

Title

BECOMING A TEACHER

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Program

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Course

Practicum IV

The idea of studying this career came after trying to find something I could do for the rest of my life, different from being behind a desk, counting and giving certain results to a company where I would feel mechanic and where I would feel I do less than what I am capable of doing.

It all started when I was in 10th grade, I did not know exactly what I wanted to be when I grew up, my mom was a teacher and even knowing I used to look up to her, I was really unwilling to be one, the fact of having a bunch of kids on my charge never was a dream of mine. She was always excited to teach new things, the school mission was (and it used to be a reality) to not only teach kids things, but also to teach them to coexist with each other. I used to help her in the School she founded, and used to help her with practical things like having the kids together, and have in order the materials they used in class. I always had empathy with small kids, but I never thought of it as a way to live.

My first teaching experience happened, almost as a coincidence, When I was in eleventh grade and in my School to celebrate the teachers day, they planned an activity, a whole day in which eleventh grade students were supposed to take teachers place and give the lessons instead of them, I was supposed to give a lesson of geography (something I knew about but was not completely aware of), as I supposed the first words that came out of my mouth were filled with anxiety and a lot of not very positive feelings, I was scared, I was nervous, sweating, I was not happy at all. I do not really know how I was put together for so long, eight graders were very intimidating. As I was trying to look not so stressed in the outside, I found out that the best option to be a little bit more comfortable was having my students uncomfortable too. I started to interact with them, at the very exact moment they start speaking, I felt the weight off my shoulders and now I was glad to be there, the kids (3 years younger than me) were very pleased to be heard, and they felt confident to ask the things they would never ask to the actual

teacher. At the end, it was a very good experience, good enough to make me start thinking on it as a life choice.

Then I started to have more interest in teaching, this desire evolved when I was able to belong to a reading club, the “teacher” or guide that we had, showed us a completely different way to learn. Learning through reading and through discussion and debating was such a new and rewarding way of learning. Then I started to compare those teaching practices with the others I had experienced as a student before, and I realized how those previous practices affected me as a learner. Teachers with lack of commitment, knowledge and pedagogical awareness had an impact in the way I learned; and I started feeling the responsibility to make that change.

After thinking the path that I could follow in this new dream of being a teacher, I always considered literature and sign language as an option, I have always think that the reason that we are able to create, imagine and dream is the ability we have to communicate, that is the advantage we have regard other living beings. Communication and language always caught my attention. The reason I choose English was not as interesting as anecdote can be, I choose English because of a personal interest I had, I used to listen to songs in English since I was five years old, my father used to work in a language center, and he used to bring home music for me to listen. Christina Aguilera, Avril Lavigne and all kind of ballads were present in my daily life. I learned the language by myself and later realized that allowed me to learn a lot of other things by myself. Watching series, reading, singing songs in English (and actually being able to understand) were a possibility that came from learning the language.

Choosing this career and the concepts that I have about being a teacher have changed a lot, after doing my practicum I realized that maybe I was a little too rushed in judging teachers practices, I realized that there are a lot of external

factors that can influence teachers' practicum; that sometimes as teachers we just give up too soon thanks to those factors, and that educating people is not a matter that can be delegated to just one person. A teacher can be inspirational, and students can inspire the teacher, a teacher can be a guide, but also students can guide the teacher. Education has a million ways to be "reached", and in every single one of those the teacher plays an important and essential role, but society is just too blind to understand that it is a responsibility and everyone's work.

Coming to the specific moment of facing the classroom, I have to admit that that was one of the most nerve-rocking moments of my life, I remember preparing myself physically, orally and mentally to face it, I planned three days before, and I remember not sleeping enough the night before. I was anxious, I was scared, I was thinking of all the possible scenarios that I could face to. The most *common thought* was: *"what if". What if they do not like me? What if they do not respond to what I planned for them to do? What if my voice is not enough to catch their attention? ; and then a million thoughts and words from colleagues that had more experienced, came to my mind giving me even more falling scenarios that could happen.*

It was a third grade, 7:00 am. As they were coming into the classroom, I remember most of them hugging the teacher, saying (Buenos días) and calmly sitting down in their seats, as the teacher was introducing me, I had the opportunity of watching them and the way they behave. I was not that anxious anymore, I reached them, greet them and I felt even less anxious, without knowing, it became in something natural to me, they were surprisingly listening, and responding to everything I proposed them. After finishing the lesson what was even more shocking to me was the fact of them being extremely kind and motivated to learn, asking me if I wanted to come back and what would we do in that case. At last, I felt grateful and it ended up being a very rewarding moment.

It was only there where I understood that there are experiences in which you just cannot be prepared to face them; because even after the million stories I listened from my colleagues and the good amount of situations that were once shown to me in my teaching/ pedagogical classes, I was not prepared for what I faced.

Growing up in this profession forces you to learn theory that can be useful for your practices in a future, the need of knowing the context that I was facing, and trying to do my best in order to “achieve” the purpose of it, made me start looking for instruments and arguments to use in the classroom.

In this sense I come to realize how important it is to establish the principles that will lead and address the process that as teachers we must assume: to plan. As a teacher one could just subtract the planning and objectives of a language bank book that is in a language policy and apply it to the classroom, without making any connection or reflection on the reality where this process is being carried out. Principles then will be essential to help us increasing the reflection that we make upon our teaching practice.

One of the principles that I used in my working area is the principle that states that “The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and wellbeing. (INTASC, 1991), this, due to the fact that the responsibility of the process can not only be delegate to the teacher, but to all the community involved in the learner’s life. A good example of how can this principle work is the fact of hand parents into the process, from small responsibilities to larger ones. Projects made by both (learner and parent) will not only allow parents to be more aware of what the learner is learning, but also will allow them to be a support on the process, this will have as result confident learners and aware parents.

As we know, the idea of education is not a matter of just giving or facilitating the learner with a handful of information for them to memorize; on the contrary, is a matter of offering them the possibilities they have to solve their problems and helping them also to identify those elements that might help them in the way. This notion it is certainly attached to the principle number 4 purposed in the The Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing and Development: “The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.” Linking this principle with the theory of Henry Giroux is profitable, since in order to educate people owner of their own purposes and goals to fit into the necessities of the society it is essential to shape them into being critical beings, capable of changing their realities.

Teaching students to be critical and capable to solve problems, will break then, all the parameters of traditional education, dealing with the methods, strategies and even the “content” presented on the classroom; It is mandatory to be changed because promoting this kind of goal in our context will lead us to be not only, more diversely methodological in our lessons, but also to be aware of again, the diversity that we can find in a classroom, and how open to change we must be in order to find those particularities as possibilities and not as problems, all of these responding to the principle number 3 in the same model, which states that “The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners”. Methods, approaches and strategies must shape and be used in order to fit the learners and not visceversa.

At this moment of my teaching career I can say that it has not been easy, it can even be at times an utopia to be part of an educational process in which the purpose of educate can be successful. At times can be hard, but it is also the most

rewarding thing I have ever done, so no matter how difficult it gets, as long as I decide to be here, I will enjoy and believe that there is a lot of work to be done.



References

- Council of Chief State School Officers, INTASC Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing, Assessment, and Development. 1992.