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Early childhood teacher undergraduate preparation in Chile: professionalism and identity knowledge in the evolution of plans of study, 1981-2015

Propositions

1. Between 1944 and 2015, undergraduate early childhood teacher preparation in Chile has gone through three different phases. Each of these has involved a different way of conceptualising this process. The first defined it as technical (1944-1967); the second as a teaching specialty (1968-1998) and the third as a profession (1999-2015).
2. The plans of study of undergraduate programs in early childhood education lack some of the fundamental criteria of the knowledge base of professionalism. On one hand, their heterogeneous content reflects the absence of a common platform of knowledge. On the other hand, the variable time assigned to different areas of knowledge reflects the absence of an underlying theoretical model.
3. The fact that children's holistic development and play are only partially tackled calls into question the plans of study's ability to transmit the knowledge needed to comply with the purpose and to apply the distinctive procedures of early childhood education, as core criteria of the knowledge base of professionalism.
4. The asystematic addressing of children's rights calls into question the plans of study's ability to foster the social prestige of early childhood education's knowledge base, as a requirement of professionalism.
5. Scholars' complacency regarding how children's holistic development and play have been addressed in preparation suggests the assumption that this knowledge can be acquired from the family milieu, implying that everyday –i.e. non-professional- knowledge is present in this process.
6. Scholars' satisfaction with how children's rights have been addressed in the plans of study indicates the absence of a coherent discourse aimed at extolling their own knowledge base, as a key resource of the ideology of professionalism.
7. Pursuing a stronger institutional component of professionalism –i.e. obtaining university credentials of higher status- scholars have valued becoming a teaching specialty, to the detriment of the singularity of programs in early childhood education.

8. Programs in early childhood education have relied on different intellectual references in the field to define their plans of study, as they do not constitute a consciousness community regarding the knowledge base that is relevant in the preparation of early childhood teachers.
9. Scholars from programs in early childhood education have not taken strategic actions –as a key resource of the ideology of professionalism- to dispute the plans of study’s content and therefore control their own knowledge base.
10. The evolution of the plans of study of programs in early childhood education in Chile has been similar to a process of professionalization driven “from above” –i.e. externally- being the Ministry of Education the leading actor in this trajectory.