic situations, because in acting in action and reflecting on it, they construct in an idiosyncratic way, competences set out in the graduate profile, those that go beyond routine and regulated knowledge that slows down creativity and innovation (Zeichner, 1993). (Zeichner, 1993)

Institutional dimension. This dimension was also analysed because professional teaching practice takes place in the secondary school, seen as an organisation, where academic, management and inter-relationship processes are privileged, which is why it is the most important scenario for professional socialisation, as it is there where the knowledge, rules, traditions and customs of the profession are learnt in order to transcend and innovate.

And this is true, it is often said that future teachers are made in practice, it is precisely there, in the school environment, where they experience the profession and all the factors that influence it, in this sense, they recognise the work environment as a fundamental element for their performance, the pedagogical tact with which the teaching, learning and management processes are handled; empathy for the diverse circumstances that surround the lives of students, teachers and managers, mothers, fathers and tutors, the organisation of time and respect for the roles assigned to the different actors, and the school's openness to change, innovation and new ways of teaching in the face of the changing and dynamic reality of 21st century societies, relationships between teaching and management staff, as well as resources that enhance the role of the teacher and promote meaningful learning for students, empathy on the part of the head teacher, as well as the support of management staff.

From this point of view, a balance is made between the good and the complicated that the institutional environment becomes when trying to move from tradition to modernity, from the routine to the relevant and innovative, without considering the elements of the school culture that must be transformed from actions and not only from the impositions or new forms that some structural reforms bring with them. Fullan and Hargreaves (1999) say that no top-down imposition works, it is necessary to plan and work for change, in this way also impacting on the transformation of culture.

What is important in this analysis is that the student teachers are clear about their role as agents of change in an educational institution, from the different roles they play, whether in the teaching and learning processes or in school management and its interrelationships. As future teachers of Mother Tongue. Spanish, they have understood that they are responsible for ensuring that it is assumed as a social and cultural tool that can favour inclusive communication environments and situated literate language practices (Cassany, 2012).

Interpersonal dimension. this From perspective, it is recognised that practice is based on the relationships of the actors involved in the educational process: students, teachers, principals, parents, tutors and guardians. These relationships are complex, as the different educational actors have a great diversity of characteristics, goals, interests, conceptions, beliefs, etc., and the way in which these are interwoven, constitute the work environment, representing the institutional climate that is being built every day within the educational establishment, where each of the actors are responsible for their roles and functions.

In this analysis, the teacher training students express: "in order for interrelationships to contribute to the mission entrusted to schools, it is necessary to permanently deploy a series of values such as respect, tolerance, empathy and tenacity among all the actors in the educational process". Planning teaching so that the student becomes the main protagonist, monitoring and evaluating the results of their practice and using these results to improve, transform and innovate it in a collegial manner. They comment that this cannot be achieved if they remain anchored to traditionalist practices, whose objective is the development of syllabus content, where the teacher's performance is untouchable, since the teacher lives the collective myth of isolated work. It is necessary to have feedback from the observations made by the heads of the groups where they develop the professional practice of teacher training students, which will allow them to identify, from a different perspective, the areas of opportunity that continue to be their main challenges.

observations These have been fundamental for trainee teachers to realise that professional teaching practice needs to be socialised, because its results depend on these interrelationships that are established promote a common project in secondary schools. Today more than ever, they detect the need to be involved in these institutional projects with an impact on the critical factors that become obstacles for the school to achieve its objectives; to provide all students with opportunities to prosper and become active citizens, committed and driven by collegial work in which interrelationships in favour of education are privileged.

Social dimension. Another dimension analysed is the social dimension, which implies reflecting on the meaning of the teacher's work, in the historical moment in which he/she lives and from the performance environment; his/her expectations and those that fall on the figure of the teacher, together with the pressures from the system and families. It is also necessary to reflect on the way in which classrooms become spaces in which culture can be transformed and those critical factors that limit the opportunities students have to construct meaningful learning.

In this analysis, the teacher training students have taken into account the importance of those factors of demand (Schmelkes, 1997) that are often determinant in the educational process, for example, the family context from which their students come, those relationships with fathers, mothers, tutors, brothers, sisters, grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts and other family members with whom they live.

They also value the prevailing sociocultural and economic context, as well as the conditions they have to access learning and it is not that these factors did not exist before, UNESCO (2020) says that the SARS pandemic - CO-V2, which showed the vulnerability of education systems to offer what is constitutionally stipulated: "Education for all".

Today more than ever, teachers in training have identified those barriers faced by secondary school students to learn and participate in educational processes (SEP, 2018a); from the school infrastructure in their homes and in the environment, teaching materials, objects of daily use, the organisation of the school day, among others that prevent the principle of equity and inclusion from being put into practice. When taking stock of the factors they have in favour of developing their professional practice, the teacher training students identify the lack of support from their families and, in general, an external context that is threatening to the aims pursued at school, but which can become the most important reference point for promoting meaningful and lasting learning. The socio-emotional problems that impact on the vulnerability of students, teachers and the different actors involved are evident. The challenge then is to take advantage of the Social Practices of Language (SLP) opportunities, only strengthen not to communication skills, but also as a means to work on these socioemotional aspects that affect the education system in general. As Guerrero, J. C. O., & Choque, K.B.H. (2022) share, there are stories that show several systematic aspects such as positive and negative emotions and feelings, changes in moods in teaching practice and where reflection becomes evident in order to continue improving and changing in daily life.

Didactic dimension. This dimension is considered to be one of the most important. because it refers to the role of the teacher as an agent who, through the teaching processes: orients, directs, facilitates and guides the of students with collective, interaction culturally organised knowledge so that they develop communicative skills and thus advance towards critical literacy<sup>2</sup>, identifying that the teacher's function is to facilitate the learning that students construct in the classroom and other scenarios in which they develop, which is why it is the dimension where the teacher's role is of greatest importance.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cassany (2010) points out that in literate practices the term "literacy" is broad, because it encompasses the domain of both the written code, discursive genres, the roles of the author/reader, the social organisation of language practices, the identities of author and reader, the values, representations and attitudes associated with these practices, as well as the ways of thinking developed through them.

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The analysis carried out makes it possible to identify aspects such as the following: Mastery of the SLPs that are developed during the periods of professional practice, knowledge of the groups with which they develop their practice, planning of didactic situations for the consolidation of communicative skills, learning environment and interrelationships that are established for the development of class sessions, as well as didactic strategies that are implemented, resources and support materials, evaluation of learning and CP, use of time, discursive resources, personal presentation, among others that were considered relevant.

From comments made, both the individually and by the secondary school, the importance of understanding the contents of teaching at an exhaustive level, which allows teachers in training to arrange, organise knowledge in a meaningful and strategic way so that students can appropriate it and give it a place in their daily actions, for this they must know the characteristics and learning processes of the students, since the Mother Tongue. Spanish is the most powerful tool they have to express themselves orally and in writing to the world and thus assert their knowledge, feelings and perceptions, these processes Darling (2001, p. 371), conceives them as "pedagogical content knowledge".

The students explain the importance of elaborating didactic planning based on a problematic situation, which invites students to use their communicative tools in an interrelated way and strengthen them through the strategies and resources they implement to solve it, according to the 2017 curriculum proposal, that at secondary level, the fundamental purpose of this subject is for students to consolidate their social practices of language, to participate as social, autonomous and creative subjects in different areas, and to reflect systematically on the diversity and complexity of the uses of language in multicultural contexts. In this context they understand that their task as mediators is not limited to giving continuity to a syllabus; their role is to provoke, incite and challenge learners to use their Mother Tongue with a communicative purpose and aim in the socio-cultural context where they interrelate with different actors.

Some detect that they still need to move from a structural approach to an approach where SLPs are used as a vehicle for doing with language and, as Lerner (2001, p. 25) says, help them to be "full members of the community of readers and writers", and moreover, citizens possessing linguistic, communicative and pragmatic competence (Cassany, Luna and Sanz, 1998).

In this analysis they also identify that the atmosphere established in the group fundamental for the construction of learning, they understand discipline as that interest and motivation with which students participate in a class, where the main purpose is to strengthen their communicative skills both orally and in writing, so they cannot expect that silence that comes from those who have not learned to use language to express themselves to others. Its strategies and activities are planned so that the student is a protagonist who knows how to write, speak, listen and be silent when the communicative situation warrants it, supported by innovative resources and materials that allow them to arrive at new constructions based on what they know, like and are familiar with.

In terms of strategies and resources, this continues to be a challenge that the student teachers are continually facing, which, based on the results and their reflection in each class, is being overcome. They recognise that there is still a lot to learn, but they are willing to listen to the suggestions and recommendations of their teachers, as well as to the advisor of the "In-service learning" course. Latapí (2004) says that this is how teachers learn; by supporting each other from the inputs generated in professional practice.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered in the development of the sessions is the use of the formative approach to evaluation, that which serves to know, act and improve (Guerra, 2001) the interventions with the students, the use of strategies instruments that make it possible to monitor the students' learning process and which should be taken into account from the pre-active phase of teaching (Saint-Onge, 2000). There are attempts to assume assessment as a tool that facilitates the help that the teacher can offer to students in the face of difficulties that arise, however, it is still one of the greatest challenges identified in teaching practice.

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It is often said that time is a nonrenewable resource, hence the importance of using it to favour the development of the expected learning in the subject of Mother Tongue. The teachers of Spanish and in fact, despite the frequent interruptions typical of an educational organisation, they say they use time effectively and efficiently, they are asked to observe the students in their practice groups to corroborate that they perceive it this way, because from the discourse we repeat over and over again that they are the main protagonists; they do not want to see faces of boredom, annoyance, tedium, frequently asking "what time is the end of the class? We prefer to see the hustle and bustle of communities of readers, writers and speakers, who interact with their academic peers to strengthen learning and who, when the class is over, say: "Is the session over so soon?

One of the pedagogical principles (9) of the 2017 curriculum proposal (SEP, 2017) states that the teacher must frequently model learning and if we are talking about Mother Tongue. Spanish, the discursive resources used by the trainee teacher during the different moments of the class become references to participate in SLP, which is why this aspect of professional practice was analysed on the first day of practice, detecting that there are significant advances because it is considered that the class is a discursive genre par excellence, which has a didactic intention, as well as both an explanatory and argumentative orientation, which aims to ensure the generation of a favourable environment for learning and requires the teacher to use different strategies, devices or discursive resources. Important challenges are still identified in the instructions, explanations, examples, demonstrations. arguments and answers to students' concerns and doubts, as well as in promoting reflection, questioning and the expression of ideas, but, above all, in that tone of voice that invites them to join the class and to show that they are empathetic to the situations experienced by the students. In the same vein, we talk about personal presentation as a resource to show that, just as language has a formal and informal use depending on the communicative situation in which one participates, punctuality, personal presence, responsibility, willingness and the enthusiasm with which the session developed, show the commitment of the teacher training student to teaching.

Value dimension. This dimension has a special significance because teaching practice is not neutral; it inevitably involves a set of values. Each teacher, implicitly or explicitly, manifests his/her personal values, beliefs, attitudes and judgements; he/she shows his/her world views, his/her ways of valuing human relations and knowledge, as well as his/her ways of guiding teaching situations, that is to say, each student teacher builds his/her own teaching style.

From this perspective, the analysis carried out allows us to identify that trainee teachers adopt empathy, tolerance, respect, dedication, as well as kindness, responsibility, punctuality, generosity, vocation, creativity, appropriate personal presentation, among other virtues that allow them to act with civic, ethical and legal values and principles inherent to their social responsibility and their professional work with an intercultural and humanist perspective.

#### **Conclusions**

The analysis carried out has become a reference that allows us to rethink both the role of the coordinator of the "Service Learning" course, as well as the tasks inherent to the professional teaching practice carried out by the teacher training students in secondary schools. It is valuable that they can identify their strengths, preserve them and use them to address their areas of opportunity and face the challenges in the next intervention, thus, in this way, they experience the reflective process that allows them to analyse, rethink, act, transform, improve and innovate their substantive role in secondary schools.

Among the strengths identified are the results that students have when consolidating their social practices of language to participate as social, autonomous and creative subjects in their different areas, and to reflect systematically on the diversity and complexity of the uses of language and this is precisely the purpose of the subject of Mother Tongue. Spanish in secondary education (SEP, 2017).

They also identify skills they possess to create authentic didactic situations for the development of communicative skills students mention this), the interrelationships established between trainee teachers and students have been improved and strengthened (6 students refer to this), effectiveness in the use of time, enjoyment of teaching, confidence in discursive resources (6 students refer to this), the students are able to experience the Social Practices of Language that are developed (2 students so stated), use of playful strategies to promote meaningful learning, use of formative assessment (13 students mentioned this), design and application of interactive strategies where language is used to solve real situations, design and use of didactic material that becomes a support for the construction of the expected learning.

The adoption of the socio-cultural communicative approach in their interventions is also a skill that is mentioned, as well as the creation of learning environments that favour authentic interaction in communicative situations, the use of digital tools to dynamise learning and make it meaningful, attention to the emotional state of the students, as well as the mastery of the learning contents; Attention to suggestions, indications and observations of group leaders and advisor of the subject "Service Learning", among others that have allowed them to take on teaching from a humanistic, integrative perspective and with the approach of inclusive education.

It is also interesting to review the weaknesses that are identified, because one of the challenges facing those who are present in the accompaniment is precisely to help overcome and work on the areas of opportunity in a favourable way in subsequent practices, among the most important of which are noted: the lack of tools to design dynamic and challenging didactic situations, the enthusiasm and excitement of the trainee teacher for what he/she does, the mastery and management of the contents of the subject (this is mentioned by 6 students), improving the use of didactic materials, using the pedagogical and didactic approach of the subject (this is mentioned by 6 students), using formative assessment as an opportunity to know, as well as to act and improve teaching and learning strategies (this is mentioned by 9 students).

The use of creativity in the design of teaching and learning strategies is another weakness identified by 5 students, evaluation criteria for the assessment of products is also an identified limitation (3 students report this). Another aspect is the documentation in different sources information to acquire mastery management of learning content, as well as making the student the main protagonist of the class (4 students refer to this), promoting intellectual challenges with language, organising activities, offering clear indications, among other aspects that are detected as important to improve professional practice.

The extracts from this analysis clearly show what the students consider to be their strengths, which serve as anchors for them to continue developing their own teaching style and thus move towards strengthening the competences set out in the LEAEES graduate profile that refer to the professional and disciplinary component.

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