Teachers´ collaborative work:
new toward for teacher´s development

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Abstract

Chilean education is undergoing through a process of structural change driven by new educational reforms. Proper implementation of educational change necessarily involves the main actors responsible for reforms implementation: teachers. Researches agree that reforms implementation introduces elements of stress among teachers. This situation adds to the challenges faced by schools located in communities with high rates of social vulnerability. This qualitative research, based on a case study, explores the practicing teacher's discourse regarding their obstacles and facilitators factors based on their experiences with collaborative work with peers. The data obtained shows that collaboration between peers is associated with teachers' professional development and their working experiences as teachers.
Keywords: Teaching work; development policy; qualitative methodology.

Trabajo colaborativo docente: nuevas perspectivas para el desarrollo docente

Resumen

La educación chilena atraviesa por un proceso de cambios estructurales impulsados por nuevas reformas educacionales. La apropiada implementación del cambio educativo necesariamente ocurre a través de los principales actores encargados de la implementación de las reformas: los docentes. Las investigaciones sobre el tema coinciden en que la implementación de reformas introduce elementos de tensión entre el profesorado, situación que se suma a los desafíos que enfrentan los establecimientos educacionales situados en comunidades educativas con altos índices de vulnerabilidad socioeconómica. Esta investigación cualitativa, basada en un estudio de caso, explora el discurso de los docentes en ejercicio con respecto a su experiencia de trabajo colaborativo con sus pares contemplando los factores facilitadores y obstaculizadores del mismo. La información obtenida permite interpretar que la colaboración entre pares y su implicancia a lo largo del desarrollo profesional de los docentes se vincula a las distintas etapas vitales y de inserción laboral.
Palabras clave: Trabajo docente; política de desarrollo; estudio cualitativo.

Trabalho colaborativo docente: novas perspectivas para o desenvolvimento docente

Resumo

A educação chilena atravessa um processo de mudanças estruturais impulsionados por novas reformas educacionais. A apropiada implementação da mudança educacional necessariamente ocorre por intermédio dos principais atores encarregados da implementação das reformas: os docentes. As pesquisas sobre o tema coincidem em que a implementação de reformas introduz elementos de tensão entre o professorado, situação que se soma aos desafios que enfrentam os estabelecimentos educacionais situados em comunidades educativas com altos índices de vulnerabilidade socioeconômica. Esta pesquisa qualitativa, baseada em um estudo de caso, explora o discurso dos docentes em exercício a respeito de sua experiência de trabalho colaborativo com seus pares contemplando os fatores facilitadores e obstaculizadores deste. A informação obtida permite interpretar que a colaboração entre pares e sua implicação ao longo do desenvolvimento profissional dos docentes vincula-se às distintas etapas vitais e de inserção laboral.
Palavras-chave: Trabalho Docente; política de desenvolvimento; estudo qualitativo.

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Introduction

The experience of learning opens the human being to the world, this happens again and again in life and especially in school, however this experience is not exclusive to students but, for an adequate professional development, this experience must also be lived by the adults that accompany the learning processes: the teachers. In this way, the teaching work allows the person who performs it to constantly experience the magic of the connection with a new knowledge, whether with students, teachers, parents or a technique. In short, learning is inseparable from action, as explained by Senge et al. (2012, p. 43), an aspect that especially in the teaching career, configures the development space of the teaching profession in experience (Schön, 1998; Tardif, 2004).

This understanding of what must happen in a school for the professional development of teachers is expressed jointly with the urge to promote educational improvements at international and national levels (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014). Especially in Chile, in recent years there has been a constant restructuring in the components of the education system, an element that, as Fullan (2012) expressed, in terms of teaching staff has stood out for promoting changes in being and teaching in everyday life and bureaucracy of the teacher's work through the measurement of their performance. These changes have resulted in the enactment and implementation of the National Teacher Evaluation System (NTES), the Educational Integration Program and the incorporation of co-teaching systems, in addition to the entry into force of the Professional Teaching Career. All these aspects seek to promote professional development according to the improvement of the quality of education from initial training to teaching in the national education system, which hopes to reverse the process of devaluation of the teaching profession in Chile (Cornejo, 2009; Hochschild, Díaz, Walker, Schiappacasse, & Medeiros, 2014; Ruffinelli Vargas, 2016) and strengthen public education (Valenzuela & Montecinos, 2017).

Policies and educational change

These changes in the structure of teaching work, for authors such as Fullan (2012) are one of the elements that would trigger a climate of tensions in the face of the uncertainty of the unknown and the exercise of a role in which it is not taken into account as a professional. In both aspects such as salary, working hours and teaching hours, teachers in Chile declare not feeling heard (Acuña Ruz, 2015; Cornejo, 2009). In addition to the above, the excess of changes in the work, mainly administrative of teachers has been indicated as a factor that would limit the success of the reforms. Especially when the lack of connection between the organizations that mandate a reform, the culture of the institutions and the people involved in its application predominate (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Spillane, 2005).

Considering that a fundamental feature of the teaching profession is that its development occurs with others and that

in the words of Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) would be in this meeting when the teaching work is professionalized. It is important to take into account that the knowledge of the educator carries with it the marks of his work, that is to say, the encounter with others is built through teaching. This aspect is essential in the professional development of teachers, which would be marked by individual experiences of the exercise together with others (Tardif, 2004, p. 15).

Consequently, it is key to understand that collaborative work comes from the vision of a work culture in which goals are shared and operated interdependently to achieve common goals. In this way, collaboration is a means to achieve collective ends that allow the learning of attitudes, habits, beliefs, practical knowledge and build schools that are learning spaces for everyone (Salokangas & Ainscow, 2017). Collaborative relationships are thus a way through which teachers leave the classically called "egg box ecology" (Goldenberg, 2003, p. 10) in which relationships with peers would not be established, to strengthen personal ties or improve student learning.

Another relevant aspect of collaborative work is related to the idea that those who carry out this type of work are on equal terms, that is to say, the interdependence of knowledge and skills means that there is no single expert to follow, but that all who are in the working group they must generate contributions to achieve the proposed purpose. In this way it is evident that the work undertaken together with others generates favorable learning for the people involved, which has been identified in the educational field as a reference of effective school, in addition to an evident indicator of school inclusion as indicated by Ainscow and Sandill (2010).

The described evidence against the particularities of teaching work, in a context of critical reform understand the context where innovations arise. Consequently, research has indicated that, recognizing the value of the teacher for the improvement of learning, rather than individual change, an educational organization requires a change in the culture of collaborative work to promote sustainable improvements in student learning and jointly facilitate the professional development of teachers, as recognized researchers have analyzed, including Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West (2012), Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin and Vasquez Heilig (2005), Hargreaves and Fullan (2014), Harris (2012).

The international evidence presented is undoubtedly a mirror of Chilean reality, while Ávalos (2013) and a team of researchers indicated the need to increase the time to organize the teacher's work, giving special importance to generating spaces to work collaboratively between teachers in order to improve their practices through peer support. This recommendation corresponds to a later publication by López and Gallegos (2014), who related the collaborative work promoted by the directors of educational centers, with the improvement in the satisfaction of teachers with their performance in the classroom and in the institution in general. As Flores (2014) also observed through the analysis of the processes of induction to new teachers through informal processes carried out with other teachers. This process in the national context has generated tensions, because although the importance of the

teacher is recognized for school success and the improvement of the quality of learning processes, teacher reforms would not have considered the differences between the professionalization of the role according to the teachers themselves in the teaching career proposals, which according to studies such as those published by Acuña Ruz (2015) were preferentially focused on accountability and economic incentives, a situation that would be reversed today (Avalos-Bevan, B., 2018).

Faced with this national and international panorama, it is necessary to review in practice how collaborative work leverages in favor of educational improvements and of professional professional development in order to converge on what aspects of Chilean educational reforms could enhance peer work. , questions that guided this research work.

Consequently, subjective perspectives regarding collaborative work among teachers will be addressed from the speeches of teachers in practice who raised their experience with peers from the same educational establishment.

Method

Design and context of the study

The research presents a qualitative approach and corresponded to a case study (Stake, 1998) in a compulsory secondary education center of a technical and scientific humanistic nature in the coastal city of Talcahuano, Bíobío Region. The educational establishment is characterized by having a high percentage of young people with socioeconomic vulnerability between 67 and 100% annually, that is, attending a group with a low socioeconomic profile, as established in its Report of results in the SIMCE national test, the Ministry of Chile education.

The teaching staff of the high school is divided between those who teach in humanistic scientific subjects and those who carry out technical courses such as Care for Older Adults; Nursery Care; Industrial Food Processing and Collective Food Services. The establishment is covered by Law n ° 20.248, Preferential School Grant (PSG) and has a team in charge of implementing the School Integration Program (SIP), to accommodate the Special Educational Needs of the youth of the Special High School for young people from high school.

The information obtained about collaborative work was collected through in-depth interviews with active teachers, in order to reveal through the individual discourse the main characteristics of the collaborative work they developed in their establishment, as well as the factors that would facilitate and limit the peer work. The research period corresponded to a school semester. The interview script was thematically validated according to areas of collaborative work development and consequently the questions asked considered the Professional Development categories; Collaborative work and culture institution; Collaborative work activities.

The teachers interviewed were informed of the content of the interview, agreed to be recorded and that the information be used for research purposes through informed consent.

Participants

The study participants were nine teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. The following table 1 describes the main characteristics of the participants:

Table 1. Description of the participants who were part of the study.

Participant	Teaching area and gender	Years of experienc
Teacher 1	Language and Communication Teacher	2
Teacher 2	Biology and Natural Sciences Teacher	10
Teacher 3	Physical Education Teacher	3
Teacher 4	Math Teacher	10
Teacher 5	Language and Communication Teacher	18
Teacher 5	Food Teacher 1	3
Teacher 6	Food teacher 2	5
Teacher 7	English Teacher	15
Teacher 8	Math Teacher	25
Teacher 9	Chemistry eacher	22

The teachers in exercise fulfilled the characteristics of teaching in Secondary Education and being hired for more than part-time in the educational establishment. The teachers knew the purposes of the study and signed an informed consent.

The results were analyzed from the ATLAS.ti software, in which codes were generated from the data obtained, with a total of 146 codes emerging from the interviews. Subsequently, based on the emergence of reiterations and common senses among the codes, 9 categories or dimensions of analysis were raised (Trinidad, Carrero, & Soriano, 2006; Marradi, Archenti, & Piovani, 2018).

Results and Discussion

The codes merged after saturation of the data, allowed to establish relationships between the different interpreted topics, in order to connect the various aspects that would involve the development of collaborative work in a specific context, such as the educational center in question. In this way, the categories emanating from the individual discourse of each teacher managed to combine shared visions regarding collaborative work. As observed in the following semantic network elaborated from the categories:

It was evidenced that teachers especially identified the need to support each other in peers and seek common strategies to perform in contexts that they considered difficult due to the social vulnerability of students, an aspect that they generally described as different from what is known and of high emotional demand. This characteristic, explained by the high segregation by socioeconomic origin that persists in the Chilean educational reality (Elacqua, Martínez, Santos, & Urbina, 2016; OECD, 2004; Valenzuela, Bellei, & De Los Ríos, 2011) is a condition that, from informality, it allows teachers to connect with each other and help each other, especially to new teachers, as Flores (2014) had indicated for the national reality, but which has also been evidenced in collaborative cultures as a way of sustainable improvement (Dufour & Fullan, 2013).

Therefore, a characteristic of collaborative work is the benefit of this experience in vulnerable contexts and how teachers would consider it necessary that this particular contribution of collaborative work be enhanced in the future. In addition, these elements associated them with the evidence they had obtained through the processes of formal collaboration within the framework of the inclusion programs (IP). This program, among other things, would have allowed them to achieve a better mastery of the course group by having permanent support in the classroom, especially for the necessary control of the discipline, both because young people did not learn at the same pace, as by lack of academic habits in students. Because of this experience and the interpretation given by the teachers, the joint work in the classroom was identified as a future perspective of the collaboration, that is, the co-teaching (Mineduc, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the co-teaching would imply a series of challenges associated with the facilitating and impeding factors identified by the teachers, while the time factor was considered highly relevant to design and implement a co-teaching that allowed both teachers to work properly. In turn, the characteristics of differential educators, such as creativity and the search for learning of all students, was recognized as an element in favor of the development of this teaching methodology, as observed in the following quotation: "it helps me with others students who are not in her group, she also helps them; We share work in the classroom and that is much more efficient" (Educator 5).

Figure 1: Semantic network generated from the analysis of the interviews through Atlas Ti analysis software. Own elaboration.
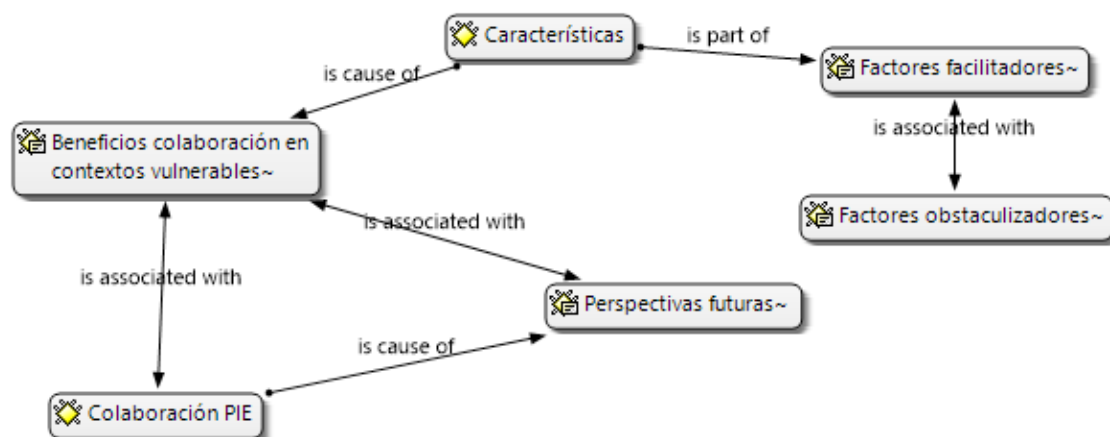
Obs: Semantic network caption: CHARACTERISTICS of collaboration are in relation whit BENEFITS OF COLABORATION IN VULNERABLE CONTEXT and how works NTES TEAM COLLABORATION. That works for create FUTURE PERSPECTIVES in accordance with FACILITATING FACTORS and HINDRANCE FACTORS.

On the other hand, the data obtained allowed us to interpret that the collaboration between peers and its implication throughout the professional development of teachers would be linked equally with the different vital stages and labor insertion. While younger teachers mainly attributed the benefits of collaboration to the possibility of learning to work with students adapting to their socio-economic reality, an aspect that had not been considered in their undergraduate training, as national researchers have emphasized (Ferrrada, Villena, & Turra, 2015). In this way, the initiation of a professional career would require an induction process, in the own knowledge of the teaching practice but also in the socio-cultural reality of young people and their families (Flores, 2014), aspects that have been successfully considered in the National Teacher Policy in Chile, as Ávalos-Bevan (2018) has proposed.

The recognized studies of Eddy (1971) (cited in Tardif, 2004) and Lortie (1975) had identified stages in the teaching career which were delimited by their integration into the community of teachers of the establishment in which they worked. Where Eddy (1971) identified three phases in the initiation in the teaching career: the first corresponding to the transition from student to teacher, in which he had to follow rules to be efficient in containing students; the second corresponding to the acceptance of the teaching hierarchy and the importance of complying with the informal rules of the staff room; the third was finally the discovery of the real students, who were not necessarily willing to learn or be sensitive to the teacher's rewards and punishments.

For his part, Lortie (1975) identified a phase of exploration (from one to three years) where they began to assume the functions of teaching through trial and error, to be accepted and validated. Stage in which many times young people dropped out of teaching; and another phase of stabilization and consolidation (three to seven years), in which the professor was recognized by the institution, had more confidence and mastered more aspects of the work.

Both investigations have been fundamental in the understanding of teacher professional development, however it is necessary to consider in the teacher's insertion into the classroom, the structural characteristics of education, as it is demarcated especially in Chile. Consequently, the educational segregation and the consequences that this has on the professional development of teachers call to review a first stage in the professional development of "adjustment" between the educational reality and the cultural knowledge, especially connected with the culture of the students themselves.

This perspective is justified with the information recorded in the commune of Talcahuano, as among the category of impeding and facilitating factors, the strength of interpersonal relationships to promote or limit collaborative work among peers was evidenced. This, meanwhile, despite maintaining common goals, teachers recognized the problematic situation of working with peers when there was no affinity or same degrees of commitment. Situation before which young teachers recognized the need for greater peer support

to solve classroom problems and curricular development in a vulnerable sociocultural context that involved discipline crisis and difficulties to specify the teaching-learning process as they had previously defined.

Final considerations

In the light of what has been found, the design of organizational structures that promote a culture of collaboration, based on collective improvement and the construction of shared learning is especially relevant when generating educational processes in social vulnerability contexts. The promotion of a culture of collaboration, as described by Dufour and Fullan (2013) and later Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) requires that it occur in pairs and should be a process facilitated by the management teams of the establishment. In this sense, it is not enough just to declare the need to improve teamwork, real spaces must be created within the school routine that provide time for collective reflection and analysis of effective pedagogical practices within each teaching team. Leadership and its ability to generate structures is an aspect that is already known but which is important in the face of innovation and transformation of school culture (García-Martínez, Higueras-Rodríguez, & Martínez-Valdivia, 2018).

All of the above is related to what was previously explained by Tardif, while teachers throughout their professional careers build knowledge that is characterized by being social. Social in the sense that it emerges in a collective space and legitimizes itself with the other teachers through rules determined by a system. Consequently, the knowledge of the teachers would be in constant transaction between what they are individually, that is, their emotions, history, cognition, expectations and what they do in school work with their peers and students (Tardif, 2004).

The revised background invites reflection on collaborative work in Chile, a reflection that must be placed from the collective perspective of being and as a teacher. Aspect that in this country, would be closely related to the socio-cultural characteristics of the environment in which the teacher would perform, promoting or limiting the frustrations of the teacher, especially the beginner, regarding their abilities and professional development.

Consequently, based on the elements reviewed, the need to address educational improvement from an integral perspective that includes a necessary adjustment and improvement to the continuous training of teachers and the evaluation of their work, as well as there are demands to improve the co-teaching and establish cooperation ties between peers to positively impact student learning, an aspect enhanced by the different school leaders (Weinstein, 2017).

Along with the above, it is necessary to know and recognize the teaching culture and the context where pedagogical practices are meant. Therefore, in the face of the implementation of a mentoring policy for new teachers, it is especially relevant that this policy considers the contextu-

al characteristics of Chilean classrooms. So that the main difficulties of vulnerable contexts are integrated as a real and empirical issue, allowing teachers to effectively adjust their expectations to reality so that the innovation and improvements they propose to their own teaching exercise are anchored in a specific scenario. In this way, those who act as mentors could not be experienced people in the same educational context that the young teacher enters, but who has also been able to excel to the difficulties of the context. These elements will undoubtedly encourage him to motivate and invite the teacher to enjoy the labor insertion process and mainly stimulate his professional development at different stages of his life as a teacher.

Finally, the recognition of the tensions between the meaning of collaborative work in vulnerable contexts with the difficulty of performing in these contexts and especially the limitation of generational disagreement. They are elements that reveal the importance of incorporating a sense of capabilities in the processes of implementation of the innovations that are developed, as an element that of sustainability to the changes since, although categorical, the studies analyzed by Fullan (2012) indicate that "the change will always fail if we do not find a way to create infrastructure and processes that involve teachers in the development of new conceptions" (p. 68).

This is how, in this part of the development of the teaching career in Chile, the space could be found to allow teachers to appropriate their work and promote improvements in their establishments by developing their own abilities. Educational research seeks to collaborate in the implementation processes.

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