UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TITULO DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
MENCIÓN INGLÉS

Systematization of pedagogical experiences

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

AUTOR: Diego Manuel, Martínez Cabrera

DIRECTOR: Ochoa Cueva, César Augusto, MS.

CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO LOJA

2017

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De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación: "Systematization of Pedagogical Experiences" realizado por el profesional en formación: Martínez Cabrera Diego Manuel; ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, abril de 2017

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Martínez Cabrera Diego Manuel

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family members: Manuel, Rodrigo, Diana, Beatriz and Barni who have supported me to achieve my goals all along. Without their helping hand, this work would not have been possible.

Diego

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to all the teachers who guided my career, my friends and relatives who gave me advice and help, my wholehearted appreciation to all of them. I am also very grateful to the UTPL and its at-distance studies system.

Diego

Contents

Abstract

The present work titled Systematization of Pedagogical Experiences deals with a personal teaching practice in the educative field and its purpose is to pose reflections and descriptions about the practice grounded from a personal perspective, recent research, books and journals of education. This educative practice was carried out in the city of Loja, in a public high school and in a private elementary high school. The document is divided into three major sections. The literature review section describes current studies and researchers in different fields, this section aims at explaining the interrelated aspects of the teaching-learning process such as modern methodologies, communicative competence, teacher's roles, motivation in language teaching, teaching experience, and links between experience and teaching. The method section describes the settings and learners' characteristics as well as the procedure followed. In the final section, results and discussion, it is found personal reflections and descriptions about the teaching practice, this section also describes the techniques, strategies and learning problems found in students. Finally, the major conclusion is that Systematization of Experiences is an ongoing process whose main focus is becoming better professionals.

Keywords: Systematization, teaching practice, communicative competence, modern methodologies, teaching experience.

Resumen

El presente trabajo titulado Sistematización de Experiencias Pedagógicas trata acerca de la práctica personal docente en el área educativa cuyo propósito es plantear reflexiones y descripciones sobre la práctica docente fundamentadas desde una perspectiva personal, recientes investigaciones, libros y revistas sobre educación. Esta práctica fue llevada a cabo en la ciudad de Loja en un colegio publico y escuela primaria. El documento se divide en tres partes principales. La sección revisión de literatura describe estudios recientes e investigadores en diferentes campos, esta sección explica aspectos interrelacionados del proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje tales como metodologías modernas, competencia comunicativa, rol del maestro, motivación en la enseñanza, experiencia docente y vínculos entre experiencia y enseñanza. La sección método describe el ambiente y características de los estudiantes así como el procedimiento efectuado. En la sección final, resultados y discusión, se encuentran reflexiones personales y descripciones acerca de la práctica docente, esta sección describe las técnicas, estrategias y problemas de aprendizaje encontrados en los estudiantes. Finalmente, la principal conclusión es que la Sistematización de experiencias es un proceso continuo cuyo eje central es convertirse en mejores profesionales.

Palabras Claves: Sistematización, práctica docente, competencia comunicativa, metodologías modernas, experiencia docente.

Introduction

Systematization has been a rewarding task since it allowed me to rethink about my own teaching practice in the educational field. In order to carry out a thought-provoking analysis from a personal perspective, it was required to gather useful information available from researchers in the educative field. First and foremost, the main reason to carry through the present work, Systematization of Pedagogical Experiences, was due to the importance of depicting the personal experience and the interplay among the different factors within the educative field. The variables which played an important role during this teaching practice were: type of learners, topics of study and learners' proficiency level, learning problems, students' personal traits and teaching environment. Eventually, the systematization process was very useful on a personal level because it enabled me to express freely about the teaching experience, and I learned a great deal out of it.

To achieve the process of systematization, it was required to underpin this work through a literature review and go over the journals of experiences. These two guidelines were highly necessary to deeply analyze my own teaching experience from this available information.

The importance of this works relies on the links between the personal practice and the theoretical approaches in learning and teaching. This work is helpful for new teachers because in it they find a variety of descriptions and reflections about the most relevant situations and difficulties in the teaching practice; besides, new teachers will find useful recommendations in order to boost teachers' performance. On the other hand, experienced teachers in the field of EFL will find current studies and theoretical approaches about the teaching practice, in this document they may find common views, different and debatable views about the teaching activity; consequently, most teachers working under the EFL approach will find this work very broaden to be analyzed within their teaching activity.

CHAPTER I: Literature Review

What is teaching?

In the present section it is found general aspects about what teaching and learning imply as well as other elements that come into play in the educative field. It is relevant to review what researchers can tell about the teaching-learning process.

Tebabal & Kahssay (2011) as cited in Ganyaupfu (2013) State that the primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to bring a fundamental change in the learner. They also mention that to facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit specific objectives and level exit outcomes. In the traditional epoch, many teaching practitioners widely applied teacher-centered methods to impart knowledge to learners. Until today, questions about the effectiveness of teaching methods on student learning have consistently raised considerable interest in the thematic field of educational research.

According to Ayeni (2011) as cited in (Ganyaupfu, 2013), teaching is a continuous process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners through the use of appropriate methods. Regarding this topic, Adunola (2011) as cited in Ganyaupfu (2013) states that in order to bring desirable changes in students, teaching methods used by educators should be best for the subject matter.

(Zhou, 2003) as cited in Hollins (2011) Remarks the view that teaching is a complex and multidimensional process that requires deep knowledge and understanding in a wide range of areas and the ability to synthesize, integrate, and apply this knowledge in different situations, under varying conditions, and with a wide diversity of groups and individuals. The author stresses the term quality teaching. In this sense, quality teaching refers to knowledge applied in ways that provide equitable access and opportunities that build upon and extend

what learners already know in facilitating the ability to acquire, construct, and create new knowledge.

Additionally, in quality teaching, the core knowledge, skills and understandings are the following: understanding of human development; deep understanding of the learning sciences; application of disciplinary knowledge for a better experiences; mastery of pedagogy with clearly articulated theories; knowledge of how to design assessments for evaluating learners' achievements; and a strong commitment to grow professionally (Hollins, 2011).

When talking about teaching, it is mandatory to recur to teaching methods because they are the cornerstone of teaching. New teaching methods often claim to be based on the latest research in fields such as psychology, linguistics, or pedagogy. Consequently, teachers are told about the effectiveness of the new method, pointing out that the previously used methods are no longer in use or outdated (Lightbown & Spada, 2011).

Teachers have been exposed to different teaching approaches over the past fifty years. One of them requires learners to study grammar rules and lists of vocabulary for translating literary texts. Another approach emphasizes the use of memory and correctness to imitate and practice entire dialogues. Yet another one stresses the relevance of natural communication among learners in different activities where language is used (Lightbown & Spada, 2011).

However, how are teachers supposed to evaluate the level of effectiveness and potential of new methods? One key influence on teachers' decisions is their previous experience by reflecting on the successes or failures, as well as their knowledge about the needs and skills of their students (Lightbown & Spada, 2011).

Cruz et al., (2014) as cited in Raba & Herzallah (2015) Claim that teaching is a complex craft. In some ways, it is impossible to capture in a page or two the sophistication of what good teachers do. Yet nothing is more fundamental that achieving the goal of success for

every student than high quality teaching. That is why classroom first places the teacher at the center of improvement efforts.

Additionally, teaching, like any other career, requires efficacy. Ineffective teachers repeatedly commit the same mistakes over and over, while effective teachers seem to give off certain characteristics, moreover, effective teachers tend to have good expectations about their students' behavior and standard of learning. They help their students achieve success. In addition to this, effective teachers have clear and high expectations about their own performance as teachers (Raba & Herzallah, 2015).

(Cruz et al., (2014) as cited in Raba & Herzallah (2015) Effective teachers strive to motivate and engage all their students in learning rather than simply accepting that some students cannot be engaged and are destined to do poorly. Teachers collected complete information about their students so they recognize their strengths and weaknesses.

What is learning?

Although there may be many definitions or concepts about what learning really is, in my opinion, learning is not an ending action; rather, it is an ongoing process and experience which involves cognitive faculties, psychological manifestations and emotional settings. Learning is a complex phenomenon which deserves special attention because if it is possible to know how to learn something, then it will be much more likely to know how to improve the quality of learning. In the following paragraphs, different researchers define and give their views about learning.

In his book, *Language, Cognition and Human Nature* (2015) Steven Pinker claims that learning involves a great diversity of complex intertwined areas. The study of language acquisition and learning is so vast and widespread that investigators in the field still continue to struggle with theories, problems and solutions. Professor Steven Pinker has studied the field of language for over three decades. According to him:

Any plausible theory of language learning will have to meet an unusually rich

set of empirical conditions. The theory will have to account for the fact that all

normal children succeed at learning language, and will have to be consistent

with our knowledge of what language is and of which stages the child passes

through in learning it. (Pinker, 2015, p. 3).

It is certainly true that learning is not simply acquired knowledge to be put into practice;

rather, learning develops over time and it works in diverse contexts with different students;

learning involves ongoing processes, experiences and reflections (Pinker, 2015).

In order to understand better how learning works, it is necessary to quickly review the

main theories of learning. Scarino & Liddicoat claim that "theory dichotomies do not reflect

current understandings as theory and practice are not seen as opposites" (Scarino & Liddicoat,

2009, p. 25). Rather, they complement each other because there exists a relevant relationship

between them. A good theory may be the basis for a great practice as well as practice may

guide us towards a theory-making process (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). "It is learning theory

that provides big picture understandings when teachers wish to reconsider and potentially

change their practices" (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p. 25).

Since there are complexities and diversity of perspectives about constructivism, Hoover

(1969) as cited in Amineh & Asl (2015) introduces a common set of principles for these

perspectives that can be operationalized. Hoover expressed two important notions which

encompass the simple idea of constructed knowledge. The first notion is that learners

construct new understandings using their current knowledge. In other words, the learners'

prior knowledge influences their new knowledge.

The second notion stresses that learning in not passive. Rather, it is an active process in

which there is negotiation of their understanding. It consists of having a direct experience in

the new learning situation. Learners' current knowledge may change and accommodate in

order to embrace the new experience. Therefore, learners are not viewed as passive learners but they are active throughout the learning process (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Piaget's constructivism which is based on his view of children's psychological development (cited in Amineh & Asl 2015) insists that discovery is the basis of his theory. Piaget discusses that children go through stages in which they accept ideas they may or may not later change. Therefore, understanding is built up step by step through active participation and involvement so learners cannot be considered as passive in any of the steps or stages of development.

Contrary to Piaget, Bruner (1973) as cited in Amineh & Asl (2015) states that learning is a social process, whereby students construct new concepts and knowledge based on their current knowledge. In this view of constructivism, the student selects information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions, with the aim of integrating new experiences into his existing knowledge and experience.

In the book*, why don't students like school?* (2009) Daniel T. Willingham concludes that it is obvious that students differentiate one from another. He suggests that using these differences would help to improve the teaching practice. He also introduces two fundamental methods. One of them is based on differences regarding cognitive styles. In other words, "if one matches the method of instruction to the preferred cognitive style of the child, learning will be easier. Unfortunately, no one has described a set of styles for which there is good evidence" (Willingham, 2009, p. 126).

The same author thinks that teachers should differentiate instructions among students, and they must know that scientists cannot offer any help. "It would be wonderful if scientists had identified categories of students along with varieties of instruction best suited to each category, but after a great deal of effort, they have not found such types, and I suspect they don't exist" (Willingham, 2009, p. 126). Rather, it is advisable to treat students in different

ways taking account of teacher's experience with each learner and to always assess what works and what doesn't (Willingham, 2009).

On the other hand, Elizabeth F. Barkley focuses in active learning, for her "Active learning means that the mind is actively engaged. Its defining characteristics are that students are dynamic participants in their learning and that they are reflecting on and monitoring both the processes and the results of their learning" (Barkley, 2010, p. 17). It is important to highlight her views thereon:

> Since helping students learn is our primary goal as teachers, how do we best accomplish that? The simplest answer may be to set up conditions that promote active learning. "Active learning" is an umbrella term that now refers to several models of instruction, including cooperative and collaborative learning, discovery learning, experiential learning, problem-based learning, and inquiry-based learning. Active learning puts into practice over a half-century of research that demonstrates that to truly learn, we need to make an idea, a concept, or a solution our own by working it into our personal knowledge and experience (Barkley, 2010, p. 17).

Modern methodologies, strategies, techniques, materials

The definition of teaching and learning provides the necessary background to analyze the following topic. First of all, I would like to emphatically express that part of the success of a teacher's role relies on how best he/she can make use of teaching methods, strategies, techniques and materials. Teachers, undoubtedly, need not only to use a set of strategies but also to improve their teaching techniques and strategies over time. It is necessary to review researchers' perspectives.

In the book, *Enhancing the Art & Science of Teaching with Technology*, Robert J. Marzano & Sonny Magaña (2014) introduces three different perspectives on educational technology.

"One perspective views technology through a value-positive lens, meaning technology has the capacity to constructively transform education. The value-positive approach maintains that, when used for education, technology will almost always have a positive effect, regardless of other variables" (Magaña & Marzano, 2014, p. 17).

The second perspective on technology is negative "Technology cannot impact teaching and learning in any positive way and does not belong in the classroom. These theorists often allege that technology is a waste of time, money, and public policy initiative, since the same achievement goals can be accomplished with and without technology" (Magaña & Marzano, 2014, p. 17).

A third perspective views technology in the educational field as neutral, that is to say, technology is only beneficial as the teaching practice enhances (Magaña & Marzano, 2014). "When used in tandem with effective instructional practices, technology is likely to have a number of positive impacts in the classroom including gains in student achievement, engagement, and motivation" (Magaña & Marzano, 2014, p. 17).

There has been an enormous shift in the way that people use technology for their personal lives over the last 20 years. The integration of technology in the field of education has been slow, however, teachers have noticed the importance to include and adapt their practice according to always changing technologies (British Council, 2013).

The British Council stresses the shift from consumption to production. Technology was predominately used as a source of information in the past but in our current days, learners are becoming producers of information. They are creating, adapting and developing content for a wide variety of purposes. They do this by applying to Web 2.0 technologies such as forums,

blogs or wikis (British Council, 2013). On the other hand, "The change from a 'read Web' to a 'read/write Web' has encouraged teachers to become increasingly inventive in their approach to engaging technologically savvy learners who want to publish their work within an ever expanding arena" (British Council, 2013, p. 21).

Herrell & Jordan (2012) Clearly emphasize that technology can be very useful in meeting the needs of learners at different levels, therefore, enhancing their growth in both oral and written production. Oral and written programs may provide improved effective practice for students.

Technology plays a vital role nowadays, it is a mistake to underestimate the power of technology because it helps improving both teachers' success and students' outcomes. Technology is growing so fast worldwide that teachers cannot afford to keep apart from these advances. It is mandatory for teachers to stay current on all the ways in which technology can be applied in classroom (Herrell & Jordan, 2012).

Among the many modern electronic platforms, it is possible to choose the most suitable ones to meet students' needs. Herrell & Jordan (2012) mention the use of wikis for building student independence. A wiki is a website that allows learners to build and edit webpages without their having to know programming languages or Internet protocols. These authors clearly mention that "wikis are powerful in the classroom because students can create and edit their work just as they would on a word processor but the process is empowering to students because their work is published almost instantaneously to their chosen audience" (Herrell & Jordan, 2012, p. 287).

In short, nobody can deny the power of technology as a tool to enhance students' active learning as well as teachers' overall performance. The use of modern technologies goes hand in hand with teaching techniques and learning strategies.

With respect to strategies, techniques and materials, Macalister and Nation suggest that "the material needs to be presented to learners in a form that will help learning. This presentation will involve the use of suitable teaching techniques and procedures" (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 9)

However, teaching strategies and techniques require a more profound in-depth analysis. A fundamental part of teaching is needs analysis. Before starting a course, teachers need to know the main content and goals of the course. By reflecting on needs analysis, they make sure that the course will include useful and relevant information for learners. It is a process that involves asking the right questions and finding the best solutions (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Nation & Macalister (2010) Make a major subdivision between present knowledge and acquired knowledge, and objective needs and subjective needs. According to these authors "the outcomes of needs analysis must be useful for curriculum design. It is not worth gathering needs analysis information if no application can be found for it" (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 25).

Communicative competence

In the book, *The Study of Language,* George Yule remarks that "communicative competence can be defined as the general ability to use language accurately, appropriately, and flexibly" (Yule, 2010, p. 194). In reference to L2 learning, the author claims that there are three basic components: the grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence (Yule, 2010).

Firstly, grammatical competence focuses on the appropriate and accurate use of structures and words, however, having grammatical competence does not guarantee the interpretation or production of utterances and expressions appropriately in L2 (Yule, 2010).

Secondly, using a language in the appropriate context is defined as socio-linguistic

competence. This competence is very important because the user of a language has to determine when and how to use a language. As a way of example, Can I have some cookies? Give me cookies! It all depends on the social context (Yule, 2010).

Thirdly, strategic competence refers to the organization of a language, it is the ability to convey a message effectively and to overcome difficulties through strategies (Yule, 2010). "In L2 use, learners inevitably experience moments when there is a gap between communicative intent and their ability to express that intent" (Yule, 2010, p. 194). In short, having strategic competence means that the communicator overcomes problems in interaction with others (Yule, 2010).

When talking about competence, the term is referred not only to the mastery over any language but also referred to the syntax, morphology, phonology and grammatical knowledge from a user's part, as well as the appropriate social use of language, in other words, it is relevant to know when and how to convey utterances according to different contexts. Moreover, the term communicative competence can be understood as the ability to linguistically compete against others with confidence and courage. The term evokes knowledge about the grammatical rules of a language as well as the rules of language for specific uses and contexts such as: the social context, the professional context or academic context (R.Calaivanane, Hameed, & R.Srinivasan, 2016).

Canale and Swain (1980) cited in R.Calaivanane, Hameed, & R.Srinivasan (2016) Understood communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlined system of knowledge and skill essential for communication. Regarding communicative competence, knowledge refers to the (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of an individual about language and other aspects of language use. Besides, their concept of skill refers to how an individual can use the knowledge in real life situations. Communication is an activity in which symbolic content is not a mere transmission from source to source but an exchange between human agents

interacting within a shared situational or discursive context.

"Saying there is more to using a language than knowing the grammar is relatively easy. Formulating precisely what other kinds of knowledge are involved is more complicated" (Cook, 2014, p. 42) In the book, *Applied Linguistics*, Hymes (1960) cited in Cook (2014) mentions that an influential attempt to do this was made by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes in his description of communicative competence in the late 1960s. According to Hymes, a person with linguistic competence only would be quite unable to communicate. This person would be a kind of social monster producing grammatical sentences unconnected to the situation in which they occur. What is needed for successful communication Hymes suggested, the four types of knowledge: possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and attestedness.

Hymes (1971, 1972) as cited in (Sun, 2014) Introduced the notion of communicative competence as opposed to Chomsky's dichotomy of competence and performance. He points out that it is more important for language users to understand the social rules for the actual use of a language for daily interaction. Hymes' communicative competence model consists of two areas of competence: grammatical and sociolinguistic competence, and the ability to use them. Communicative competence is separated from the actual performance in real-time, concrete situations.

Teacher's roles

Teachers adopt different roles in a class whenever is needed. In order to make teaching more effective, it is recommendable to switch roles "Part of a good teacher's art is the ability to adopt a number of different roles in the class, depending on what the students are doing" (Harmer, 2007, p. 25).

From Harmer's point of view, teachers need to manage at least five different roles in a class, depending on the activity that is being carried out. Firstly, teachers become controllers

whenever is needed, for example, to give grammar explanations or information presentation. Teachers act like prompters, every time they encourage and push students to achieve more especially when students are working together cooperatively. At other times, teachers need to be assessors, that is, they provide feedback and tell students how well they have done. Teachers also need to function as a resource. In other words, whenever learners need to consult information. Lastly, they need to be tutors, that is, they become advisors responding any student's question. Also, the teachers advise them on what to do next (Harmer, 2007). Additionally, rapport is very relevant in a class environment "rapport means, in essence, the relationship that the students have with the teacher, and vice versa" (Harmer, 2007, p. 25).

Scrivener deepens on the importance of having rapport. Rapport would be the distinctive learning atmosphere of each teacher. Although having rapport with students is viewed as positive, according to Scrivener "The problem is that, whereas rapport is clearly important, it is also notoriously difficult to define or quantify. Sometimes people equate it with being generally friendly to your students" (Scrivener, 2010, p. 15).

Hattie (2012) on the other hand, argues that, on a fundamental level, a teacher's role means that teachers should see themselves as evaluators of their effects on students. The use of evidence-based methods may inform teachers about their effects on students. What matters most is the impact caused on students. Additionally, achieving a positive learning effect results from having an appropriate mind frame.

> The act of teaching requires deliberate interventions to ensure that there is cognitive change in the student; thus the key ingredients are being aware of the learning intentions, knowing when a student is successful in attaining those intentions, having sufficient understanding of the student's prior understanding as he or she comes to the task, and knowing enough about the content to provide meaningful and challenging experiences also that there is some sort of

progressive development. It involves a teacher who knows a range of learning strategies with which to supply the student when they seem not to understand, who can provide direction and redirection in terms of the content being understood and thus maximize the power of feedback, and who has the skill to 'get out the way' when learning is progressing towards the success criteria. (Hattie, 2012, p. 16).

In the book, *Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching*, Larsen-Freeman & Anderson pose an interesting principle-based approach in which a teacher's role is modified according to the different principles. He analyses the widespread methods such as: Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, Communicative Language Teaching and so forth.

They pose sixteen well-known teaching principles for which there could be different roles, learning goals and processes, for instance, he formulates the following questions: What are the goals for a teacher Grammar-Translation Method? What is the role of the teacher? What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process? And so forth. By answering these questions, the authors attempt to match the teacher's role along with the teaching method or principle (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

In the book, *Methods for Teaching,* David A. Jacobsen, Paul Eggen and Donald Kauchak (2009) have a different opinion about teachers' roles. The typical view of a teacher is usually someone giving information to a group of seekers of knowledge. The role of this group is often passive. Under such learning environments, the teacher is the person who guides learning. This view, of course, is extremely narrow because telling students what to do is only one strategy employed by teachers. The authors appeal to three different roles in a classroom. One of them is promoting growth and achievement, another one is encouraging constructivism in the classroom and finally motivating students (Jacobsen, Eggen, & Kauchak, 2009).

Motivation and its roles in language teaching

To begin with, motivation has to be present in teachers all the time. It is common ground that all experts agree on the need to fosters motivation. It is really of paramount importance that teachers have inner motivation, but what motivates a teacher can come in many forms.

In the fields of psychology and education, the core concept of motivation has been the dynamism or drive that causes people to carry out an activity naturally (Han & Yin, 2016). Sinclair (2008) cited in Han & Yin (2016) defined teacher motivation in terms of attraction, retention and concentration as something that determines what attracts individuals to teaching, how long they remain in their initial teacher education courses and subsequently the teaching profession, and the extent to which they engage with their courses and the teaching profession. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) cited in Han & Yin (2016) highlight the two dimensions of teacher motivation in accordance with their conceptions of motivation, namely, the motivation to teach and the motivation to remain in the profession. Their review of literature came to a conclusion of four featured components of teacher motivation: prominent intrinsic motivation which was closely related to inherent interest of teaching; social contextual influences relating to the impact of external conditions and constraints; temporal dimension with emphasis on lifelong commitment; and demotivating factors emanating from negative influences.

"Teachers can teach only if the learner has some desire to learn. We call that desire motivation. Motivation is the inner drive to do something—to finish a book, complete a tough assignment, make the cross-country track team" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010, p. 19).

There are two basic ways to motivate students. One of them is through intrinsic motivation. This kind of motivation appeals to students' inner selves. In other words, they do

an assignment to please themselves. In spite of this, not all students may feel intrinsically motivated and for that reason teachers also use extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation involves using letter grades, special treatment and even prizes. Both types of motivations are notoriously related and complemented (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010)."Part of the artistry of teaching is in knowing when to use intrinsic motivation and when to use extrinsic motivation. Part of the science of teaching involves determining which ones to use on specific students" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010, p. 20).

Motivation plays a critical role in guiding students' behavior. It is very important to understand what factors may influence on students to pursue learning goals (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010). There exist two important concepts which are the core to understand motivation. One of them is the subjective value assigned to a goal and the other is the expectancies for achieving that goal (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010). "In the context of learning, motivation influences the direction intensity, persistence, and quality of the learning behaviors in which students engage" (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010, p. 68).

Another author claims that "motivation involves the processes that energize, direct, and sustain behavior" (Santrock, 2011, p. 438). In his book, *Educational Psychology*, John W. Santrock claims that four different psychological perspectives explain motivation differently. These four perspectives are: behavioral, humanistic, cognitive, and social. "The behavioral perspective emphasizes external rewards and punishments as keys in determining a student's motivation. Incentives are positive or negative stimuli or events that can motivate a student's behavior" (Santrock, 2011, p. 438).

On the other hand, "The humanistic perspective stresses students' capacity for personal growth, freedom to choose their destiny, and positive qualities (such as being sensitive to others)" (Santrock, 2011, p. 438). This perspective is closely associated with Abraham

Maslow's (1954, 1971) who believed that certain basic needs must be met before higher needs can be satisfied (as cited in Santrock 2011).

"According to the cognitive perspective on motivation, students' thoughts guide their motivation" (Santrock, 2011, p. 439). In other words, the cognitive motivation belittles external incentives. Urdan (2010) as cited in Santrock (2011) thinks that the cognitive perspective also stresses the importance of goal setting, planning, and monitoring progress toward a goal.

The social perspective refers to the need of affiliation or relatedness, that is to say, people purposefully seek to connect with other people. This perspective involves the restoration of close, personal relationships (Santrock, 2011).

Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas (2010); Hamm & Zhang (2010) cited in Santrock (2011) Believe that the students' need for affiliation or relatedness is reflected in their motivation to spend time with peers, their close friendships, their attachment to their parents, and their desire to have a positive relationship with their teachers. Undoubtedly, "Motivation plays a significant role in the rate and success of second and foreign language learning in general, and in classroom language learning in particular" (Kaboody, 2013, p. 45).

Motivation Dörnyei (1998) as cited in Kaboody (2013) Provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the second language and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Additionally, teachers, researchers, material developers and students agree on one thing: "Motivation is an essential part of mastering a second or foreign language. The concept of motivation seems complex since it takes a respectable number of disciplines to arrive at a reasonable understanding of its facets" (Kaboody, 2013, p. 766).

Since there is not a particular definition of motivation one thing is clear to everyone. Motivation is essential in language learning (Khodashenas, Amouzegar, Farahani, Hasheminasab, & Kazemian, 2013). Regarding motivation in English as a Foreign Language,

the authors contend that:

> The issue of motivation, particularly in EFL settings, is so important that other considerations about teaching methodology seem to pale in comparison. It is important to think about motivation as the essence of language teaching because of the stark realities of learning English for most of our learners. All of the conditions that we know contribute to successful second language learning are lacking in most EFL contexts: there just isn't enough English input in the environment, there probably aren't enough opportunities for interaction with English speakers, there usually aren't enough strong role models promoting the learning of English, and there may not be widespread enough social acceptance for the idea of becoming proficient in English. (Gilakjani, Leong, & Sabouri, 2012, p. 10).

Teaching experience (Gifted or Acquired)

Teaching can be challenging as well as an emotional experience. The transition from student to teacher is a process which involves both transformational and emotional experiences. There is a study carried out by the American Sociological Association which claims that there has been little attention to emotional aspects regarding first-time teachers in the existing literature. The results of this study indicate that the sheer emotion of first-time teaching is one of the most relevant aspects of this study. From this research, most first-time teachers experienced both positive and negative emotions (Meanwell & Kleiner, 2014). It is very important to take this study into account because the more positive the experience, the less likely first-time teachers will be unmotivated with their jobs.

For the last four to five decades, the process of becoming a teacher has been extensively studied and discussed in the scientific and academic community worldwide. The richness and complexity of this phenomenon has been the subject of multiple interests and ways of

exploring its different dimensions, actors and dynamics. As a consequence, research and publications in this field have significantly increased, especially with regard to teaching practice, which has progressively been recognized as playing a determinant role in the teachers' initial education and their early development (Arends 2009; Britzman 2003; Bullough and Stokes 1994; Caires and Almeida 2005; Capel, Leask, and Turner 1997; Evelein, Korthagen, and Brekelmans 2008; Thiessen 2000; Veale 1989 as cited in (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012).

Since the 1990s, emotional and social intelligence have also gradually emerged as key values in the education of new teachers. There is much empirical support, especially in the psychological arena, emphasizing their contribution to the well- being and success of individuals in their professional achievement.

Assuming that teaching practice is a period of intense search, it is believed that it is more relevant to analyze the lived experiences of those who learn to teach. This involves not only the scientific, procedural and pedagogical components of this process but also the individual as a whole. It is, thus, important to focus on the cognitions, emotions and meanings that emerge, to listen to the dilemmas, doubts and fears of the student teachers regarding their teaching practice, as well as their drives, beliefs and expectations about the profession. (e.g., Caires 2001, 2003; Caires and Almeida 2005, 2007; Caires, Almeida, and Martins 2010; Caires, Almeida, and Vieira 2010) as cited in (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012).

In the book, Classroom Teaching Skills, Irizarry, et al., (2011) remark the importance of being a reflective teacher. Reflective teaching means that teachers evaluate and examine their own teaching regularly using skills such as analysis, interpretation, observation and decision making. By using these skills, reflective teachers must critically think about their performance as teachers. Reflecting on one's own practice usually involves connecting prior knowledge or skills, reconstructing experiences, assessing thoughts and understandings that underpin our

teaching, and applying knowledge or skills in new scenarios. According to authors, there are important tools that enhance the teaching experience such as:

Teaching journal. In order for teachers to record their thoughts or reactions, many teachers employ journals to keep track of their classes. Writing journals can help teachers reexamine events in less distracting settings (Irizarry, et al., 2011).

Video recordings. They provide visual clues of what happened during class, moreover, this tool provides the opportunity to observe hidden patterns of behavior about the teaching practice (Irizarry, et al., 2011).

Teaching portfolios. They consist of teacher-created materials such as lessons, videos, plans, tests, student work and the like. These materials are very useful for teachers because they provide appropriate feedback about teachers' growth and development (Irizarry, et al., 2011).

Colleagues. It is very convenient to use someone else's opinion and perspectives about teaching practice. Colleagues can provide fresh ideas and explicit examination, additionally, it is recommendable to observe someone else's teaching practice in order to gain insights (Irizarry, et al., 2011).

Teaching, like most professions, requires practitioners to be open, eager for, and committed to personal growth. Since teaching is not a static work, teachers need to develop their abilities and skills regularly. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards introduces the concept of accomplished educators. Accomplished teachers often incorporate ideas and methods to support their teaching objectives and improvement of their practice (National Board For Professional Teaching Standards, 2016).

"Accomplished teachers seek opportunities to cultivate their learning. As savvy students of their own teaching, they know the value of asking colleagues, administrators, and other educators to observe them and offer critiques of their instructional practices" (National Board

For Professional Teaching Standards, 2016, p. 32). They usually include new findings into their practice when appropriate and stay abreast of current research, they also harness the power of digital learning experiences, conferences and workshops (National Board For Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). With respect to accomplished teachers:

> Accomplished teachers therefore serve as paradigms of lifelong learning and achievement. Character and competence contribute equally to their educative manner. Such teachers embody the virtues they impart to their students: curiosity and a love of learning, tolerance and open-mindedness, fairness and justice, an appreciation for our cultural and intellectual heritages, and respect for human diversity and dignity (National Board For Professional Teaching Standards, 2016, p. 33).

Briefly, accomplished teachers, in all aspects of their action, possess the ability to convey significant reflections and learning, moreover, they are viewed as very democratic because they consider multiple perspectives, adopt different approaches, solve problems and persevere in their practice (National Board For Professional Teaching Standards, 2016).

Links between experience and teaching

Needless to say, experience is closely related to efficacy and effectiveness in many fields and careers. For example, people, more often have a preference towards experienced physicians over those young physicians. Teaching, like any other career, is an activity which requires practice, skills and of course experience. Studies about teacher experience are important because it helps determining to what degree experience affects learning and whether the two factors are strongly correlated or not. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze how important is teaching experience for learners' success.

Berliner (2001, 2004) as cited in Ladd & Sorensen (2015) Experts in other domains, emphasize that experienced teachers quickly recognize patterns in what they observe, see

more complexities than novices and bring to bear many sources of knowledge about how to respond to them. In addition, they are flexible in their practice, and have a broad repertoire of skills that they can easily access and implement to achieve their goals.

"The implication is that teachers can learn the basic tools of teaching in their preservice training, but mastery of teaching requires extensive reflection that can only come with experience and exposure to a variety of classroom experiences" (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015, p. 6). On the other hand, teachers, more often have to handle their emotions and their students' emotions as well; moreover, they have to keep classrooms under control. Finally, they often face challenges related to their effectiveness (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015).

In a very recent study, there was a finding that indicates a positive correlation between experience and student achievement. The findings show that "the gains from experience are highest in teacher's initial years, but continue for teachers the second and often third decades of their careers" (Kini & Podolsky, 2016, p. 15).

The links between teaching and experience is a serious matter since policy markers need to determine to what degree teachers can improve their practice, and how novice teachers can enhance their learning experience and speed up the process. Policy markers often face dichotomies regarding experienced teachers and non-experienced ones. The common inquiry is whether to invest in learning opportunities for more experienced teachers, or invest resources on novice teachers only. Should policy emphasize teaching as a long-term profession, or on recruiting short-term workforce? The authors contend:

> Teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher's career. Gains in teacher effectiveness associated with experience are most steep in teachers' initial years, but continue to be significant as teachers reach the second, and often third, decades of their careers. A more experienced teaching workforce offers numerous benefits to students and

schools, including greater individual and collective effectiveness in improving student outcomes as well as greater stability and coherence in instruction and relationship-building—the core work of schools (Kini & Podolsky, 2016, p. 33).

However, in another study carried out by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Educational Research in 2010; the impact of teacher experience on learners was less notable. The evidence suggests that "The impact of experience is strongest during the first few years of teaching; after that, marginal returns diminish" (Rice, 2010, p. 1). The evidence also stresses that "Experience matters, but more is not always better" "teachers show the greatest productivity gains during their first few years on the job, after which their performance tends to level off" (Rice, 2010, p. 1).

In another recent study carried out in by Hanover Research (2016), the difference between novice teachers and experienced teachers is highlighted in different findings. It is highly important to include these findings because it helps determining the real impact of experience on learners. In the first place, the study discusses the current link between teacher experience and student achievement. Moreover, the report examines other elements that may influence student achievement such as teacher education, school context and teacher retention (Hanover Research, 2016). The current findings are shown down below:

> Multiple studies find that new teachers are less effective than experienced teachers, but their performance improves rapidly during their first years of teaching. For example, one study estimated that the performance improvement that new teachers experience in their first year of teaching, as measured by their students' standardized test scores, is approximately half of the cumulative improvement they would experience over their entire career. However, studies also find that teachers experience a "plateau" of professional growth after their first three to five years of teaching (Hanover Research, 2016, p. 3).

On the other hand, results from more experienced teachers indicate the following:

Researching into performance growth among experienced teachers has produced mixed results. The finding that professional growth "plateaus" after five years indicates that the oldest, most experienced teachers may be no more effective than their comparatively younger, less-experienced colleagues. However, research shows that experienced teachers can and do grow professionally, albeit at slower rates that novice teachers (Hanover Research, 2016, p. 3).

Although there may be different analysis, opinions and perspectives about the relationship between teaching and experience it is important to incorporate other people's research. The available and current studies can provide some clues about the existent relationship between these two variables; however, these studies are not conclusive at all. That is to say, nobody can emphatically assert that novice teachers are less productive than those experienced ones. At the same time, more experienced teachers are not less productive than novice teachers. What is true is that experience can provide young teachers better insights, refined skills, strong personality and enhanced teaching patters. On the other hand, newcomers can tap into vitality and eagerness to teach.

Chapter II: Method

Setting and Participants

This teaching practice was carried out in the city of Loja in a public secondary high school and in a private elementary school. The participants in the high school were teenagers aged somewhere between twelve to sixteen years old. According to the Ministry of Education, there are three proficiency levels of English language in Ecuador. These proficiency levels follow a hierarchical structure, they are level A1 which is the most basic of the three, level 2 which is the intermediate level, and the level B1 which is the most complex of all. The above mentioned levels are called The English Language Learning Standards (ELLS) and they pervade all the years of education of a person until 3rd year Bachillerato (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). "The English Language Learning Standards (ELLS) are outcomes students are expected to achieve at the end of a proficiency level in terms of knowledge and skills gained through the process" (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

The participants in the high school were students level A1 and A2 because according to the given structure, level A1 is for students of Educación General Básica and level A2 is for students up to 1st year Bachillerato (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). On a general basis, the

students belonging to this institution fit in with the standards and outcomes provided by Ministry of Education.

Additionally, the public high school had two schedules. There was the morning schedule and the night time schedule, I performed my practice in both schedules. In the morning schedule the classes start at seven o'clock whereas the night time schedule starts at 5:50 p.m. One interesting aspect was the fact that some learners studying in the night time schedule were of age or even parents already, whereas students in the morning schedule were all under age.

During my whole practice in this high school, I developed my teaching activities under the oversight of two experienced teachers whose help and advice enhanced the outcomes. On average there were 40 students per class in this educative institution and the timing for each class was about 45 minutes, although in some cases there were two running periods of class which lasted 90 minutes. I consider that the class size had a real impact on my practice since I was not able to allocate fair time for some of them.

In the same way, the teaching practice was carried out in a private elementary school in Loja city during a period of two weeks. The learners of this educative institution were understandably children ranging from an age of five years old to approximately eleven years old. The most basic level for my practice was 1st year Educación General Básica, although this elementary school boasted having other levels below this, like kindergarten and early stimulation programs for infants. According to the English language standards, all of the students at this private institution were certainly level A. The last educative level was 7th year Educación General Básica.

Broadly speaking, they performed very well during my practice. The learners were open minded and willing to participate. During this practice I received the help of three friendly teachers who provided me certain clues to work. This elementary school reasonably had only

the morning schedule. The classes started at 07h:15 and the last class hour started at 12h:45. In this institution the average class size was of approximately 20 students per class which was very good for me as a teacher because it provided me broader control over the students; moreover, it was possible to deliver follow-up to students in a timely manner.

Procedures

In order to obtain more favorable outcomes, I followed a systematic development of all my classes where the main focus was on planning and the teaching practice itself. Over a period of four independent weeks, I attended these educative institutions in order to perform my teaching practice as main teacher.

All of the classes followed a similar development structure in both educative institutions, what really changed was the learners' age and the learning topics, the materials employed such as flash cards, word cards, worksheets were similar as well as the strategies like team work, individual work, complete the sentences, choral drills and so forth. For another thing, the main teaching approaches were Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Language Translation Method. In sum, my overall practice totaled up twenty classes.

Two main steps were followed in order to accomplish the teaching practice. The first step was the planning of the lesson, it was somehow a theoretical approach which consisted of setting learning objectives, strategies and methodologies; furthermore, the lesson plan was split into three interrelated parts. In the introduction section there were included warm-up activities, introductory settings, while in the middle section, the main focus was on the contents, the teaching inputs, and students' individual practice. Finally, at the final section there was place to deliver feedback and an overview of the contents

In the second step, it was all about the teaching practice. In other words, the second step entailed carrying through the different parts that made up the lesson plan. By following this

systematic procedure, I obtained favorable outcomes because there was little place for improvisation or uncertainty.

To underpin the journal of experiences in the best possible way, it was required to make use of a daily record after the classes were over, this daily summary consisted of a general description and a personal reflection about each class. Eventually, photos and video recordings were taken for a later analysis from my part and for teachers' assessment as well.

Chapter III: Results and discussion

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Teaching experience is sensed differently by teachers because, in one way or another, everyone is different. Additionally, although learners' ultimate objective for attending school is to receive an education, they are also equipped with different skills, goals and personal traits. In other words, each learner is different from each other. In the same way, "Teachers themselves also vary in their styles of learning and thinking. Individuals vary so much that literally hundreds of learning and thinking styles have been proposed by educators and psychologists" (Santrock, 2011, p. 129). In the following paragraphs, it will be explained, from a personal perspective, the experience about the teaching activity and the problems encountered; the outcomes and strategies employed; and the conclusions that were obtained.

My experience working as a main teacher was carried out under the approach of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Since most of students' first language is Spanish, it is necessary to teach English to Hispanic speakers under this approach. In this context, English language is used as a foreign language. For this purpose, I employed two commonly used teaching methods. One of them is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and the other is Grammar Translation Method. "When we use the term method, it implies some orderly way

of doing something" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010, p. 4). I toggled between the two methods as needed. Firstly, I mainly used CLT whenever I had two or more learners communicating with each other in order to perform activities such as warm-ups, commands, total physical response and storylines found in the didactic material. In other words, as the theory suggests, I mainly used this method with an emphasis on the ultimate message rather than on the language itself. "The essence of CLT is a shift of attention from the language system as end in itself to the successful use of that system in context; that is to say from an emphasis on form to an emphasis on communication" (Cook, 2014, p. 36). Secondly, I used the Grammar Translation Method for teaching grammar structures, verbal tenses and writing exercises. This method was mainly employed whenever learners had to form oral and written sentences with a given grammar structure and a verbal tense.

In the same way, I employed a set of strategies and techniques such as group work, individual work, flash cards, word cards, realia, fill in the blanks, answer the question, complete the sentence, readings, brainstorming, warm-ups, choral drills, rearrange the sentences and total physical response. "The term strategy implies thoughtful planning to do something. We use the term technique and procedure as synonyms to signify a series of steps that one takes to employ any general model being used in the classroom" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010, p. 4). In addition, I attempted to balance the four basic skills as much as possible. It was necessary to adapt some of these strategies in one lesson plan, taking account of the coherence and cohesion among the interrelated factors such as age, topic, sequence of strategies, level of proficiency and a timeline for each activity. For this purpose, I followed an outline constituted by three steps; start, middle and final. "It is important for teachers of English language learners to recognize the essential ways in which they must adapt lessons and assessment to meet the unique needs of these students" (Herrell & Jordan, 2012, p. 15).

The materials, topics and lessons were in accordance with students' age. In a general sense, there was very much emphasis on the use of vocabulary and basic grammar structures with children, whereas with teenagers the emphasis and topics were about culture, sports or intellectual topics. Similarly, I believe that having planned the classes was of great importance because it provided me basic clues for the teaching activity. The planning helped me to remember about methodologies, strategies, techniques and materials. In the same way, I prepared the lesson plans and didactic material according to variables like topic, proficiency level and age.

Therefore, after having reviewed the techniques, strategies and methods employed, I think that my teaching experience working with teenagers and children was mainly positive because it allowed me to notice my weaknesses and strengths as a teacher. Besides age difference, working with children was far more difficult for me than working with teenagers. Although I had teaching experience before, I never worked close to children, not even in a personal level. The single problem was that I did not know how to speak to them so that they understand me better. In other words, I did not know how to communicate appropriately with them. I eventually overcame this difficulty by watching professionals on the field through videos and live experience as I began to notice what worked and what did not. There are good videos on the web to learn from. For instance, a young English teacher named Paul Pemberton that works in Shanghai clearly shows through his video how to keep a dynamic class all the time with learners aged from 5 to 7 years old (Pemberton, 2015). Another good video from the Cambridge University showed teacher Günter Gerngross emphasizing the use of total physical response, since we clearly know that children tend to be physically active all the time, the teacher demonstrates the use of tone of voice and body language to convey his message. (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2010).

In a different manner, working with teenagers was quite different, although not easier. I always felt more confident and comfortable speaking to teenagers. This was because, for me, teenagers are, most of the time, easier to decode. For instance, they were less reluctant to ask things directly: feedback, an explanation or just a concern although I noticed different problems with these learners too. Firstly, I realized that some of them required more motivation than children; secondly, their level of distraction was higher than children's. This is of course an overview of what I experienced, there are always exceptions. Briefly, there were notable differences in both group of ages, but there were also advantages. In my view, it may take years to master the art of teaching and no matter how old your students are, I think that teachers must become excellent communicators.

During my teaching experience, I have realized that there exist a set of variables involving learning, but I also encountered similar situations among these variables. For instance, the pace at which everybody learns is different. "It has been observed countless times that, in the same foreign language class, some students progress rapidly while others struggle along making very slow progress" (Lightbown & Spada, 2011, p. 54). The level of motivation differs from one learner to another as well. As a result, I had to deal with slow learners that could not keep up with the rest of the class. Upon this dilemma comes the following choice: Should I invest more time and effort on these particular students or should I continue the normal development of the class? In my opinion, the answer for this dilemma comes from the context and the direct experience with students since no other source provides a compelling answer. "Every educator has an ethical and moral obligation to assist all students to realize their full potential" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010, p. 3). It was very important for me to judge with objectivity these issues because teaching is not a monotonous chore neither is it a rigid, repetitive activity. Thus, both experienced and

inexperienced teachers must be able to identify and assess the learning environment so they avoid spending a great deal of time on unnecessary things.

Similarly, while working with children, I identified a learning problem in a child. One student belonging to the second grade was very inactive, shy and reluctant during one practice; moreover, he was unwilling to do the tasks. This little child was apparently unable to write the words appropriately even when guided. Therefore, my first guess was that this kid had a learning disorder such as: dysgraphia, dyslexia, deficit attention or any other related problem. My other guess was that he just had a bad day at home and he was upset. In any case, it would be recommendable to keep track of his daily performance in order to obtain a more accurate conclusion since it is very difficult to diagnose learning disorders with high accuracy at first sight.

It is very important to detect if this is a temporary problem due to some external issue or a more serious threat to his learning like autism or any other personality disorder. "It is essential that parents and teachers be encouraged to seek professional advice if they feel that a child is not developing language normally, keeping in mind that the range for 'normal' is wide indeed" (Lightbown & Spada, 2011, p. 24). Likewise, I had to deal with a seven-year-old boy who misunderstood most of my instructions. Perhaps, this particular student had an attention deficit problem or language processing disorder; in my view, he had problems with information processing. Unlike the second grade student, this kid was willing to do the tasks, and did not seem to be frustrated by his performance. However, he was simply misunderstanding the instructions. Consequently, it was necessary to observe his performance over and over again. This kid simply needs more guidance, attention and effort from teachers' part because his problem lies on keeping up with the rest of the class.

In the high school where I carried out the teaching practice, there were learning problems as well; however, one special case caught my attention. There was a girl coursing

the first year of Bachillerato with slight mental retardation. Since the standard book used by the other students did not meet her requirements, the girl had a special book designed for her. In this case, I carried out my class normally and did not put emphasis on this fact since I was not familiarized with it; rather, the focus of attention was on the whole class as always. Nevertheless, I asked for her participation once and she accepted my request, the girl basically was to change the form of a verb in third person on the blackboard along with the help of her classmates, she performed well in this activity. From this case, I can conclude that social inclusion in the educative field is important in order to have a fair society. However, depending on the case, some students need special education, this girl perhaps needed extra help from other professionals and her family because I realized she felt isolated from the rest of the class. Briefly, it is relevant to highlight these particular cases because oftentimes these students need extra help from their parents, psycho-pedagogues or psychologists since teachers cannot overcome these problems by themselves.

On a general basis, students reacted favorably to my teaching in every class. They accepted my presence and gave answers to my requests at all times; moreover, their overall behavior was acceptable. I realized some of them were more motivated, whereas others got distracted. During my teaching experience, motivation is understood as willingness to participate and carry out the activities proposed by the teacher. On the other hand, I think that some of them got distracted by the fact that I was a new person inside the class. From my experience, the level of motivation was never equally distributed among all learners, and this outcome is due to the fact that, oftentimes I did not assign fair time to everyone, the other possible cause is that some of the students did not simply like the subject. In either case, it is important to notice that students react according to how you treat them, some of them only need more confidence and self-esteem, whereas others need to work harder and make an extra effort to understand the subject. Although there will always be a variety of students coming

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from different backgrounds, teachers must struggle to make their subjects as interesting as possible.

Undoubtedly, the experience as a teacher caused an impact on my personal and teaching practice. "The profession of teaching takes place in a number of contexts that will place demands on your work. Some of these demands reinforce one another, while others are sometimes in conflict" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010, p. 8). I am fully sure that this experience will provide ground for my professional practice. After having experienced a set of different scenarios, I think that it is going to be helpful in two ways. Firstly, I think that I will be able to identify common learning problems in learners. Secondly, I will identify those difficulties that are not under control. Put differently, I will identify the possible variables under control and the incontrollable variables during my teaching activity.

As a teacher, I believe that teaching is not all about practice but the teaching practice has to be grounded on theory as well. In my view, it has been very useful to read topics such as learning theories, learning difficulties, teaching approaches, behavioral problems, approaches to second language acquisition and its main proponents, learning and age, and the cognitive and psychological factors that people undergo when learning a new language. I think that all of this theory has been of great help. In the same way, having kept records of my teaching practice was of great help because it allowed me to self-assess my own performance, and the conclusions I obtained from my practice were in direct relation with what I experienced. I am convinced that the accumulated knowledge I have obtained is far from being sufficient. In spite of this, I have managed to understand the underlying principles of learning and teaching. This, along with my willingness to self-educate over time, will be the ground for my future practice.

Reflection on Experience

For me systematization is an overall activity which entails analyzing failures, successes, positive and negative aspects; it is beyond a comparison between good and bad outcomes; the analysis has to be nuanced. For example, what aspects from student's point of view seemed difficult for me, the emotional aspects, whether or not I encountered difficulties, how I overcame these difficulties, what aspects were overlooked, the level of confidence I acquired over time and other subjective elements of my teaching. In summary, my teaching experience was positive because I overcame varied situations which provided me certain clues for my practice. I believe that I managed to set up an appropriate learning environment because, most of the time, I experienced positive outcomes from learners. From my understanding, teaching starts long before the practice, it starts with getting to know your students, setting up the short-term and long-term goals. In this respect, "Goals provide students with a focus for their learning, which leads to more time and energy going to that area of focus" (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010, p. 128).

Teachers must have a vast set of skills in their professional field. In simple terms and from my view, a good teacher is someone who masters content knowledge and communicates effectively with learners. Put differently, a teacher is someone who possesses knowledge and knows how to communicate this knowledge in the best possible way. Even though experience is an important element when it comes to teaching, the opposite view is not conclusive at all. From my own self-assessment, I am someone who possess little experience working as a main teacher but, at the same time someone who feels competent regarding content knowledge. In my opinion, teachers who communicate with learners explicitly are the ones who reach success. This form of effective communication involves teachers and learners communicating emotionally, intellectually and consciously.

In the same way, it is an ineluctable duty for teachers to keep abreast of everything surrounding their profession since teaching, like any other profession, is not a static activity.

It is very important to highlight this point because learning-teaching theories and approaches have changed over time and they will probably continue to change. From my perspective, some of the most important factors to be taken into account in our current days are: Cutting-edge technologies for teaching and learning, new learning environments and latest scientific studies derived mainly from neuroscience, psychology and cognition. "Everyone hopes that the discoveries of neuroscience will help explain human intelligence, but no one expects such an explanation to be done in a single step" (Pinker, 2015, p. 85).

On the other hand, in our current globalized world overwhelmed by an enormous amount of information available almost to anyone, it is necessary to distinguish between three types of information: truthful information, information yet to be proven right and false information. Upon this issue, another question raises: How do I know which information is truthful? From my experience, one way to solve this problem is to seek for multiple sources of information. It is very relevant to stress this reflection because currently, the problem is not lack or accessibility to information anymore, but finding truthful and suitable evidence for the given purpose.

I believe that it is always possible to improve any aspect of the teaching practice. Since learning is a never-ending process, it is our duty to be abreast of the current theories, practices, technological advances and even teaching apps. Educative researchers such as Angel Pérez Gómez (2012) state that learning entails a change of attitude and thus teachers have to able to embrace new knowledge. It often happens that there are controversial topics about psychological perspectives, methodologies and studies, besides researchers do not always agree on all the studies, it may happen that prior knowledge overlaps new knowledge. Rather than being a negative aspect, I think it is positive when new knowledge meets acquired knowledge because it is part of the continuous learning process. For instance, one of the current aspects that I have paid attention to is the mind and the fact that the separation of

reason and emotion is no longer valid. For neuroscience has proven that the emotional aspect is involved in every human action; consequently, the dichotomy between reason and emotion is an outdated approach (Gómez, 2012). The sheer emotional aspects do have a real impact on learning, motivation and willingness to do something.

As I already stated, it is always possible to enhance our teaching performance, but that enhancement sometimes entails changing the attitudes, beliefs and many other aspects. Before considering any important change, it is recommendable to assess the situation and be able to determine what changes are needed and why, what outcomes are expected and what is the ultimate purpose. In my understanding, there is no need to be an about-face change to reach good outcomes. It is not necessary to forego the personality or change the system of values either. Rather, micro changes can make a great deal. For instance, I consider that the negative aspect of my practice was in relation with classroom management. Namely, I should have established clearly and unambiguously rules for participation, the criteria for assigning rewards and reprimands and other important details about my classroom management. The best way to overcome any negative aspect is through repeated practice and effective communication. It is highly important to set rules from the very beginning; moreover, the practice itself must be accompanied by a deep post-analysis in order to assess the outcomes.

On the other hand, there may be other aspects that must remain unchanged for the sake of the students and teachers. For example, I would never forgo my personality traits or family values when it comes to teaching nor I would change my sense of humor. I think that the teacher must be perceived as an intellectual authority before students at all the times but also as someone whom students can trust. To reach this level of confidence, it is vital to acquire inner motivation and my inner motivation comes from within.

In general terms, through my experience, I learnt from myself, from my students and from the environment in which I worked. Firstly, I learnt from myself because it was

fundamental to go over my knowledge and skills. At the beginning, I had the feeling that I was doing something wrong because I failed to explain clearly some of the topics. Afterwards, in the early stages of my teaching practice, I realized that I had competence regarding content knowledge, but I was lacking effectiveness in communicating my message. How can I teach efficiently so students catch the basic idea? That was the first question that I formulated myself. When it comes to teaching, it is not enough to know something, it is more about how you deliver the message. I eventually overcame these difficulties by rehearsing my practice over and over again. As I acquired more confidence, I became more competent communicating with learners.

Secondly, I learnt from direct contact with learners because they are the existing reason for the teaching profession. It is always possible to learn from other people because they provide the lively experience that no other source does. It is about learning from a direct contact with human beings. Namely, learners provided me contents to teach because every time someone asked for deeper explanation, I had a chance to prove my communicative skills and interact with learners.

Thirdly, I learnt from the environment since the learning environment is another enriching source. "One way of approaching environment analysis is to work from a list of questions which focus on the nature of learners, the teachers and the teaching situation" (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 2). There is no sense in applying teaching techniques, methodologies or strategies if the teaching-learning environment is not embedded into the teaching-learning activity; the truth is that each teaching-learning environment is, in some way or another, unique; besides, there is almost always a random element in it.

In summary, the interplay among these three elements provided a significant experience. I would like to stress that my overall experience was highly required as well and I think that the teaching experience helped me to shape my social skills; it helped me realize

my mistakes and more importantly: it provided me with an enriching opportunity to learn from myself.

Teaching Environment

Analyzing the teaching environment is vital because part of the success or failure depends, in different degrees, on the environment. However, the level of importance assigned to teaching environment may be relative to some. From my perspective, the teaching environment played an important role during my practice.

There were diverse teaching environments during my experience; however, I would like to highlight two particular cases: public and private institutions. I worked both in public and private institutions and in my view, there still continues to exist remarkable differences between private schooling and public schooling at least in one aspect. By and large, public institutions are most of the time overcrowded. Although there can be evidence against this fact in some other public institutions currently, for instance, a recent document issued by Andes agency on July 2016 states that "The perception that public education is low quality is starting to fade away. Due to the application of public policies, currently, public schooling vies with the private schools in learning quality" (Agencia Pública de Noticias del Ecuador y Suramérica , 2016). In spite of this, the minister of education stated in the same document that " while it is certain that, we already have good quality high schools that could readily surpass private high schools within the country. Notwithstanding, we still have deeply poor-quality educative centers as a consequence of different factors" (Agencia Pública de Noticias del Ecuador y Suramérica , 2016).

I think, on a general basis, that students having obtained a degree in public institutions are not less leveled than those who obtained a degree in private schools. However, there is not a conclusive evidence. This is because there are complex variables in play such as socioeconomic variables and background knowledge.

From my own live experience, working in private institutions was not easier nor less tiresome because the basic principles, techniques and strategies are all the same. The level of effort required to reach success must be the same. However, the main difference was the class size. The class size does have a real impact on students and teachers at least from what I observed. The real problem lies on the fact that it is not virtually possible to assign a fair time to everyone; besides, it is more difficult to keep track of everything happening in the classroom. In my conclusion, class size does affect on the teaching-learning process.

Another important aspect about schooling in our national reality is that the English subject is taught to students under the approach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because students' mother tongue in Ecuador is Spanish; moreover, English is not the second official language in Ecuador. "The English Language curriculum is designed for students in Educación General Básica (2nd to 10th) and Bachillerato General Unificado (1st to 3rd), whose mother tongue is not English" (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of teaching English in our local environment is to grant students the tools to use English as a Lingua Franca. In this way, English could be used in a social context to communicate with speakers of different mother tongues. As a result, all of my classes were carried out under the EFL approach so it was needed intertwine this approach with the contents, strategies and goals. This is the reality in both public and private schools where most of the books are intended to non-speaking English people. In spite of this, I consider that this is not as radical fact because, nowadays, teachers have at their disposal many tools to work with. In more advanced levels, learners of different ages, with or without the help of teachers, can be part of a virtual community, virtual realities, social media and so forth, using English for different purposes.

An additional relation regarding the teaching environment is with authorities and teachers. In my case, the authorities offered me their help under no condition. Although I have

to say that I attempted to carry out my practice in other public and private institutions wherein I was not allowed to do it. Fortunately, the teachers with whom I worked were very sympathetic, they offered me unconditional help at all the times, they were open minded and offered me feedback and advised whenever needed. I am very thankful to them. Also, it is relevant to stress that often the evidence to be gathered from these institutions regarding pictures and videos is hard to obtain due to the already established policies; the authorities are, most of the time, reluctant to have their students video recorded because they think it is a violation to their privacy.

Likewise, it is very important to reconstruct the experiences in order to know what factors contributed to the successes or failures during the teaching practice. Furthermore, systematization provides the basis for constructive critiques, by making experience accessible to others, comparing commonalities and differences. In my personal perspective, systematization is not very different from other forms of research. Systematization employs a practice-theory approach rather than a theory-practice approach.

Eventually, systematization is worth doing since there are cases where practice or direct experimentation is at some point required. As a way of example, psychological experiments such as the operant conditioning, social experiments under controlled variables or experiments that involve a decision-making process all entail live practice and experimentation. The above mentioned experiments followed a process similar to systematization. Firstly, the practice is carried out more than once. Secondly, the conclusions are obtained once the experiments have been repeated over a period of time. The outcomes sometimes overlap or not with theory. Briefly, all of these studies needed real experimentation in order to obtain more accurate conclusions hence researchers are enabled to draw conclusions unhesitatingly.

CONCLUSIONS

By systematizing my practice, I learnt from myself, my own personality, and from my social and emotional skills with others. I also consider systematization being an open and flexible process. In my understanding, it is a continuous assessment not only as a teacher but also as a person in contact with others. Besides, systematization of experiences is not the ending process; rather, it is a helpful tool that enhances teachers' knowledge.

In my view, systematization is very helpful since it provides certain clues on which to ground the practice, systematization helps with inner doubts about the very teaching practice. For example, it is possible to pose questions such as what did I do wrong? What did I do right? What could I have done? And so forth. I think that reflecting on the teaching practice will always be right since it is good to prevent future mistakes; reflecting on experience is also good because it helps foster the things that were carried out rightly.

To have a successful performance as a teacher, it will always be important to include elements such as organization, coherence and learning objectives. All of these elements must be embedded into a lesson plan. To achieve better outcomes, lesson planning must be aligned to students' needs. From my view, lesson planning entails a process of outlining different activities and then edit what is needed.

It is of paramount importance to handle body language properly. From my view, body language in the teaching field must never be underestimated. This premise involves being both physically and mentally active. From my own vivid perception, someone who stands still all the time while talking can easily cause boredom; someone who has scarce body language does not communicate successfully either.

Having done the journals of experiences during my teaching practice helped me identify my weaknesses and failures as a teacher. I want to stress that it is highly important to identify these two variables as soon as possible and do something about it; in addition to this, the

journal of experiences provided me guidance to write the systematization of pedagogical experiences.

During my teaching practice I was able to videotape some of my classes. This practice helped me to analyze unnoticeable elements that I may have overlooked. For instance, it helped me analyze whether my voice was being used properly or not; whether or not I was causing confusion, and my overall body language during the practice. Therefore, I was able to recognize my mistakes through these recordings.

Eventually, systematization of experiences is an ongoing process; it is the cornerstone of a teacher's work. I think that reflecting on the practice is always needed, no matter if it is done mentally or informally because the objective is invariable, that is, to improve the quality of teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

My first recommendation for beginner teachers is to always notice mistakes like tone of voice and inappropriate body language, it will always be decisive to notice these mistakes from the very beginning. Additionally, it is necessary to amend these mistakes immediately. In order to avoid these two mistakes, I recommend rehearsing the teaching practice over and over again privately.

Another recommendation is to be consistent and coherent with learning objectives of each class. Learning objectives must be the main ingredient of every teacher. I must stress that it is important to set up a timeline for these objectives; additionally, teachers have to attain observable and measurable objectives. The different objectives for any given situation will have to account for different variables such as students' age, proficiency level, cultural context and the timing of the lessons.

I recommend self-motivation and self-confidence to teachers. From my opinion, one of the best ways to motivate a learner is not with words but with visible actions. Therefore, inner motivation is shown through actions to learners. In this way, teachers have to be coherent and consistent both in action and thought.

It is inevitable to deal with slow learners, troublesome students or passive students, it is a requirement to diagnose the possible causes, for the causes may be varied. Nevertheless, three common causes found may be emotional problems, learning difficulties, or even undernourishment. It is recommendable to overtly dialogue with learners about these issues, and hypothesize the possible cause for their underachievement. Additionally, teachers must make and extra effort to deliver continuous follow-up to these learners, in some cases they could use information technologies in order to provide feedback.

As technology facilitates our lives, I highly recommend an electronic portfolio or e-portfolio in order to keep track of everything. In addition, apps for teaching can be very

empowering when needed. This kind of tools can be of great help to systematize the teaching experience. Furthermore, the use of printed paper is reduced helping the environment.

My last recommendation deals with self-education. Being an at-a-distance student for a long period of time taught me the value of self-education and guided education. Therefore, it is recommendable for teachers to always keep update in every aspect of the teaching activity, aspects such as technological breakthroughs, latest approaches in teaching, newly developed theories in language acquisition and so forth will help you become a better teacher. From my view, the constructivist theory is embedded into at-a-distance education.

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