

Working Paper

**Integrating Student Teachers' Learning
through an E-portfolio**

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Abstract

This working paper reports on an action research study aimed to explore and analyze the process of creating and using an E-portfolio of evidence to promote integrative learning of Student Teachers (STs) to further their self-discovery as EFL Teachers. The Process of creating the portfolio was framed within one Practicum semester and viewed as a capstone experience addressed from the perspective of an integrative learning approach. The construction of portfolios was carried out in three phases that had a progressive and transformative intention. The analysis and the interpretation of the data resulted in three categories referring to the influence that interaction with peers, cooperating teachers, and pupils exert on how STs perceive themselves in the development of their confidence and their pedagogical convictions, as well as the challenges about their previous teaching knowledge and their future paths as teachers. STs perceive self-transformation as a continuous process of meeting students' academic and emotional needs in their process of EFL learning.

Resumen

Este documento de trabajo informa sobre un estudio de investigación-acción destinado a explorar y analizar el proceso de creación y uso de un portafolio electrónico de evidencias para promover el aprendizaje integrador de maestros en formación (STs) y fomentar su autodescubrimiento como futuros profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). El proceso de creación del portafolio se enmarcó dentro del segundo semestre de prácticas y se consideró una experiencia de aprendizaje culminante abordada desde la perspectiva de un enfoque de aprendizaje integrador. La construcción de los portafolios se llevó a cabo en tres fases que tenían una intención progresiva y transformadora. El análisis e interpretación de los datos resultaron en tres categorías que hacen referencia a la influencia que la interacción con compañeros, profesores colaboradores y alumnos ejerce sobre cómo los STs se perciben a sí mismos en el desarrollo de su confianza y convicciones pedagógicas, así como los desafíos relacionados con sus conocimientos previos de enseñanza y sus



futuros caminos como docentes. Los maestros en formación perciben la autotransformación como un proceso continuo para satisfacer las necesidades académicas y emocionales de los estudiantes en su proceso de aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL).

Introduction

Colombian ESL / EFL teachers face a wide range of unique and constantly shifting professional development challenges as educational environments become more complex and diverse. Those environments may demand exceptional teachers' capacities that should be developed through time and at different stages in their careers. Initial teacher education should provide ways to support the development of such capabilities, which are critical in helping Student Teachers- STs to construct their meanings to develop a sense of agency. They can take ownership of their teaching, deal creatively with unforeseen situations, and propose suitable learning scenarios, being thoughtful about the pedagogical decisions they have to make. We consider that initial EFL / ESL teacher education should mainly focus on teachers' development and learning as a holistic process, emphasize the importance of learning by doing in the classroom, self-inquiry, research, and learning from and with others. As Johnson (2009) stresses, "At its foundation, professional teacher education is about teachers as learners of teaching" (p.19). It means it is necessary to commit to the development of specific dispositions that will allow student teachers - STs - to make decisions for students' learning which eventually might imply their following learning of teaching.

It is widely accepted that teacher practise in teacher education is critical for STs' professional development. The processes of understanding practicum contexts, sites, and realities, planning and delivering lessons, and being concerned about students' developmental, formative, and learning processes might be a natural way for STs to restructure the pedagogical content knowledge built during their undergraduate studies. Nevertheless, besides the approach mentioned above toward the practicum, Lucero & Cortés- Ibañez (2021) accurately suggest we should go beyond merely instrumental conceptions of the practicum. We should conceive it as a space where participants interact more "collaboratively, dialogically, reflectively, and transformatively with themselves, each

other, the environments.” (p.186) It entails providing opportunities for STs to be part of processes that lead to them becoming aware of themselves as language teachers and of their own practices, eventually leading them to develop their confidence. They should be encouraged to consider alternative frames of reference and propose ways to transform EFL teaching practices.

This point of view suggests that the expectations of STs’ performance during their practicum period should not be placed on their applying or demonstrating the declarative knowledge they are supposed to have learned. They should be placed on their progress in understanding the complexity of teaching and the incidence of the actors and factors involved. STs’ ability to analyze contexts, settings, and students’ capacities to propose or implement suitable actions intended to lead to students’ learning should also be considered. In addition, they need to become part of the educational communities and be accepted as active participants, so their contributions are valued. That requires organizations, mentors, and cooperating teachers to be committed to STs’ formative processes and shift the conception of their roles from supervisors to learning companions. Following these considerations, we have promoted the understanding of the practicum experience as an opportunity for student teachers to be immersed in high-stakes environments that support continuous engagement with instructors, students, and community members with various backgrounds and experiences.

Additionally, the subject of Practicum and the activities that are part of it are viewed as a capstone experience. In that sense, it can be addressed from the perspective of an integrative learning approach. As quoted by Newell (2006), it is conceived as “ an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus” (Rhodes 2010, p51). Our aim is for STs to see their practicum experience aligned with their undergraduate studies as a logical progression, a unified whole composed of a wide range of knowledge to draw on to make decisions for their students’ formative processes. We proposed the creation of an E-portfolio,



which might enable deep levels of analysis and accounts for student teachers' development of pedagogical capacities. It could also assist them in integrating their learning, developing reflective practice, and providing a way to take ownership of their learning to teach. (Zubizarreta, 2008).

So, to represent the ever-changing nature of actively engaged learning to become a teacher, this action research study revolved around our search to accompany student teachers on their initial path to develop their professional identities as language teachers within the framework of reflective practices. STs were invited to create an electronic portfolio of evidence that combines a collection of what they consider their best work during their practicum. They can address their concerns through the practicum and show evidence of their own choices. The study aimed to explore and analyze the process of creating and using an e-portfolio of evidence to promote integrative learning of STs from Licenciatura en Bilinguismo to further their self-discovery as Language Teachers.

Theoretical Considerations

To properly contextualize this study, we have considered three constructs. First, we will discuss the content of STs Professional identity within the context of reflective practices, focusing on developing their agency through the perceived changes in their beliefs about EFL teaching. Then, we will discuss the purpose of the integrative learning approach as a set of principles to guide pedagogical decisions. Finally, we will refer to the E-portfolio as a means to promote and represent integrative learning processes among STs.

Professional identity Reflective Practices -Exercising Reflection

When we refer to the practicum period of ESL / EFL prospective teachers, we agree that reflective teaching requires STs to critically examine their fundamental beliefs about education, teaching and learning a second language, and how well they correlate with actual classroom practice. We also concur that going through reflective processes allows STs to improve or reevaluate their methods of second language instruction, scrutinize their curricular choices, and solicit and take input from peers, cooperating teachers, and their students. (Schön,1988; Korthagen, 2004; & Olaya Mesa, 2018). In reflective teaching, STs

evaluate their teaching practices, examine their curricular decisions, consider student comments, and make modifications to increase student belonging and learning. It seems evident that STs are shaping their professional identity during the exercising reflection- PI - Professional Identity. As Rodrigues & Mogarro (2019) analyzed, research on the development of ST's PI recommends that teacher educators provide opportunities for STs to think deeply about practical experiences and challenges. They also recommend encouraging STs to share their feelings (such as expectations, insecurities, and uncertainties) and acknowledge their peers. Thus, discussing teaching practices in front of others and fostering a sense of community is desirable as it is one key component for the configuration of STs' PIs.

According to Torres-Cladera, G et al (2021) STs' professional selves are formed in their everyday interactions as on-the-spot decisions and actions that might seem irrelevant help STs build a sense of themselves concerning their educational and practicum contexts. Additionally, they reflect on past events and analyze how those occurrences can influence current practices and guide future actions. In other words, professional identity is viewed as a social context-dependent process better understood if we consider its background and STs' role in making meaning of it. (Ruohotie-Lyhty, M., & Moate, J. 2016. Therefore, even though events change, and decisions are diverse, we may assert that STs establish steady manners to attribute meaning to events critical in their professional identity construction process.

For this study, STs' identities are considered from a sociocultural perspective and defined as their changing experiences of being, becoming, and belonging to their profession as a social practice (Skott, 2019). Therefore, paying attention to how STs adapt in response to the context: the learners, the environment, and the instructional theories might be a practical perspective to shed light on our quest to understand how STs' professional identities are built and shown (Buendía-Arias; André-Arenas; Rosado-Mendinueta, 2020).

Furthermore, STs' self-identification needs to be acknowledged and recognized by peers and cooperating teachers to be visible to others and acquire real meaning as it is composed of their unique traits vis-a-vis shared beliefs. This idea leads us to focus our attention on the concept of teachers' agency which, as defined by Biesta (2015), is more than a capacity; it



“denotes a quality that allows teachers to shape their responses to problematic situations” (Biesta and Tedder, 2006, p11 as cited in Biesta, 2015). He states that past personal and academic experiences permeate the achievement of the Teachers’ agency; it is future-oriented, both in terms of short- and long-term expectations; it is enacted in the present moment, affected by what we regard as cultural, material, and structural resources. We can infer that agency is evidenced through the creative ways STs’ respond to teaching dilemmas since STs’ main qualities or teaching beliefs might be constantly transferred to new problematic situations. Additionally, as Johnson (2009) claims, STs can transform their beliefs and knowledge systems under their agency. Therefore, if we try to understand how STs’ professional identity evolves, we must bear in mind its dynamic nature and identify its core-steady elements.

As mentioned above, we should foster possibilities for STs to develop their agency and transformative capacities so that they feel confident to make decisions and propose alternative methodologies or strategies. It is essential for STs to engage in individual and group reflection, building trust to share their insights and have pedagogical discussions with peers to grow personally and professionally. They might even publicly examine their beliefs and practices (Horton & Freire, 1990) so they can critically construct their visions of teaching and place themselves within a socio-cultural context.

Integrative Learning

As defined by Rhodes (2010), Integrative Learning is “an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curricular, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus” (p 51). Additionally, Brown Leonard (2012) identified three experiences that are crucial to promoting integrative learning namely, “Engaging in personally relevant coursework that leads to self-knowledge and understanding, identifying multiple perspectives, encountering conflict, and reconciling conflict” (p 58) In this sense, integrative learning is mainly characterized by connecting skills and knowledge in numerous ways within various contexts. At college-level study, integrative



learning can involve judiciously combining information and abilities from disparate fields of research or disciplinary areas and reflecting on the linkages established through time between academic, co-curricular, and pre-professional activities. It also entails considering a variety of perspectives to enhance collaborative problem-solving and transferring developed capacities or insights to issues met in different contexts (Miller,2005; Barber, 2012). It is essential that integrative learning is not treated as an isolated event but rather as a standard component of students' intellectual lives to be genuinely effective.

We can better understand Integrative learning if we focus on the three common domains proposed by Peet, et al. (2011), which stem from their analysis of the different theoretical trends which underpin the purposes of its implementation: First, “ Becoming an intentional and reflective learner” (p.13); second; 2) “having a process orientation toward knowledge and learning” (Melendez et al., 2009 as cited by Peet, et al. p.13); and, 3) “ working with others to address social issues” (Huber & Hutchings, 2004; Mentkoski & Associates, 2000 as cited by Peet, et al. p 13). They may seem like different subsets of principles, but we should not treat them independently as they influence one another. It is suitable to acknowledge that one of the three domains may prevail in some contexts but might be affected by the other two. For example, in some cases, the main purpose of implementing integrative learning might be to trigger some of the learner's characteristics (“to become an intentional and reflective learner”). Still, we think it happens within a process and might be more significant when we cooperate with others to solve a real problem in a particular context.

Integrative learning as an instructional approach during teachers' initial education and, specifically during the practicum period, can assist student teachers in establishing a holistic perspective rather than a fragmented one of the fields of knowledge that are key to making coherent and suitable context-bound pedagogical decisions. We consider that intentionality and complexity play a role in integrative learning, so making intended learning outcomes is key to the process. Besides, opportunities for STs to engage with and reflect on their learning experiences at this critical point are to be included (Spelt, E.J.H., Biemans, H.J.A., Tobi, H. et al.,2009). Thus, we expected some tenets that emerged during this experience could be



explicitly recognised as grounds for developing STs' professional identity. However, the network continues to grow endlessly, and the links between concepts shift.

E-Portfolio

As affirmed by Wozniak, N. M. (2013), the process of creating Learning Portfolios in tertiary education has gained recognition as a valuable tool for facilitating inquiry, evidence-based reflection, and integrated learning. Furthermore, Zubizarreta (2008) asserts that its creation promotes meaningful and long-lasting educational experiences for the students involved. It implies a strong emphasis on reflection, cooperation, and the deliberate selection and integration of evidence of learning. In other words, creating a portfolio compels the collection, analysis, and future planning for action, making it a notable mediation to represent students' learning transformations. Some of the insights mentioned above about using E-portfolios for EFL teachers' professional development might inform us about factors that influence the professional identity development of STs. They are considered a powerful tool for facilitating higher-level learning and connecting the goals of active learning and educational assessment. Consequently, STs were invited to create an E-portfolio as a means to account for the impact of their participation in the educational community where they were doing their practicum, providing evidence of their progress and learning as prospective teachers.

In this view, we took an integrative perspective to explore how the creation of the learning E-portfolio could display STs' changes of understanding about learning to teach, combined with the understanding that teachers are "knowledgeable beings" whose actions, thoughts, and words may contribute to the exploration of their distinctive "ways of knowing" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Through creating this type of portfolio, we intended STs to address their concerns through their practice and have the freedom to make individual decisions which might encourage them to concentrate on specific parts of their teaching practice that they might otherwise neglect Smith & Tillema, (as cited by Nguyen, 2014). Additionally, we expected them to identify coincidences or disparities between their perception of their performance and what peers, pupils, or cooperating teachers perceived. Therefore, the



creation of the E-portfolio served one primary purpose: to improve STs' teaching practises and simultaneously give them a space to share their existing knowledge and comprehension of EFL teaching. The reflections that stemmed there might serve as a springboard for further exploration on how they can modify such practices.

As for the process of creating the E-Portfolio, we chose a hybrid design between two types of portfolios described by Richards & Farrell (2005): a showcase portfolio and a working portfolio. Besides comprising elements that account for a student teacher's progress toward achieving a specific goal, we proposed a portfolio that could be a suitable device that reflected the breadth and depth of the student teacher's abilities. According to Cambridge & Chen (2010), the creation of a portfolio involves a process of preparing for, keeping track of, analysing, and disseminating evidence of learning and performance, having the act of reflecting and connecting at the heart of the process; reflection is the process by which students make these connections.

Hence, we engage in integrative learning when deliberately creating hinges of concepts and learning experiences across time and settings. The whole process is formative in nature. The purpose of this study: Engaging in Integrative learning through creating an E-portfolio during Student teachers' practicum experience could portray how STs develop their professional identity.

Methodology

Action research has been defined as the process of studying a school, classroom, or teaching-learning scenario to comprehend and improve the quality of actions or instruction. It is, in this sense, the pinnacle of teacher reflection (Stringer, 2019). This study was developed under an analytical stance, enabling the researcher to better understand the creation of the E-portfolio within the unique context where it was carried out and make decisions to adjust action strategies during the process. Data was chosen, arranged, and interpreted using an analytic process with two purposes: to get valuable insights to dynamize the interventions and find threads of shared meanings among participants. We have followed the dynamic non-linear cyclical process that Tripp (2005) proposed, which involves observing, planning,

reflecting, noticing critical moments for action, and considering participants' performance to review and adjust the research process.



https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-full-action-research-cycle_fig3_305619003

We viewed the portfolio building process as action research for the pedagogical intervention, with documentation serving as the research record; the abilities that STs must display become not the portfolio's purpose but instruments to aid in a more extensive inquiry process (Elliot, 2003).

Context and Participants

This pedagogical action research study was carried out with 12 tenth-semester STs enrolled in Practica II of Licenciatura en Bilingüismo Español-Inglés at UNICA. Bearing that the Pedagogical Principles that ground the Licenciatura en Bilingüismo are related to the Liberal Arts approach, the practicum experience can be considered a Capstone subject. Durel (1993) defines it as “a crowning (unit) or experience coming at the end of a sequence of (units) with the specific objective of integrating a body of relatively fragmented knowledge into a unified whole. As a rite of passage, this (unit) provides an experience through which undergraduate students look back over their undergraduate curriculum to make sense of that experience and look forward to life by building on that experience (Durel, 1993, p. 223). Moreover, capstone courses or experiences are structured to allow students to continue the development of their discipline-specific knowledge and abilities within real-world

situations, so the proposed activities for the pedagogical intervention of this study were designed for that purpose. As stated in the class syllabus, student teachers meet the practicum professor every week to review, discuss key concepts and teaching methodologies, and talk about the experience they are going through. The purpose of the two-hour meetings is to assist STs in developing academic skills, asking probing questions, gathering evidence, or presenting arguments in favor of their points of view. In addition, they are expected to improve their ability to work in groups and learn from one another.

Within this context, the activities and reflective conversations during the pedagogical intervention were carried out with the implicit beliefs that Student Teachers are knowledgeable beings capable of critically think about the pedagogical dilemmas faced during the practicum experience. What they think, do, and say about EFL teaching and learning can help us learn more about their unique ways of knowing (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). We intended to propose an alternative perspective to accompany STs through the beginning of their journey as long-life learners rather than supervising them. Therefore, we planned all the tasks and activities carried out during the sessions to be directly or indirectly transferred to create the portfolio.

To add to the above-stated considerations, it is necessary to endow the practicum experience and the Practicum requirements with a more flexible character because practicum settings have had to transition from on-site to online learning environments during Covid- 19 Pandemic. It has presented unique challenges to teacher educators because we are required to modify our pedagogical strategies in order to compensate for the missing experiences that are implicit in experiences in actual classrooms (Kosar & Kemal, 2021).

Portfolio Creation Process and Instruments of Data collection

For the creation of the Portfolio, STs were asked to provide evidence of the impact of their participation in the educational community, and many of the emerging insights resulting from the class group sessions were intended to be directly or indirectly incorporated into it. The main objective of the group activities, reflective activities, and conversations STs went through to support the process of creating the portfolio was for STs to unfold tacit and explicit

knowledge that might be highlighted, enhanced, and or transformed. It is possible to uncover previously unrecognized connections and new interpretations through reflection that may lead to an ever-deeper understanding of identified EFL teaching problems. For example, we might become aware that a compilation of recipes will not solve them, but we require transcending EFL teaching methods. As in Johnson & Golombek (2014), dialogic mediation aims to trigger teachers' examination of their preconceived convictions and practice from diverse perspectives to reach a deeper understanding of concepts and exert some agency over their practices. STs' values, skills, capacities, and long-term goals were all considered. We expected that to be a progressive, transformative process. The pedagogical intervention implemented in this study was developed in three stages.

Phase 1 - The activities planned for this phase were intended to help STs go beyond what might seem evident within the practicum space so that they could approach it from different perspectives. The activities were based on the principles of Slow Looking (Tishman, 2018). to refine STs' observational skills to help them get a comprehensive view of the practicum setting, explore alternative views, or generate multiple options (Tishman, S. & D, Perkins. 1997). STs were asked to describe their practicum setting from different perspectives. They were also asked to describe their "Teaching Philosophy" and how they aspired to participate and contribute to the practicum setting community. STs were then presented with the challenge of creating the Portfolio. Subsequently, based on what they had expressed and their previous knowledge about the portfolio's creation, we agreed on what criteria the portfolio should meet in terms of form.

Phase 2. At this stage, STs identified essential experiences suitable for the showcase, shared their initial insights with peers, and started documenting their experiences. During group sessions, the activities and reflections revolved around what they had identified as critical and problematic within the school contexts and wanted to address or understand. There were also sessions planned to give STs opportunities to make explicit what they took into account when planning lessons, recall and review concepts, review EFL teaching methods, and check pervasive misunderstandings about learning. (Weinstein & Sumeracki, 2019).

Phase 3: This is the last phase. STs had to create a coherent visual display that would account for their performance and determine the overall threads or topics that should be highlighted during the presentations with peers. Finally, they had to write a final reflection about the process of creating their portfolios, interpreting what they had learned about their teaching and what it suggested to them about how they were developing their concepts, ideas, beliefs about language teaching, and their skills as prospective teachers.

Data Analysis and Findings

For the analysis of data, we followed a constructive method. During each stage of the portfolio creation, the collected data was reviewed and summarized to grasp an overview of how it could relate to the study's primary purpose. The summaries comprised references to the context in which the data were collected; new questions or points of view that emerged during group reflections; and the most important or informative facts reported by STs (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 2018). Afterward, the content of the summaries went through a mixed process of deductive-inductive categorization resulting in three dimensions- themes (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 2018). The Categories were referred to how STs Perceived themselves as EFL Teachers - Being- within the practicum setting and how interaction with peers, cooperating teachers and pupils helped them in the development of their confidence and their pedagogical convictions -Belonging- , and brought out considerations and challenges about their previous teaching knowledge and their future paths as teachers - Becoming- related to their awareness of their perceived flaws and gaps about their content knowledge

The departure point was to analyze Sts Portfolios' content to seek correlations of the main themes STs had chosen to focus on and the processes they had followed to address them to the dimensions of being, belonging, and becoming that had emerged from the summaries. Subsequently, ST's final presentation of their portfolio and the final reflections were used to corroborate the researcher's insights and analyze what STs shared about their self-perception and the process of creating the portfolio.



Even though some STs displayed more fluidity than others in how they performed during the whole process, as in every formative process, we could identify three intertwined trends that revealed transformations associated with STs' professional identity. One trend was related to STs' perceived cognitive development, the second one related to how they had addressed their shared concerns about students' EFL learning processes, and a third one linked to socio-emotional associated factors. This one was the juncture point of the other two.

During the first phase of the pedagogical intervention, some of STs' preexisting beliefs emerged from the expressions of their expectations became evident: They intended to create a positive classroom environment, connecting topics or activities to students' backgrounds or interests. They claimed that students' perception of activities could either boost or hinder language learning processes. Nonetheless, by the end of the first month of their practicum, they expressed some feelings of uncertainty as they were hesitant about the course of pedagogical actions to suggest or undertake to improve students' language learning processes. Those feelings were principally marked by expressions related to concerns about keeping students' attention and participation, especially under the circumstances of remote teaching. At this stage, many seemed to be looking for correct answers to their identified language problems. It was also perceived by the researcher (university mentor) as they frequently sought our approval and the cooperating teachers. They seemed to depend on external validation to some extent.

Moreover, concerning the decisions STs made in this regard, they reported that even though they were skillful at taking advantage of their technological skills, available resources, and previous experiences as language learners, they felt more confident when they received advice and support from their peers and practicum mentor.

During the second phase, STs asserted they felt more confident about their roles in practicum settings as they grasped the intended meaning of the activities, and the reflective conversations carried out during interventions. They also acknowledged that having dilemmas about how to address identified students' EFL learning difficulties is part of "being



a teacher.” We could locate that the dilemmas were mainly related to language production skills as students presented.

At this stage, we used the group sessions to revise frameworks for planning lessons, EFL teaching methodologies, and ways of assessing students to align their intended pedagogical actions with their practicum settings' identified needs and requirements. In addition, STs reflected on the importance of going through processes of refining preexisting convictions.

“I think the concepts that I learned through subjects are now more evident because you start to develop them and notice they have connections with reality. That is enriching because most of the time I have to look at the past and remember my classes at university (notes) to remember what the concept is and what I have to do. My ideas and beliefs about teaching have changed” (ST 1, reflection - 2nd Phase)

“I discovered the importance of including the grammar sphere in the classroom, not as a way of imposing on them to only focus their attention on this aspect, but as a way to help students to organize their ideas when they want to share their thoughts and not feel frustrated”. (ST 9, intervention- 2nd Phase)

The above quotes coincide with our perception that they were going through linking processes (Yang, 2014) as they changed views about a construct and showed there had been a synthesis. Most of them started to show evident movement toward their teaching ways (Shulman, 2006) or away from certain teaching practices. Nevertheless, even while discussing instructional procedures, they routinely highlighted the socioemotional components of learning. STs were driven to adapt their lesson plans and practice to promote students' active learning. There was evidence of more clarity on how they integrated the intellectual and the emotional aspects of learning to see them as one whole.

In the final presentations and reflections, STs realized that planning and presenting “good activities” does not guarantee students sustained engagement and language production during classes. They asserted that even though implementing ICTs encourages student participation and motivation as it enhances the dynamic nature of EFL teaching and learning processes, there were many other aspects to consider, especially under the circumstances of



remote teaching. These aspects were mainly related to creating a relationship with students, promoting self-regulated learning, and helping them find a purpose for practicing and learning the language.

“ I thought that if you are a teacher, you must be attentive to the activities and preparation to give a good class. However, a teacher is a powerful influence; I could notice students started to create a teacher-student relationship.” (ST 4, Phase 3)

“ I love the fact of learning how to develop certain skills while being a teacher. I understood that even when you want to talk with your students, you must build a level of confidence and respect with your students” (ST6, Phase 3)

“From my point of view, this has to be one of the main goals of teaching, more than teaching students’ things and stuff, teaching them how they can learn what they want on their own”. (ST8, Phase 3)

In that sense, they seem to have made progress in understanding the complexity of their formative role as teachers and building trust so that students perceive their classes as a safe environment for learning. They recognized the importance of honing specific abilities to respond to their students' perceived needs and develop their classes more naturally. Following that, we noticed that student teachers began to take into account a variety of variables, which is one of the features that characterize integrative learning (Newell, 2012) as they appeared to realize that combining their pedagogical convictions with prior theoretical knowledge, peers insights, and students and cooperating teachers' feedback was valuable as a safe base for decision-making,

While they gained class experience, their analysis of various scenarios became increasingly complex. Furthermore, there is evidence of the development of perceptions about themselves as they became aware and viewed their transformation as a continual process of meeting students' intellectual and emotional needs. It leads us to believe that when STs see a genuine connection between previous knowledge and real-world classroom situations, there is evidence of their professional identity development.



“I definitely feel it inspired me to continue my path as a teacher, I understand that there is always a better way to do things, and I want to find new ways of becoming a better learner for teaching others” (ST 9, phase 3)

“I found and learned things in myself that I have not discovered before. I have made a good advance this month through the practicum, I have become more confident about my skills and my knowledge, and I like that I took the plunge of doing new things.”

In this sense, decisions STs make for students’ EFL learning purposes and changes in perceptions about themselves as teachers may catalyze the growth of their professional identity.

Conclusions

We can conclude that the E-Portfolio seems to be one suitable instrument that portrays the journey STs have gone through to make sense of their Practicum Experience. It can be conceived as an alternative way to hold STs' learning stories accountable through their practicum period. The process of creating the Portfolio has been a rationale that has allowed us to perceive the process of belief transformation STs have gone through while exercising their agency. There is some evidence that they have confirmed and strengthened some preexisting beliefs (Yuan 2014), related to the influence of socioemotional factors on EFL teaching and learning processes. We coincide with the same observation Tran (2018) proposes that teacher agency is not always about initiating change, but somewhat responsive behavior inserted in daily practice. Following Mendez Lopez's (2020) ideas, going beyond students' academic needs, fostering pupils' emotional well-being and showing sensitivity to their emotional concerns during EFL learning are characteristics of teachers who demonstrate agency.

The Portfolio can be viewed not as a product but as an organized representative whole where many variables at stake in being- a ST can converge. STs have shown that they have perceived concordance between those beliefs within the interaction with students and cooperating teachers (belonging). They appear to have made the majority of pedagogical



decisions constructively and experienced qualitative growth in their teaching identities within a framework of reflective practices and planned collaboration,

Concerning STs' cognitive development, we can say that it seems they are expanding their understanding of their role as EFL teachers (becoming) as they appear to be conscious of the importance of constantly revising and rethinking their teaching beliefs and practices to deepen their grasp of our profession.

They have shown some evidence to support the claim that they have moved away from focusing on the technical, skills-based aspects of teaching to include a more person-centered, constructivist paradigm that acknowledges the importance of developing their criteria as teachers. That leads us to think that evidence of student teachers' agency development might be found when they make sense of their practicum as the relationship between previously acquired knowledge and real-world classroom situations becomes more evident to them. These findings suggest that STs perceive self-transformation as a continuous process of meeting students' academic and emotional needs in their process of EFL learning. These findings resonate with research studies that concluded that teachers with a pleasant emotional experience related to their practicum are more likely to come up with new ideas and solutions to assist them in solving or coping with challenges more effectively. (Mendez Lopez. 2011)

They show signs of being more independent and self-confident in making explicit the reasons why they make certain decisions. Besides, they seem more self-reliant in giving feedback to their peers, openly sharing concerns about EFL teaching asking difficult questions, and collaborating with others. This exhibits one remarkable characteristic of the development of their agency, the capacity to cooperatively work with others deliberately and flexibly (Edwards, 2017). What has been aforementioned allows us to conclude that there might be a correlation between Integrative Learning (Integrative learning tasks, activities), exercising agency evidenced by changes in personal beliefs and significant cooperative work with others, and the development of EFL STs' professional identity. The more STs clarify what



they understand about EFL teaching and learning, the more they acknowledge their doubts and assume the quest to obtain informed answers to back their classroom performances. Focusing on the process of creating the portfolio, we highlight that support, guidance, and interaction are critical. STs reported that at the beginning of the process, they felt some confusion as they thought it had to be a collection of every lesson plan created to be evaluated. However, as the process developed, they became aware that its purpose was to help them make sense of their practicum experience and notice its complexity. As a result, the conception of the portfolio has transformed; It might be called an Integrative Learning E-portfolio. It can be viewed as a creation, an organized whole where STs' reflections, pedagogical knowledge, and understandings of their students and themselves within a particular educational context converge. In that sense, we can assert that the Integrative Learning E-portfolio is a suitable representation of STs' professional identity development by exercising their agency in everyday practice within favorable practicum spaces.

Over the course of their practicum, STs displayed significant development in their pedagogical content knowledge. Initially grappling with uncertainties and seeking external validation, they progressed to adopting more confident roles as educators. They navigated dilemmas in teaching methodologies and student learning processes, ultimately refining their pedagogical strategies based on their recognition of socio-emotional elements in teaching and learning. They acknowledged the importance of fostering relationships with students, promoting self-regulated learning, and creating supportive classroom environments. This integration highlighted their understanding of the holistic nature of education, where emotional and intellectual aspects are intertwined.

Pedagogical Implications

Some implications from a pedagogical perspective are provided. First, it might be suitable to complement this study with the identification and deeper analysis of the self-perceived understanding of STs about their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, specifically related to the ways they address EFL teaching methodologies, EFL students' language learning progression, and its evaluation. STs acknowledged that they would need



to rethink the standardized milestones across EFL levels compared to what their students have perceived is shown in our contexts. It would also be essential to focus on the uncertainties, contradictions, and contingencies related to ST's professional identities to have a broader scope for their analysis and find out about their reconfiguration once they are identified.

Another aspect to be addressed is the curricular implications of the insights that stemmed from this study. It could be suitable to make the intentions and processes that integrative learning entails more explicit to STs and present it as an appropriate way to address problems or dilemmas they might face during their future professional performance. It is necessary to continue with an integrative perspective on how topics are covered during the practicum group sessions so that STs might develop an awareness of the variety of factors that might influence the dilemmas and problems they might face during their professional life. Another possibility would be to propose integrative thematic areas or topics to promote the development of STs' divergent thinking to find creative solutions to EFL instructional problems.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations of this study have to be noted; the findings of this study account for a one-semester process. Therefore, it might be necessary to record student teachers' experiences in a longitudinal approach to have more factual information about the developmental changes of STs. Additionally, given the sociocultural approach of the project, it would be necessary to broaden the study's context so that we can relate the role of STs inside a whole community. Finally, it is necessary to go beyond classroom events and interactions with students within the ELT context and connect the development of ST's professional identity with their long-term expectations and conceptions of education's social purposes.

Even though we recognize that the conceptualization and the process of identity construction among Teachers is related to the Socio-Historical contexts in which they occur, this study just accounts for an initial stage with a more subjective character and influenced by the



sociocultural context. The conclusions we have reached are a provisional arriving space of the long journey of Professional identity shaping we go through as EFL teachers.

Regarding integrative learning among STs, we have obtained initial insights on how it could be a good predictor of their development of pedagogical content knowledge and how it might be related to reflection on their professional identity development. However, deepening the possibilities to promote and assess it is necessary. We also think that, due to the collaborative nature of the project, it would be necessary to explore in depth what should characterize the practicum settings and the role of cooperating teachers. We noticed their self-perception as supporting scenarios and expert peers are key to the process.

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