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La formación en docencia universitaria en Chile y su impacto en profesores y estudiantes

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Summary

Higher education in Chile is currently characterised by widespread growth and a heterogeneous student body, as well as a prevalence of quality assurance mechanisms. In this context, university teaching has become a strategic priority in the achieving of these aims. For this reason, different institutions have implemented teacher training programmes for their staff, with the aim of improving educational practices. However, there is little evidence about the impact of this training on educational improvements and even less about it on student learning.

In this context, the aims of this study are as follows. The first consists of analysing the impact of training on university teaching and the focus teachers give education. The second is to evaluate whether the teachers that have taken part in teacher training manage to make their students' learning a more profound and less superficial experience and if, in addition, said students perceive their learning experience as a more positive one. To achieve the latter, the Diploma in University Teaching at the University of Santiago de Chile has been used, beginning with the assumption that this type of study can easily be replicated in similar programmes, considering, in particular, the impact variables signalled.

To carry out this study, different methodological approaches were used. Given that it is only recently emerging as a subject in the country, there are no important points of reference to define a proven model for the study of this field of research. In this context, the development of this study considers three different methodological models. The first is qualitative and the second and third are quantitative. All three methodologies are part of an almost quasi-mixed model, given that the questions associated with each one require different methodological approaches but are part of the same main problem to be tackled.

Thus, in Chapter 1, the different theoretical perspectives from which the study of university teaching internationally has been developed are dealt with. In

general terms, research on education and learning processes in the university context is a relatively new topic, with no history that allows for the visualisation of a wide variety of theoretical positions. Along these lines, the models that refer to the *process-product* paradigm can be detected, leading to research that aims to identify the characteristics of an 'effective teacher', assuming that the quality of education and learning processes is mainly based on teachers' behaviour or traits. All this converges in the development of teaching performance standards that are used to provide the content on which teacher training for university faculty members should be based.

This position was criticised through a line of research known as 'Student Learning Research'. From the seventies onwards, this position spread internationally. From this point of view, the study of education and learning cannot be tackled without considering the classroom context in which teacher and students interact, which is why the authors of this research have proposed the 3P Model (presage, process, product). This model is one of the main theoretical references that has guided the development of different teacher training programmes internationally. Specifically, it makes up the theoretical position that this study has used to deal with the analysis of the impact of these programmes in Chapters 3 and 4.

Taking the ideas of this latest theoretical perspective as its main reference, the first chapter is structured around three main ideas. The first refers to the study of the quality of student learning, looking in depth at its conceptualisation and the analysis of the factors that influence it, especially those derived from education. As a result, the second idea tackles the quality of university education. As has already been mentioned, the two main perspectives that have propagated through specialist literature will be described here: the 'process-product' paradigm and 'presage, process, product'.

These two positions have led to theoretical models that have been highly influential over the nature and contents of different university teacher training

programmes. This makes up the third main idea of this chapter, which includes an international revision of university teacher training in different contexts. The way in which this has been tackled in Europe, Asia, Oceania and America is described and analysed, with special emphasis on the proliferation of specialised centres. Said centres have not only developed this type of programme but have also contributed to the development of research on education and teaching in higher education.

The second chapter both expands and goes into more depth on the topic of university teacher training in Chile. Thus, its contents are organised into three sections. The first focuses on revising the historical context of the transformations of higher education in the last few decades. It has become problematic because admissions have opened up and become more diversified and because of changes in financing, new professional scenarios and the development of knowledge and technology, among other things. These have brought with them important changes in the profiles of the students who have started studying at these institutions and also in the aims and functions to which university teaching must respond. This occurs in a political and social context that is also different to previous decades, when teaching quality was not one of higher education institutes' main concerns.

Next comes one of the main responses offered by universities to the transformations and demands previously described, namely the creation of '*Teaching and Learning Centres*'. In this section, different aspects of the setting up, characteristics and functions of these centres in Chile are revised, comparing them to the international experiences presented in the first chapter. In summary, these centres are relatively new to Chile and have emerged at the same time as quality assurance policies. At the same time, the activities they offer are very similar to each other and do not only involve university teacher training. Although they have procedures and work mechanisms, they do not offer a solid conceptual foundation in the majority of the cases analysed.

Finally, the third and last section tackles the current reality of university training and teaching in Chile, from the perspective of the work carried out in these centres and aimed at improving teaching. Thus, different training methods are described, looking into their main characteristics in more detail and analysing the way in which their impact on teaching and learning has been evaluated. The training activities implemented are always similar, involving medium and short-term activities. On the other hand, the methodology implemented for evaluation has technical weaknesses similar to those that were highlighted in the revision of international literature, which means there is room for improvement.

In the third chapter, the topic of studying the impact of university teaching training on teachers and their education is developed. This type of evaluation is fundamental to fostering the enrichment policy that has spread widely through the centres and is aimed at improving teaching in Chile. Initially, therefore, an in-depth revision of the international literature that specialises on this subject is presented, mainly framed within the theoretical position that has been assumed in this study. The aim is to analyse the different methodological approaches that have been used and identify their main strengths and weaknesses in order to back up the model that is developed herein.

In the second part of Chapter 3, the model that has been designed in the context of this study is described, specifically the version used to analyse the impact of teacher training on university faculty staff and their teaching. Said model takes the main methodological examples that have been revised and puts them into the context of Chilean reality, with the aim of minimising the observed weaknesses. This proposal is designed to contrast the focus of teachers who have taken part in a training programme with that of teachers who have not. That is why a quantitative design is appropriate, involving a transversal scope and a control group. At the same time, the model seeks to analyse the effectiveness of training over other associated variables, so as to not confuse the two when carrying out the evaluation.

To end Chapter 3, the results of this model's implementation at the University of Santiago de Chile are presented. These are compared to those from the research presented in the first part of the chapter, with the aim of reflecting on their contribution to the topic's state of the art. In addition, the possibility of transferring this model to the study of other similar programmes in different Chilean institutes is analysed, given that there has been little development of this kind of research despite the large number of programmes of this type that are currently being implemented.

Chapter 4 has a similar structure to the previous chapter, but in this case focuses on studying the impact of teacher training programmes on students. This type of research has not been quite so developed in literature, since it deals with an indirect effect of training, even when this impact is its main aim. Along these lines, a revision of specialised literature on the subject comes first, with an emphasis on the methodological proposals that have been established. This emphasis responds to the fact that the aim is to create guidelines for the design of the study model on the impact on students that is proposed in this chapter.

In the second section of this fourth chapter, an extended version of the model presented in the previous chapter is provided, concurring with the methodological characteristics indicated. However, said model has the distinctive feature of proposing a multilevel approach - given the indirect effect of the training as previously mentioned - which is novel as far as the state of the art in this field of investigation is concerned. Finally, the results of the application of this model in the Diploma in University Teaching from the University of Santiago de Chile are presented. At the same time, they are also discussed in conjunction with the revised literature, with their contribution to research and the possibility of them being used in similar programmes implemented in Chile being emphasised.

In general terms, among the main results obtained from the application of these evaluation models, the resemblance between the results obtained by the group of teachers that finished the programme more than a year ago are those

that most stand out. In both of the studies presented, this group of teachers obtained similar results, as opposed to the results of the other groups studied. In this respect, it is important to highlight that, in the case of impact on teaching (Chapter 3), this was the only group of teachers that obtained better scores on the student-centred focus scale. At the same time, in the case of impact on students (Chapter 4), this was the group with the best results. In other words, to a greater extent, their students favoured a more profound learning focus as opposed to a superficial one. Undoubtedly, this is one of the most important results of the study, since it also backs up the importance of the programme's duration. In every case, these teachers had participated in the programme for at least one academic year.

On the other hand, the resemblance between these results also sheds light on the model's effectiveness, since this was not the only case in which theoretically and methodologically consistent data was obtained. Along these same lines, there were also similarities between the orientation scales aimed at learning and learning experiences, whose results were similar to those reported in international literature. At the same time, consistent results were obtained in both studies regarding teachers who had a degree in education but who had also studied for the Diploma in University Teaching. In this case, as well as corroborating the validity of the evaluation model applied, the similarities in the results obtained among this same group of teachers shows the relevance of the specific nature of teacher training in the university context. In this respect, it was reported that having a degree in education did not influence the scale groups evaluated. Significant differences were only obtained in orientation towards the in-depth learning scale but, in this case, the results were negative when compared with teachers who studied for the Diploma in University Teaching, since students of the first had worse scores on said scale.

All these consistencies mean the model suggested here could be created as an interesting alternative to higher education institutes that want to evaluate the impact of their teacher training programmes. In addition, this proposal

provides instruments that were submitted to a strict validation procedure in Chile, which is why they can perfectly be used in the framework of similar situations, even when these studies are not necessarily used in conjunction with this particular evaluation model. Finally, the proposal is also a contribution to quality assurance, since it provides robust Information on the decision-making orientated at improving these programmes, considering that there is not currently a wide variety of valid and trustworthy models and strategies to report on the impact of this type of initiative.

In the fifth and final chapter, the general conclusions and projections related to the development and evaluation of university teacher training programmes are analysed, based on the conclusions that contribute to their improvement, drawn from the studies on their impact on teaching and learning processes. Along these lines, the importance of the programme's duration is emphasised, as well as the necessary emphasis that these conclusions should be awarded in the analysis of and reflection on the practice of education, beyond a more 'instrumental' training centred on the independent learning of techniques and methods.

As a result of these reflections, the redesign of the teacher training programme that was the subject of evaluation in Chapters 3 and 4 is presented, together with an updated version of the evaluation model presented in these same chapters. These proposals look to express the conclusions that were obtained from the experience, together with the recommendations reported in international literature, so as to move forward with a better understanding of the importance of these teacher training programmes and their influence on the teachers that participate in them and their respective students.

More specifically and in conclusion - and as recommended by literature and the results of the evaluation process carried out in this study - it is suggested that the institutes should complement and articulate their teacher training strategies through processes that last at least a year. In this way, diploma

programmes could benefit from the implementation of classes, for example, that allow teachers to receive specialised assistance according to the specific needs of the students and subjects taught. In the same way, advances could be made in how learning communities are configured in order to strengthen the tools available to teachers so they can innovate and also incorporating a more specific outlook from a curricular perspective. This responds to one of the most general logical weaknesses of this type of programme, since these are conceived for teachers with different areas of knowledge. On the other hand, this brings with it interdisciplinary benefits, something that is also valued by the participants in these programmes.

In summary, complementing and articulating different training strategies within a solid theoretical and methodological framework not only strengthens the quality of said training but also allows for advances to be made towards a 'scholarship of teaching and learning', strengthening research and innovation in the classroom within the academic study of education and learning as one of the aims of teaching development. This helps achieve a greater understanding of how students learn in the context of higher education and in different areas of knowledge. This is a debt that is pending at an international level and particularly in Chile, since, as has been said on numerous occasions, research in this area has been very scarce.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will serve as a contribution for specialists in the area and mainly for those who work at centres for teacher development in Chile and Latin America, providing them with theoretical and methodological frameworks as well as specific suggestions on how to improve the quality of the programmes they implement. At the same time, the set of proposals that originates from these lines of investigation intends to support research on the topic and the improvement of university teaching in Chile.