

Pre-Service Teacher Identity Construction from a Familial Coexistence Perspective

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Abstract

Familial coexistence issues are a current problem that pre-service teachers might face during their teacher identity construction. Factors such as family coexistence, economy, health, and emotions can lead to struggles in teachers' personal and professional identity. The construction of identity, nevertheless, is an ongoing process in which teachers can always change their beliefs and behaviors in order to improve their teaching performance, in light of different aspects such as the social context, the place where they work, and the people who surround them. The project was made using an autobiographical method in which the pre/service teachers lead the investigation and were the participants themselves. Two main conclusions were the difference between cohabitation and coexisting; In addition, the importance of having both parents' perspectives when making decisions. This document reviews the influence that family has on pre-service teacher identity construction. The factors that familial coexistence bring to the pre-service teachers' identity construction during the career process and, later on in their professional field.

Keywords: Identity, Teacher identity, Familial Coexistence, Pre-service teachers

Resumen

Los problemas de convivencia familiar son un asunto actual que los docentes en formación pueden enfrentar durante la construcción de su identidad docente. Factores como la convivencia familiar, la economía, la salud y las emociones pueden generar luchas en la identidad personal y profesional de los docentes. La construcción de la identidad, sin embargo, es un proceso continuo en el que los docentes siempre pueden cambiar sus creencias y comportamientos para mejorar su desempeño docente, a la luz de diferentes aspectos como el contexto social, el lugar donde laboran y las personas que rodearlos. El proyecto se realizó mediante un método autobiográfico en el que los profesores en formación lideran la investigación y son los propios participantes. Dos conclusiones principales fueron la diferencia entre coexistencia y convivencia; Además, la importancia de tener la perspectiva de ambos padres a la hora de tomar decisiones. Este documento revisa la influencia que tiene la familia en la construcción de la identidad del docente en formación. Los factores que la convivencia familiar aporta a la construcción de la identidad del profesorado en formación durante la carrera y posteriormente; en el campo profesional.

Palabras clave: Identidad, identidad del maestro, coexistencia familiar, maestros en formación

Degree Requirement

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Familial coexistence has an impact on pre-service teachers' identity construction; during the formative process, student teachers can find some possible factors that can affect their family life, such as finances, health, and emotional issues. Familial coexistence problems might affect the student teachers' disposition and motivation to become teachers, and they may be a cause of desertion.

This research will benefit other pre-service teachers in the way that they will recognize some problems that occur in a family and could affect their identity as teachers; taking into account their background, they will have a base to adjust their behavior to solve the problem. This is relevant because family support is one of the most important elements for teachers to construct not only their personal but also their professional identity. Hence, it is important to investigate the pre-service teacher identity construction in relation to familial coexistence because the field is extensive and we would like to know more about this relevant topic.

The main purpose of this research is to find out the possible effects (positive or negative) that could experience the pre-service teacher identity construction from the familial coexistence context. The relevance of this topic is to expand the familial coexistence research related to the pre-service teacher identity construction.

1.2 Literature Review

For this review, we have actually completed a conceptual framework, in which we explore the concepts of teacher identity and familial coexistence.

Through the years, the family bond has been considered one of the most important bases in society and in each person's life due to the influence that family might have when making decisions. Therefore, in the identity construction of language teachers, it is remarkable the role that family plays during the development of their profession and career. Therefore, the possible influence that familial coexistence has in pre-service teachers' identity construction is the aim of this study. For this reason, we consider the following documents to support our literature review to have a wider perspective on this field.

1.2.1 Teacher Identity

Vaillant (2007) refers to teacher identity as the way teachers live subjectively their work and which are the gratification and dissatisfaction factors they perceive with respect to their work. Also, it has a relation with professional identities, diversity, and with the perception of the profession by themselves and by society. The teacher's identity refers to their personal experience and the role that is recognized in society. (p.3-4)

1.2.2 Familial Coexistence

It is the process that makes possible a common negotiated space of meaning construction among the members in an interactive and simultaneous way. For symbolic interactionism the interaction is the space or unity that enables the self and the society: through interaction, the symbolization is generated, kept, or changed permanently. Social interaction is what enables a negotiated reality (Giraldo, 2008, p. 432)

Family is a fundamental part of people's lives, the first social circle in which they learn, share, and get their first impressions of their identity; as Renteria (2008) claims, the family is the space in which the members have a daily process of interaction, where they recognize, fortify, make, construct or transform themselves by creating a common space that makes existence possible. Having said that, the family is considered the key point of any interaction, the most important one in fact, because the family prepares the individual for society.

Regarding the permanent coexistence, struggles among family members may have consequences in the members' social life, affecting the behavior either positively or negatively. Family issues are caused by difficulties in areas such as economy, health, emotions, and communication. "As a permeate process of interest, attachments, attitudes, roles, and other elements that dynamize the daily coexistence, for this reason, creates alliances, divergences, and tensions" (Renteria, 2008; p.432). Familial coexistence is the starting point to create social interactional tools that enable social dynamics. Individuals gather up all the skills and competencies that they have learned in their family circle and put them into practice in other social contexts.

On the other hand, the family has a strong influence on the construction of identity. Family is the relational space where the individual constantly perceives and earns experiences that allow for the construction of personal identity, that is, who they want to be, how they behave, or what aspects they have in common or not with their family members. In this case, "identity is understood

in terms of broad cultural strata such as race, class, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, language, and physical abilities” (Olsen, 2008, p.4). All the factors mentioned before are relevant in the process of shaping identity, in the first moment inside the familial context. Then identity is brought into the social context made up by school, friends, and surrounding people. Torres (2017) claims that “one’s identity is constructed and communicated in various discourse forms, reflecting how learning changes who we are and how we become members of a determined community by creating personal histories” (p. 44).

Consequently, during the process of personal identity construction, they start also shaping their identity as pre-service teachers. It is an ongoing process where pre-service teachers take aspects from their personal identity and use them to build and change their teacher identity. For this reason, the construction of identity is a changeable process that looks for constant improvement; according to Vaillant (2007) refers to the teacher identity; “As the teachers live subjectively their work and which are the gratification and dissatisfaction factors. Also has a relation with professional identities diversity and with the perception of the profession by themselves and by society. The teacher’s identity refers to their personal experience and the role that is recognized in society”. (p.3-4). Based on this, we can say that the teachers’ identity construction is an unfinished process, which is always looking for changes that can improve the teaching performance. In addition, it is permeated by family, society, and the context.

Furthermore, related to the factors that might affect the construction of teacher identity, we can say that it is important to take into account familial, emotional, and ideological aspects. First of all, family in relation to the concepts previously mentioned; second, emotions, which are related to the possible motivation and behavior towards teaching; and finally, the ideology, due to different perspectives about teachers’ beliefs and institutional alignments. In other words:

The characterization of teachers’ identities from the emotional dimension focuses on teachers’ value to the affective relationship with different school members; that is the student/teacher bond and work climate. From a cognitive dimension, the need for professional development and the sense of either commitment or detachment in relation to their working conditions and school demands are the main characteristics influencing their teacher identity. (Salinas, 2007, p.5)

Thus, familial coexistence could bring possible negative aspects with family relationships, due to “Family conflict increases job dissatisfaction and job-related stress while reducing the organizational commitment. Besides, it leads to problems in family life. Therefore, it is of vital

importance to reduce work-family conflicts experienced by teachers” (Erdamar & Demirel, 2013, p. 4924).

Finally, after the literature review, we discovered that almost all the papers analyzed are based on the qualitative and interpretive paradigm. The methods used were structured and semi-structured interviews, autobiographical narratives, narratives, and focal groups. Indeed, this literature review has a direct relation with the paradigm and methods chosen by us for our research project, since our investigation can contribute to getting a wider view of the field.

In conclusion, family is one of the pillars of society, where individuals learn their first social skills and develop as persons and as members of society. Teacher identity is shaped by emotional and familial factors that define the way teachers act, being family the most important, as familial coexistence is constantly changing along with life. For this reason, the family has a big influence on pre-service teachers’ identity construction and determines the way they behave in their family circle, school context, and society. Family first influences the construction of personal identity, and then this personal identity shapes the teacher’s identity in the professional experience.

1.3. Research question

What is the influence of familial coexistence on pre-service teachers’ identity construction?

1.3.1. General objective

To establish the effects of familial coexistence on pre-service teachers’ identity construction.

1.3.2. Specific objectives:

- 1.** To register the pre-service teacher experiences in regard to familial coexistence related to English teaching.
- 2.** To interpret the given results taking into account the positive and negative answers of the selected population.
- 3.** To determine the possible effects of familial coexistence that a pre-service teacher might face during the identity construction process.

2 Method

2.1. Research Methodology

This study is qualitative research, which “has a great impact on data collection and its analysis and the interpretation of results” (Pathak et al., 2013). It is used under the interpretative paradigm, which “allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In seeking the answers for research, the investigator who follows interpretive paradigm uses those experiences to construct and interpret his understanding from gathered data” (Thanh & Thanh, 2015)

This research allowed us to choose the autobiographical method; for this reason, the adequate instruments for this research were the interactive interview and the written narrative as a method to analyze the results of the data collection. “The autobiographical [method] is one of the most important in a phenomenological approach, as it allows for the self-awareness of the participants through the experiences built-in speech, also built in what we can call the life sense. The ideal autobiographical production context is the conversation” (Hoyos, 2008)

2.2. Data collection

In this research, the participants were two students from the English teaching program at Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, during the first semester of 2021. The participants’ age was around 20 to 24, and their language level was B2. The criteria to select the sample of this research were the following: The students were in the last semesters; they had to be taking either the third or fourth practicum course; it was important that they were doing their practicum course, because of the impact of this experience on their teaching identity construction, and how this could be meaningful for the research and their practicum experience as well. For this reason, we, the researchers, took the decision to lead the participation by ourselves in order to do it as an autobiographical study to take into account our own experiences.

For this research project, we found that the most adequate method to use was purposeful sampling because this project is guided by autobiography research. Also, this sampling method offers us the simplicity of sampling and the ease of research, data collection can be facilitated thereby. Taking into account this is an autobiography project.

We decided to use an interactive narrative as the main instrument for data collection. As mentioned earlier, the participants were Monica Estefania Hachi Morocho and Gabriel Jaime Ríos Macías. When we conducted the project, we were students in the last semester of the English teaching program. Monica was 22 years old. She was doing her practicum in a public school in the municipality of Bello, where she taught elementary school, mostly in 4th and 5th grades. Her family at the time was composed of her parents and her brother. She lived with them in Bello. On the other hand, Gabriel was 22 years as well. He lived with his mother, uncles, and cousin in the municipality of Rionegro. He was doing his practicum at the university, in a program called Big Brother, Big Sister. The program consisted of giving support to and tutoring the students in the first semester of the program of English teaching. Table 1 presents the order and time in which data collection was carried out.

Table 1. Action Plan

Objectives	Dates	Strategies	Participants	Instruments
To register the pre-service teacher experiences in regard to familial coexistence.	10/04/2021	Interactive narrative format	Pre-service teachers are in charge of the research.	Interactive narratives
To interpret the given results taking into account the positive and negative answers of the selected population.	18/04/2021	Coding the recording of the interactive narrative	Pre-service teachers are in charge of the research.	Transcription table and analysis
To determine the possible effects that a pre-service teacher might face during the identity construction process.	25/04/2021	Analyze the answers given in the interactive narrative along with our own comments	Pre-service teachers are in charge of the research.	Template category matrix for data analysis

2.3. Data analysis

It was done taking into account the categories presented in the categorical matrix with the purpose of giving an answer to the research question defined at the beginning. First of all, we applied the instrument to gather up all the information. In this case, it was an interactive interview (Appendix A) composed of 20 questions divided into 2 categories which are familial coexistence and teaching identity. After that, the following step was analyzing the responses taking into account the relevance of the answers provided. After we analyzed them, we made comments to what we observed. Later we did the coding process, which started doing the transcription of the interactive narrative. Afterward, we filled a category matrix for data analysis, in which we wrote the main information given in the answers and some memos answering the objectives. Table 2 below shows the main categories and sub-categories that support the construction of the instrument for the data collection.

Table 2. Category matrix

Objective 1: To establish the effects of familial coexistence on pre-service teachers' identity construction.

Theoretical base	Main category	Sub-categories	Data Collection
Familial Coexistence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rentería et al., (2008) • Giraldo (2008) 	Family Coexistence It is a space where it is possible to create a negotiated relationship in a simultaneous and interactive way among family members that coexist in the same household.	Family Support Assistance or help that families offer to any of its members on any issue that they may experience and in the achievement of their personal, professional and academic objectives.	Interactive narratives
		Family Factors All the possible factors that can either affect or benefit the familial coexistence, such as economy, health, emotions, lack of support and communication among others.	

Objective 2. To interpret the possible effects of familial coexistence

Teacher identity	Personal identity	Professional identity	Decoding process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salinas (2017) • Vaillant (2007) 	It is the way people perceive themselves, and in which they present themselves to society. It Is established first in the family and, as they grow, it is shaped in the social context.	It is the way Teachers build, define, and redefine their beliefs about what the teaching profession entails and about who they are as professional teachers. It is also shaped by the personal identity; the role in society and the way they behave. Also, it can be shaped by the immediate society which they are surrounded by.	
		Social influence Refers to the aspects in which people change their behavior to meet the social and cultural needs. Also, it is about the social expectations or ideas that exist around some professions and trades. Possible stereotypes that society bear in mind regarding the professions.	

3. Findings

The participants found a difference in concepts between cohabiting and coexisting, since having cohabitation does not mean that there is a good coexistence; on the other hand, having a good coexistence does not always come from cohabitation in the same place. This contrast is compared with the definition of familial coexistence from other research projects; which claims that a coexistence just exists when there is a common negotiated space which the members share. In this regard, participant 1 stated the following:

- “[In] my family, in general, there is a good coexistence, there is a good relationship between each member of the family... Right now, we don’t have real cohabitation because we are not living together, but still, we have a good coexistence”. Q1:P1G

Participants put their families as the base of their identity; the family has a remarkable influence on identity construction since this is the first place where participants took the different elements to build their personal and, later, the professional identity. Participants highlighted the relevance of their families in both identity construction process. Below there are some excerpts that evidence what they think about the role of their families in their identity construction.

- “I think that the most relevant factor is my family; they helped me to build the person that I am, and also the way that I grew up” Q12:P2M
- “I use my parents like a mirror, to see what I want to continue doing and also what I don’t want to do again” Q13:P1G
- “Everyone supports each other’s decisions or their ideas, in everything that the person wants to do. I think that all of these situations allowed me to grow as a person” Q3:P2M
- “The family is the first base that I have to build the person that I am... you learn from it, it is like you take all of those things and you build the person that you are” Q12:P1G

The participants highlighted how remarkable it is to have both parents and their support, which offers them balance when making a decision in their lives. They related it as having two different points of view, since mothers were more protective and caring and fathers just supported any decision without thinking about the possible events that might happen. Below there are some excerpts that support this finding.

- “They always support me. I have always counted on them. They always are like ‘why not give it a shot, you know?’ So, I think it allows for personal growth because they haven’t stopped me or told me ‘Don’t do it’ or ‘try another thing’ but they have been there and they have wanted the best for me and them.” Q3:P1G
- “They support my decisions, sometimes with a little doubt, but they always are like ‘do it we are [here] for you to support if there is something we can do’. It feels very great to have a family that supports you and is there for you.” Q4:P2M

The participants draw a partial relationship between both identities, where the personal identity influences the professional one. It is through the personal identity where the participants filter those elements, they needed to construct the professional identity. Participants reveal that they took their good characteristics with the intention of being better in a work context.

- "I think that some aspects help me or influence my professional identity but not all the aspects because being professional means to pass your personality through a strainer and you take all of the good things or the things that really are going to help you to be a great professional." Q15:P2M
- "You need to know how to separate your professional identity from your personal identity, you don't act how you are in the classroom in another context" Q15:P1G
- "If they work as a teacher and I am studying to be a teacher, they probably will be my inspiration, in the values they (parents) contribute but not in all my pre-service teacher identity construction" Q14:P2M
- "I think that they (parents) contribute a lot [to] the way I behave, the way I am. It has helped me more than I guessed... If I see that my family is very supportive with me, I do the same, as a pre-service teacher, with my students" Q14:P1G

The participants draw a partial influence of the society both taking into account the professional identity construction process, and in some way, when they decided to study the career. However, both of the participants agreed on the different thoughts and points of view that society might have about the profession in general. Both of them share the same ideas regarding the role of teacher in society and the lack of support by the government in the education field. Therefore, the participants see those problematics as something they need to change and become an inspiration, while turn out those limitations for their professional exercise. Below there are some excerpts that support this finding.

- "It has been an influence but not a lot, in my case I would say that I have influence more in the English field, because everyone said "hey you should study English, English is a good opportunity, English is something that will bring you a lot of opportunities" Q18:P1G
- "I think like the society doesn't have a huge influence in my choice of career but a little bit...think that she (a friend) influenced me because then I look for university and the program" Q18:P2M
- "Stereotypes that people have about teaching, teaching English, people say "if you are an English teacher, you teach it singing song, filling blanks...I think that about our job is to get up with those stereotypes." Q19:P1M
- "The society has an opinion that a teacher gets the money very easy, or wants everything easy, everything is not easy, less in Colombia that is a country where doesn't matter the education, I think that teachers in Colombia are little value, to be a teacher here doesn't mean nothing" Q19:P2M

4. Discussion

4.1 Implications and interpretations

Family is the most important point in the identity construction of pre-service teachers. Having both parents symbolize an extra benefit for the participants since they get two points of support. Having two different perspectives when they are going to make a life decision establishes a balance or equalizes the decision-making moment. It also brings them the possibility to think about the positive and negative points that emerge from those thoughts, so it represents getting a wider point of view than they would have if they had to decide all on their own.

Having a good coexistence with family does not mean that they have to cohabit in the same place; likewise, cohabitation in the same place is not an assurance that the coexistence exists. According to the theory, to have a possible familial coexistence, it has to exist a common negotiated space in which the members coexist. To contrast that idea, we find out that to have a coexistence there is no need to share a common negotiated space, which means the cohabitation; therefore, cohabitation and coexistence do not mean the same.

Family is the first place where pre-service get the main characteristics and aspects to construct their personal identity. In addition, it is from the personal identity where teachers take the good aspects to build their professional identity. This is confirmed by taking into account the statement by Renteria et al. (2008), who et al. (2008), who claim that family is the place where we get the social interaction tools and gather up all the skills and competencies to put them into practice in the real context. Thus, the support and advice from the family are also important to grow and develop as a person.

Having the support of the family in the career choice and their accompaniment during the pre-service teacher process is really remarkable, due to the positive impact that it generates on the students. This support is reflected in the impact that pre-service teachers have on their students.

4.2 Recommendations and conclusions

This research project is a little part of the extensive field in which people can investigate the implications that family has on the construction of identity; in this case, we explored the importance that family has on pre-service teachers' professional identity and personal growth.

We recommend that further investigations go deeper into the differences that could exist between cohabitation and coexistence since we found a remarkable difference between the theory and the answers given by the participants; therefore, it would be interesting to go beyond this topic and try to discover what people think about these terms. Also, the implications that this topic might have on this research field.

In addition, we recommend carrying out the autobiography research, in order to get a closer look at what teacher-researchers may want to discover and analyze their own perspective from a different point of view using themselves as participants. The advantages that this method offers include saving time and letting researchers reflect on their own identity through a kind of catharsis, which can be very powerful and meaningful to get to know yourself better and to help you understand why teachers are and behave the way they do.

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Appendix A: Interactive Narrative

<p>Researchers: Gabriel Ríos Macias, Mónica Hachi Morocho.</p>
<p>Advisor: José Vicente Abad.</p>
<p>General Objective: To establish the effects of familial coexistence on pre-service teachers' identity construction.</p>
<p>Instructions: Welcome to our research project. For the following discussion, the participants have to share and talk about their experiences regarding their personal and professional development and how their families help, support, or are a determinant factor in pre-service teacher's identity construction. During the interactive narrative, some questions will guide the discussion as soon as the topic shows up. Please be honest with your answers, and feel comfortable sharing your personal experiences. Feel free to express your thoughts in English or Spanish; language should not be a limitation.</p>
<p>Question's part 1. Familial coexistence A) How is your family composed and what is your role? B) How do you consider your family's coexistence? C) Is your family environment a space that allows personal growth or limits personal development?</p>
<p>Family support D) Do you consider that your family supports your decisions? E) Did your family agree or disagree when you decided to study this career? F) What were their thoughts and opinions about your decision?</p>
<p>Family factors G) How is your family situation regarding the economic stratum? And how does it affect or benefit your career election? H) Have you ever felt a lack of support from your family? How has this situation manifested itself? I) How would you describe the communication in your family? How much can you express yourself with your family about professional choices? J) Has health been a determining factor in your family? How?</p>
<p>Questions Part 2. Personal Identity A) How would you define your personality? B) What do you consider are the most relevant factors that have helped you to build the person you are? C) How does your family help to build your personal identity?</p>
<p>Teacher Identity D) How has your family contributed to the construction of your identity as a pre-service teacher? E) How do you think your personal identity influences your professional identity? F) How much have your beliefs about teaching changed from the first semester until today? G) What do you think is missing from your identity construction as a pre-service teacher?</p>
<p>Social Influence H) How has society influenced your choice of career? Why? I) What do you think is the opinion that your immediate society has about teachers? J) What inspiration or limitation can you find in society to continue on the path of teaching?</p>