



Original article

## Novice teachers: limitations for their professional development in the Ecuadorian context

Docentes noveles: limitaciones para su desarrollo profesional en el contexto ecuatoriano

Novos professores: limitações para seu desenvolvimento profissional no contexto equatoriano

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### ABSTRACT

University teaching requires quality academic training and specialization, in accordance with the learning needs of society. The objective of this research was to understand the limitations of professional development that novice teachers have in the university context. The focus of the study was qualitative directed towards the empirical experience of new teachers belonging to various Faculties of the Central University of Ecuador. The information was collected through an interview, using a guide of structured questions; This instrument was designed based on the research objective and was validated by a triangulation of experts that mitigated the different problems of researcher bias. Data were analyzed using the Aquad Seis program. The results showed that there are three dimensions that interfere in teaching functions: the first, the limitations of students, because they do not have enough previous knowledge, show little interest and have a lot of autonomous work; the second, the limitation of their personal conditions, such as little experience and orientation; and the third, institutional conditions such as few resources and overload of activities. It was concluded that novice teachers do not have sufficient academic training to solve these limitations, but they recognize them and can solve them with different actions in the short term.

**Keywords:** new teacher; professional development; education; college; experience.

### RESUMEN

La docencia universitaria exige una formación y especialización académica de calidad, acorde a las necesidades de aprendizaje de la sociedad. El objetivo de esta investigación fue comprender las limitaciones de desarrollo profesional que tienen los docentes noveles en el contexto universitario. El enfoque del estudio fue cualitativo direccionado hacia la experiencia empírica de docentes noveles pertenecientes a varias Facultades de la Universidad Central del Ecuador. La recopilación de la información se realizó a través de una entrevista, mediante una guía de preguntas estructuradas; este instrumento se diseñó en base al objetivo de investigación y fue validado por una triangulación de expertos que mitigaron las diferentes problemáticas de sesgo del investigador. Se analizaron los datos por medio del programa Aquad Seis. Los resultados reflejaron que existen tres dimensiones que interfieren en las funciones docentes: la primera, las limitaciones de estudiantes, debido a que no cuentan con suficientes conocimientos previos, muestran poco interés y tienen mucho trabajo autónomo; la segunda, la limitación de sus condiciones personales, como poca experiencia y orientación; y la tercera, las condiciones institucionales como pocos recursos y sobrecarga de actividades. Se concluyó que los docentes noveles no tienen una suficiente formación académica para dar solución a estas limitaciones, pero las reconocen pudiendo solventarlas con diferentes acciones a corto plazo.

**Palabras clave:** docente novel; desarrollo profesional; educación; universidad; experiencia.

### RESUMO

O ensino universitário exige formação acadêmica e especialização de qualidade, de acordo com as necessidades de aprendizagem da sociedade. O objetivo desta pesquisa foi compreender as limitações do desenvolvimento profissional que os professores iniciantes têm no contexto universitário. O foco do estudo foi qualitativo, direcionado à experiência empírica de professores iniciantes pertencentes a várias faculdades da Universidade Central do Equador. As informações foram coletadas por meio de uma entrevista utilizando um roteiro de perguntas estruturadas, este instrumento foi elaborado com base no objetivo da pesquisa e validado por uma triangulação de especialistas que mitigaram os diferentes problemas de viés do pesquisador. Os dados foram analisados por meio do programa Aquad Seis. Os resultados mostraram que existem três dimensões que interferem nas funções docentes, sendo a primeira as limitações dos alunos pelo fato de não terem conhecimentos prévios suficientes, demonstrarem pouco interesse e terem muito trabalho autônomo; a segunda limitação são suas condições pessoais como pouca experiência e orientação; e a terceira condições institucionais como poucos recursos e sobrecarga de atividades. Concluiu-se que os professores iniciantes não possuem formação acadêmica suficiente para sanar essas limitações, mas as reconhecem e podem resolvê-las com ações diferenciadas em curto prazo.

**Palavras-chave:** professor iniciante; desenvolvimento profissional; educação; universidade; experiência.

## INTRODUCTION

Society increasingly requires universities to train professionals who can face and solve different problems that contribute to their development and well-being. This responsibility falls directly on the teachers, who must be specialists in pedagogy and in the contents of their areas. Vallejo (2020) adds that it is also important to have research knowledge and high levels of interpersonal development, so that students can acquire the skills of the 21st century and can perform and be competent in all their actions.

Faced with these demands, teachers must assume new roles that allow them to meet the learning needs of a globalized society that is constantly changing. Vallejo-López (2020) mentions that teachers must direct their efforts so that students are excellent professionals, protagonists of social, productive, economic, cultural and political change, who contribute their knowledge and experience in production and services for the human well-being.

These new teaching roles must be developed based on their academic training, their research skills, their professional experience, and their mastery of the assigned subject. They are nourished by their knowledge in pedagogy, to be able to guide and guide the construction and understanding of knowledge, during the entire stage of training in higher institutions (Irrarazabal Gavancho, 2022).

In this same sense, Loyola *et al.* (2014) comment that the teacher has to fulfill other roles, such as: ethical, innovative, creative commitment, dynamizer of the pedagogical process, learning planning, promoting new experiences. It becomes a connector of knowledge with reality, a follower of established regulations and a developer of

thoughts, so that university students perform and are competent in life.

It is clear that the responsibility of the university professor is key to the development of science, which is why students must generate the curiosity to learn and investigate permanently. In this way, the teacher can contribute both professionally and academically. According to Padilla *et al.* (2016) "Scientific education requires a comprehensive rethinking to meet the demands of humanity, due to globalization that frames the new needs and aspirations of the human being in the search for better development" (p. 22).

This contribution must be aligned to respond to the global world, developing innovation from the classroom with the support of technological tools and the new concepts of active methodologies, mainstreaming the learning of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in pursuit of the well-being of people and the improvement of the world, to reduce social inequality. Eagle *et al.* (2020) mention that the solution is for all professionals to be able to apply their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the Environment.

Based on these ideas, it is confirmed that the university teacher must gather a range of knowledge and professional experiences to be able to exercise his chair, so a new teacher will face many difficulties in the context of university education. That is why in this research the author sets out as an objective: to understand the limitations of professional development that new teachers have.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The focus of the study was qualitative, because it was directed to know the meaning of the experiences of new teachers in terms of problems acquired during professional practice. In this same order of ideas,

Balcázar *et al.* (2015) mention that this approach "tries to describe and interpret some human phenomena, often in the own words of the selected individuals, instead of considering the researcher's perspective" (p. 21). That is why it is necessary for the researcher to capture the meaning of these actions directly.

The sample was for convenience, because 68 new teachers, 37 men and 31 women, were selected directly and according to the degree of availability and criteria of the researcher, belonging to 17 faculties of the Central University of Ecuador. The information was collected through an interview, using an instrument validated by means of triangulation of expert criteria to mitigate the possible bias of the researcher, a guide of structured questions that inquired into the problems in their professional development, as shows table 1.

**Table 1-** Matrix of interview questions

problematic	Questions structured
Problems in your professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What problems have you encountered while teaching your subject?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know the possible causes of the problems encountered in your teaching practice?</li> </ul>
Limitations for teacher professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the limitations that you have for the normal development of your teaching duties?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you aware of the possible causes of limitations in the exercise of your teaching duties?</li> </ul>

Before conducting the interviews, the new university professors were informed about

the purpose of the research and their verbal acceptance for the interview and authorization to be recorded were requested; In addition, the anonymity and confidentiality of the information collected was guaranteed.

The transcription of the 68 interviews was made; Next, the information was reduced and hierarchical in a coding matrix by analyzing qualitative data through the Aquad Seis software. From here several dimensions and categories are determined.

## RESULTS

It is relevant to indicate that, of the 68 novice teachers surveyed, 55% had less than two years of experience as university teachers and the challenge had up to seven years of experience. With the results obtained, it was possible to establish three dimensions that interfere in the teaching functions: the first, which includes the existing problems with the students; the second, mentions the problems of personal conditions and the last, which indicates the problems of institutional conditions.

Table 2 shows the first dimension, where the interviewees were able to identify four categories, in which 76.3% show that the students do not have the necessary prior knowledge so that they can be linked to the new knowledge addressed in the subject. This causes limitations in the teaching-learning process, because a leveling must be carried out based on the diagnosis made.

Also, 13.5% mention that students have little interest in their taught subjects, presenting permanent discomfort to generate attention and an adequate learning environment. In 5.1%, students comment that they are assigned an excessive load of teaching activities by the authorities of the career. This generates that they do not dedicate themselves to planning their classes and

evaluate themselves properly. Finally, 5.1% affirm that students have inadequate access to the career, due to the fact that the student selection processes do not align with the required profiles.

**Table 2-** Student limitations dimension

Category	%FA
lack of knowledge previous	76.3%
Scarce interest	13.5%
excessive load	5.1%
Access inadequate	5.1%

Table 3 shows the problems of personal conditions, depending on the teaching practice, in which 75% of the respondents mention that they have little experience as university teachers. This work is carried out in coordination with the development of the subjects assigned to them by the authorities, due to their few years of work at the university and not having the specific training required by the chair.

They also indicate, 22.5%, that the problems in their chairs are caused by situations of an attitudinal nature; that is, there are unfavorable conditions in terms of direct communication between educational actors, lack of foresight in calling meetings and indications, not socializing with teachers and administrative staff and knowledge about social dynamics.

The other 22.5% of the respondents affirm that the problems in their professional development are caused because they are not clear about the academic processes, such as knowing the document formats, reports to present, delivery times, curricular approaches, models and teaching methodologies. to follow and functions of the administrative staff and authorities.

**Table 3-** Dimension limitations personal conditions

Category	%FA
little experience	75%
attitudes unfavorable	22.5%%
lack of orientation	22.5%%

Table 4 addresses the professional development problems caused by institutional conditions. 67% of those surveyed comment that the authorities of the careers do not support them with access to the use of digital classrooms, laboratories, allocation of spaces for teachers, as well as they are not taken into account in academic programming and allocation of these.

Meanwhile, 17% say that the problems are caused because they do not have enough teaching resources. Examples of this are the provision of computers, projectors, digital cartography, laboratory elements, sports implementation, models, books, software, among others, that facilitate their substantive function so that they can teach their classes towards educational quality.

On the other hand, 11% of the teachers surveyed argue that the problems are caused by deficient technological support; that is, the university does not have internet access in all areas. This makes it difficult to use technological resources, methodologies supported by research, consultations with academic platforms, use of digital platforms, promotion of creativity and strengthening of knowledge.

Finally, 5% of those interviewed comment that the problems are due to the fact that the authorities overload them with many academic hours. In this way, there is very little left without time for planning, reviewing work, research and linking with society, also required for the evaluation and accreditation of the career.

**Table 4-** Dimension limitations conditions institutional

Category	%FA
Management deficient	67%
lack of resources	17%%
Deficient support technological	eleven%
activities recharge _	5%%

These results made it possible to fully recognize the problems that interfere with the limitations of professional development that novice teachers have, mainly the lack of support from the authorities. They are characterized by the little experience as a university teacher and the little previous knowledge with which the students enter when studying the subject. This also reflects their discomfort, so they suggest looking for different strategies to overcome these difficulties.

## DISCUSSION

Teachers must be permanently updated in curricular content, teaching methodologies, contextualized evaluation, positive interactions among other roles to improve their teaching, supporting this statement. Velásquez-Arboleda (2019) mentions that the university professor must "offer the student tools and guides that help develop their own learning process, while addressing their doubts and needs: the teacher will cease to be the source of information, to become a learning facilitator" (p. 3).

In this sense, it is clear that novice university professors have a certain disadvantage when compared to other professors, due to several factors such as: years of experience, support from their peers, recognition by authorities, and advanced research. load *et al.* (2019) ensure that there must be training that contributes to new teachers having a better professional development, aligned towards

scientific production and their academic practice, thereby reducing their difference with more experienced teachers in university professional practice.

Enriquez *et al.* (2029) mention that new university teachers, when they start working, face various difficulties in their first seven years, even if they demonstrate complete mastery in teaching, because they lack experience and good relationships with their peers; Due to this, teachers should enter an induction process before exercising their chair (Palacios *et al.*, 2022), in which a good training of future teachers is ensured.

It is clear that teachers have many difficulties in their practice, so Higher Education institutions must seek a continuous monitoring process, because it is a key stage for the success of university quality. This is how new teachers must be prepared to face and overcome the problems shown in this research.

It can also be said that these new teachers recognize their lack of experience as teachers and also when teaching subjects in which they are not specialists. When contrasting the results, it is evident that there are demands and needs for new university teachers to develop professionally, so they must be trained so that there is a bridge for the acquisition of knowledge that is acquired during the teaching experience. Here the creation of a defined process is justified in which follow-up and accompaniment are carried out during the first years of teaching.

It was also possible to know that most of the new university professors mention that their personal relationship with the authorities, teachers and administrative personnel is good, managed within respect and cordiality. Marcillo *et al.* (2021) indicates that the importance of teamwork for career development is understood as a level of

academic training, but few respondents comment that, however, there is no professional support from the authorities for different reasons.

It is rescued that the authorities, for convenience, recharge new teachers with pedagogical hours, causing them not to have time to carry out real planning (Posso *et al.*, 2022). These problems constitute the main limitations they have; but new teachers are an important part of universities, because they generate a generational change with new perspectives and visions in the real context. Therefore, according to García *et al.* (2019), mentions that "it is true that new teachers are more inexperienced and are more exposed than the rest, but the relevance of their first teaching and evaluation practices is high if we take into account that they will be the teachers of the future (p. 5).

Finally, it can be said that there are limitations in the professional development in the teaching exercise of new teachers, but they are immediately covered by the fulfillment of a teaching vocation and institutional objective, which is why what was mentioned by Posso (2022) that says "the responsibility of teaching is part of the change in education, walking with educational policies, allows the success or failure of education, training new leaders to change these policies, forming the new society" (p.95).

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**Conflict of interests:**

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

**Contribution of the authors:**

The authors participated in the design and writing of the work, and analysis of the documents.



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