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CHILEAN TEACHER EDUCATORS IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Abstract:

This article examines an under-researched area of education in Chile by exploring how contemporary initial teacher education policy addresses the professionalism of university-based teacher educators. While the content analysis is limited by the data available, its focus is on describing the notion of teacher educators' professionalism inherent in the current political discourse. First, findings show that policy pays scarce attention to the professionalism of teacher educators; most of these policies are part of general policies for university-based initial teacher education programs. Second, located within the academia, the prevalent view of teacher educators' professionalism is centered in a particular construction of the teacher-researcher that stresses greater the role of the researcher. Third, policy predominantly defines educators' professionalism in terms of market-oriented values (competences, knowledge-related resources). Finally, the article concludes by considering the implications for developing initial teacher education policy that puts greater emphasis on teacher educators, strengthens their professionalism, and positions them for an active role in policy-making.

Keywords:

teacher educator; professionalism, initial teacher education, qualitative content analysis, policy-making

JEL Classification: I21, I28, I29

Introduction

The present article aims to shed light on how Chilean teacher educators are addressed in national policy on ITE programmes. In particular, it will interrogate the ways in which the education reform-driven context in Chile influence the construction of teacher educators' professionalism. Along the last 10 years, policy processes to strengthen initial teacher education in Chile can be characterised by their neoliberal approach, where regulation and deregulation occur simultaneously (Ávalos, 2015; Fernández, 2018). One of the major consequences of the state-led neoliberal prescriptions underpinning education policy has been the adoption of quality assurance mechanisms for initial teacher education programmes, which are exclusively offered by universities, paralleled to the significant increase in the competitiveness of these institutions to both recruit and keep students in their teaching programmes (Inzunza, Assaél & Scherping, 2011; Jofré, 2016).

Current Chilean ITE policy discourse has stressed the need of strong pre-service teacher education since teachers are presented as the pivotal factor influencing the quality of student learning at school (Rivero & Hurtado, 2015; Pizarro & Espinoza, 2015). Then, it seems undeniable to claim that teacher educators have a key role in the education of trainee teachers. Although their relevance has been growingly recognised in scholarship, as reflected in contemporary studies by Chandia et al. (2016); Russell, Fuentealba & Hirmas (2016), and Carvajal (2017), research on Chilean teacher educators still remains scarce, and even more so when it relates to ITE policies (Montenegro, 2016; González-Vallejos, 2018).

[...] in the past years there have been different initiatives for enhancing teacher education [...] Despite these so-called advances, it is clear that those improvements were mainly focused on student-teachers and teacher education programs rather than the teacher educators themselves. As a result, the teacher educator still remains an invisible figure for academic and educational policy purposes in Chile. (Montenegro, 2016, p.529)

Hence, an overlooked area of research, it becomes of interest to address how teacher educators are positioned as a professional group in ITE policy. As there is no scholarship examining government policies for them in Chile, this research can be described as a small-scale explorative exercise, consisting of a conventional qualitative analysis of relevant policy documents to gain insight into how they shape a particular version of teacher educators' professionalism that positions them in the educational context within which they work.

At this point, it may be useful to reflect on who teacher educators are, and what roles and responsibilities they have. Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen (2014) define teacher educators as "all those who teach or coach (student) teachers with the aim of supporting

their professional development” (p.5). This broad definition includes anyone who educates pre-service and in-service teachers, from university-based ones, school-based mentors and supervisors to the ones who support teachers on their further professional development (Snoek, Swennen & Van der Klink, 2011). Also, notions of teacher educator are formulated, in which several sub-identities and roles –teacher, researcher, partner, academic, learner– overlap (Murray & Male, 2005; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Tryggvason, 2012). In addition, conceptualizations of higher education and school-based teacher educators differ based on their work settings, qualifications, professional roles and career expectations (White, Dickerson & Weston, 2015).

Within academia, teacher educators seem to constitute a particular class of academic workers, subject to different expectations to their non-teacher educator colleagues, working under different material conditions and more at risk of proletarianisation in the managerial landscape of higher education (Ellis et al., 2013). At university, they tend to have a lower status than their colleagues in other fields (Ducharme, 1993), as a consequence of the lower status of faculties of education in general, and because the appointment of many teacher educators is primarily connected to a teaching position, without a formal research component. One result of such situation is that there is often no clear academic career trajectory for teacher educators who are mostly connected to their main task of teaching. Therefore, as academic workers, they form a troublesome category (Ellis et al., 2013).

Hilferty argues that teacher professionalism is a social construct “being defined and redefined through educational theory, policy and practice” (2008, p. 53). For Chilean teacher educators, this study does not intend to provide a clear-cut definition of their professionalism. Rather it describes the uses of the concept that are evident in current policy and explores the implications when engaging in meaningful discussions about teacher educators’ professionalism in the context of improving the quality of teaching. Therefore, given the recent educational reforms in Chile and the increasing political attention to ITE, our study has the potential to offer a better understanding of how the wording and content of policies define attributes for teacher educators’ professionalism. To this purpose, we engage in conventional qualitative content analysis of the data collected aimed to answer the following research question:

RQ1: How is the professionalism of teacher educators constructed in documents of initial teacher education policy in Chile?

For the present research question to be properly answered, the paper is structured as follows. First, a brief overview of Chilean policy background and context is given. Second, we draw from theoretical frameworks to better understand the interaction between the discursive power of policy and the construction of ideas of professionalism. The subsequent section describes the methodology applied in the research. Afterward, the

findings from our research are presented and discussed, and some conclusions are drawn with regards to the impact of policy developments on the professionalism of teacher educators. Finally, while limited and tentative, these findings may have profound implications for contemporary issues that require national awareness and action.

Policy background and context

During Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990), the implementation of neoliberal policies radically transformed public service areas such as health, pensions, and education. In the early 80', reforms to tertiary education triggered the creation of an unregulated market system for private higher education without public subsidies, and the transference of the cost of state-funded institutions to students and their families, causing public universities to look at other sources of financing than the state (Brunner, 2009). In the case of ITE, programmes were solely offered by higher education institutions administered by the military (Cornejo & Reyes, 2008). Critical aspects were removed from teaching education curriculum as they were deemed a threat to the government (Pastrana, 2010), and strategies like reduction of teacher salaries undermined the status of the teaching profession (Ávalos, 2010). After the post-Pinochet era, successive centre-left-wing governments did not challenge the core elements of the market-oriented system, which were consolidated rather than modified (Verger, Fontdevilla & Zancajo, 2016). On the one hand, "traditional" universities, founded before the reform of 1980, adopted a self-financing logic and charged students substantially higher tuition fees. On the other, the creation and expansion of private (for-profit) institutions caused the sharp growth of post-secondary enrolment and growth in tuition fees that outpaced growth in GDP (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). The result was a higher education market, greatly differentiated by types of institutions and highly stratified in relation to price, quality, and the social composition of the student body. At the same time, these governments brought changes to primary and secondary schooling, and national curriculum but kept mostly unchanged teacher education (Ávalos, 2010). Between 2000 and 2008, private universities were given full autonomy by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which allowed them to start new courses and programmes that, combined with a surge in demand for teachers, mostly due to the extension of school hours, led to the rocketing growth of teacher education programmes and student-teacher enrolment (Fernández, 2018). During these years, the increase was notoriously high at institutions with low or no selectivity and easier access to student loans, where the number of programs ballooned 593%, while their student enrolment grew by 566% (Cox, Meckes & Bascope, 2010).

In 2006 and 2011, thousands of secondary and university students filled Chilean streets, demanding the right to quality education, more social justice, and rejecting the neoliberal paradigm in education, pushing for wide-ranging educational system reforms. As Lira &

Fernández indicate (2018), in reaction to these demands, the MoE constructed a discourse where teaching was presented as one of the main aspects to improve the quality and equity of the educational system. Using data from international organisations (OECD) and international standardised tests (PISA test), revealing the achievement gap between students from low- and high- income backgrounds, the MoE asserted that the key factor for improving students' achievement was teaching performance. Since teacher quality was defined as an aspect to intervene in order to improve the quality and equity of education, it became an issue of public policy concern (Lira & Fernández, 2018). As a result, in April 2016, the law creating the System for Teacher Professional Development (Sistema de Desarrollo Profesional Docente) was enacted (Law 20.903). The law, whose gradual application started in 2016 and whose full application is expected by 2026, has significantly changed the management of the Chilean teaching workforce. One of its main areas of concern is ITE. Here, new requirements for the selection of ITE students are defined, as well as mandatory accreditation of ITE programmes. Also, an external assessment of pre-service teachers before their graduation is set up to report on the improvement of teacher education programmes (Santiago et al., 2017).

In addition, the MoE developed Graduating Teacher Standards, specifying what teacher education graduates should know and be able to do as they enter the teaching profession. These standards were established for pre-primary education, basic education, upper secondary education, and special education. They included both pedagogical and disciplinary standards (Santiago et al., 2013). Currently, Law 20.903 requires that these standards are used in the accreditation of teacher education programmes. According to the Higher Education Assurance Law (Law 20.129) passed in 2006, accreditation for ITE programmes (Primary Education Teacher, Secondary Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher, and Early Childhood Teacher) is compulsory. Should a programme not be granted accreditation, it will not receive any state resources; nevertheless, it will be authorised to keep operating without enrolling new students (MINEDUC, 2016). The accreditation process consists of an ITE department internal review followed by an external peer review, which is solely carried out by the National Quality Assurance Body from 2016, as Law 20.903 establishes that private quality assurance agencies cannot evaluate teaching programmes (Jerez & Blanco, 2018). All in all, these regulations were made to control the quality of the student body in teacher education programmes, regulate programme admissions, curricular decisions, and the professional practices of teacher educators (Lira & Fernández, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

To define professionalism is elusive, with varying definitions and disagreements surrounding the concept. As Fox points out, "professionalism means different things to

different people. Without a language police, however, it is unlikely that the term professional(ism) will be used in only one concrete way” (1992, p.2). Although multifaceted and difficult to conceptualise (Brehm et al., 2006), professionalism can be regarded as “an ideal to which individuals and occupational groups aspire, in order to distinguish themselves from other workers” (Pratte & Rury, 1991, p. 60). That ideal is linked to concepts of responsibility, partnership, collegiality, discretion, autonomy and control, with the status of a professional granted by work, training and education (Noordegraf, 2007; Freidson, 2001; Grady, Helbling & Lubeck, 2008; Evetts, 2011). Grady et al. (2008) add that a professional also “exercises discretion in making decisions within the scope of their expertise, and they assume some authority for their own professional development” (p. 603). Similarly, Freidson (2001) argues that professionalism exists when professionals control their own professional practices within their professional domains.

However, the aforementioned locus of control has been shifted by neoliberal political and economic agendas that have become the main drivers of reform worldwide (Ball, 2003; Hursh, 2007), and are often associated with the restructuring of the welfare state and the rise of managerialism (Clarke & Newman, 1997). Particularly in the case of public services—such as health care, education and social welfare—a move towards a “new professionalism” has occurred in the last 30 years as professionals are growingly managed and controlled; a tendency called by Evetts (2011) organizational professionalism or professionalism “from above” (p. 407). Although discourses of “old” professionalism are still present, the indicated shift shows a loss of professional autonomy and control over one’s profession through professional judgment and through professional associations and an increase of managerial control in work organizations. Here, control is defined by standardized work procedures and practices, external forms of regulation, and accountability measures (Anderson & Cohen, 2015). In the field of education, neoliberal reforms lead to professional discretion being replaced by standardization, and managerial controls of performance being the norm instead of trust and autonomy based on professional expertise (Evetts, 2011; Osmond-Johnson, 2015). A managerial rhetoric creates a discourse permeated with the language of human resources while pedagogic practice is codified through testing and inspection, and prescribed curricula (Forde & McMahon, 2019).

The neoliberal restructuring in education has impacted ITE and academia alike, creating tensions for teacher educators who work in higher education settings (Connell, 2013). Issues of professionalism and teacher educators are far from being settled since the rhetoric of teacher professionalism is contradicted by university managerialism, with its logic of short-term results, while national policy and standards for teacher education no longer emerge from collegial collaboration, but instead from state and national bodies where teacher educators (and teachers) are underrepresented. Paradoxically, the greater emphasis on teacher educators’ accountability has narrowed professional discretion while

also expanding and intensifying role expectations (Anderson & Cohen, 2015). Although these additional role expectations have occasionally widened their professionalism, they have more often tended to reduce it to work within an audit culture, which demands accountability to standards that they had no part in developing (Apple, 2004; Strathern, 2000). In university ITE programmes, increased external accountability exposes teacher educators to new kinds of control, through curbs on their professional judgment and an audit culture, and also to a higher education marketplace requiring from them to compete with other academics for jobs, publication spaces and funding (Anderson & Cohen, 2015).

All in all, the work of teacher educators is influenced by top-down regulations, constrained by shrinking budgets, resources and time, and precarised in the university-labour market (Hobbel, 2009; Groenke & Hatch, 2009; Connell, 2013; Ellis et al., 2013). It can be argued that these policy changes and reforms are always accompanied by dynamics of power relations and symbolic control (Apple, 1981, 2009; Maguire & Ball, 1995). In the complexity of policy enactment, professionalization can be seen as “a process of struggle over the attainment of professionalism as symbolic capital” (Schinckel & Noordegraaf, 2011, p.89). Educational policy and reform can deploy discourses of teacher professionalism that lay out the blueprint of what it means to be a professional teacher or teacher educator. On a similar note, Ball points out that the impact of neoliberal policy shifts cannot be underestimated and it is such that “what it means to teach and what it means to be a teacher (a researcher, an academic) are subtly but decisively changed in the process of reform” (2003, p.218).

Ball (1994) also asserts that any perspective to education policy development should not be narrowed to a hierarchical top-down flow of control, which begins with legislation passed by a central state and ends with teachers delivering the policy message. The view of policy formulation, where the state is the expression of a monolithic set of social or economic interests, generating policy merely in the interests of some elites is too simplistic. By no means linear and rational decision-making processes, policies are the result of constant and repeated interpretations, contestations and negotiations (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992; Ball, 1994; Kingdon, 1984). Certainly, policy discourse is always built upon struggles between different speaking subjects, who are never fully in control of the debate. Above all, diverse social forces, economic conditions, institutions, interests, and forms of power are embedded and interact within the policy environment (Tseng, 2013). Without denying the scope for individual and collective agency, there is also the need to acknowledge that policy responses are also shaped by wider structural factors and these powerfully circumscribe the capacity of individual actors to shape policy (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). It has been within this complex socio-political environment of educational policy-making that Chilean teachers and ITE have been discursively framed as being both a deficit and a policy problem in the last 20 years (Fernández, 2018), while

teacher educators' voices have been marginalised from policy debates (Montenegro & Medina, 2014).

Data and Method

Qualitative content analysis was adopted to understand how initial teacher education policies construct teacher educators' professionalism since the concept "is best understood in context, and particularly in policy context" (Ozga, 1995, p.22). Qualitative content analysis is considered a systematic and flexible methodology for describing the meanings of qualitative data (Kohlbacher, 2006; Schreier, 2012). By using a coding frame, this type of research method reduces the amount of textual data, and systematically focuses on the meanings that are relevant to the research questions (Schreier, 2012). Qualitative content analysis examines language thoroughly, allowing the researcher to test theoretical issues in order to enhance understanding of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). In the present study, conventional content analysis was used to examine four ITE policy documents published by the Chilean government from 2007 to 2016. Conventional qualitative content analysis is one of three approaches to qualitative content analysis that is generally used with a study designed to describe a phenomenon. Conventional qualitative content analysis is considered useful when existing research is limited, as a means for allowing new insights to emerge from the available data without the use of predetermined categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The method results in coding categories derived directly and inductively from the raw data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The ITE policy documents were selected from a broader corpus of policy documents examined for the study. As the four documents were formal government policy implementation reports and guidelines, covering many more issues related to initial teacher education than teacher educators, they were scanned for keywords in order to find sections applicable to the analysis. The documents included in the content analysis were: *Accreditation Criteria and Standards for Initial Teacher Education Programmes* (CNA, 2007), in which the National Agency for Accreditation establishes the requirements that an initial teacher education programme must meet to be accredited in Chile; *Guidelines for Public Policies for Initial Teacher Education* (DIVESUP, 2016), which formulates a common framework for universities to fulfil for the proper institutional and curricular implementation of their teacher education programmes; *General Requirements to Apply for Initial Teacher Education Strengthening Grant Programme* (DIVESUP, 2017), a grant policy framework that provides guidelines for applying to government funding to strengthen teacher education; and *Initial Teacher Education Programmes: Analysis of Current Strengths and Weaknesses* (CNA, 2018), which summarises the main findings from the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes between 2016 and 2017.

To be included in the selection, the extracted passages should specifically refer to the research topic. With the assistance of Atlas.ti software, these policy texts were examined through a systematic conventional content analysis for manifest coding. That is, it was allowed for codes, subthemes, and themes to emerge inductively from the text data, so to identify and quantify certain words and content with the purpose of understanding their contextual usage (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). First, data were coded from scratch after line-by-line reading of the texts, then codes were clustered together into subthemes based on their similarity and regularity. Finally, these subthemes were compared to generate themes, which reflect conceptions of teacher educators' professionalism in Chilean initial teacher education policy.

Findings

Data analysis undertaken for the qualitative study resulted in two main themes emerging from the policy documents: (1) Teacher educators' profiles, and competence requirements, and (2) teacher educators' professional development, collaboration and career paths (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Inductive process of abstraction of initial codes, subthemes, and themes

Themes	Subthemes	Initial Codes
1. Teacher educators' profiles, and competence requirements	1. Professional suitability	1. Academic qualifications
		2. School-based knowledge
	2. Career paths	3. Clear system for the selection, recruitment, evaluation, and promotion of teacher educators
		4. Academic hierarchy in place
	3. Research & Innovation	5. Theory-based research
		6. School-based research
		7. Publication output
	4. Professional Engagement	8. Engagement in curriculum design and administration
		9. Engagement in university

		activities
2. Teacher educators' professional development, collaboration, and career paths	5. Professional development	10. Professional lifelong learning
		11. Postgraduate education
	6. Collaboration	12. Collaborative work among peers
		13. Mechanisms to guarantee teacher educators collaboration

Teacher educators' profiles and competence requirements

Although there are no specific standards or frameworks for teacher educators that could outline their required professional attributes, two policy documents (CNA, 2007; DIVESUP, 2016) conceptualise academic knowledge and professional competence as key contributory factors to their professionalism. Here, teacher educators are positioned as academics, who should have a postgraduate degree, preferably at a Ph.D. level, solid practical teaching experience, and working knowledge based on a democratic approach, inclusion, and ICT mastery:

Academic staff possess solid disciplinary and didactic knowledge of their subject and have relevant postgraduate education, preferably at the doctorate level [...] In addition, they integrate initial teacher education standards as well as other relevant components, such as inclusion, diversity, citizenship, and use of ICT, to their teaching [...] [they], have up-to-date experience in the school classroom. (DIVESUP, 2016, p. 15)

The entry criteria set by these documents pay special attention to two professional roles performed by teacher educators in the setting of higher education: Teacher of teachers and teacher as researcher. Other roles such as curriculum developer or broker are not discussed, although there is a reference to their participation in curricular design and administration (DIVESUP, 2016), and a brief mention of teacher educators as experienced mentors in one document (CNA, 2007): "The academic staff in charge of overseeing practicum students must have teaching experience in the area they supervise" (p.12). There is no explicit requirement for universities to appoint only teacher educators who have a teaching qualification for primary or secondary school. Therefore, many educators who educate pre-service teachers may not be chosen for their competencies in teacher education –as a matter of fact, university lecturers in school

subjects may be appointed because of subject-specific knowledge, or research credentials.

Over the past ten years, Chilean universities have expanded their research activity and, through asserting that teaching should be underpinned by active research, teacher educators as academics in higher education have become increasingly engaged in it. Without translating expectations about the professionalism of teacher educators into explicit research qualities that teacher educators need, all the policy papers under study are strongly focused on research. For example, the *Guidelines for Public Policies for Initial Teacher Education* emphasise the responsibility of university departments of education for fostering and supporting teacher educators' practice-based or theory-focused research productivity. It maintains that a significant factor for the quality of any initial teaching education programme is its drive for research, and the learning-centred innovation undertaken by their teacher educators:

Development of research and innovation: The academic staff conducts research and pedagogical innovations as part of their usual work, to generate up-to-date knowledge that contributes to training and learning of the students. (DIVESUP, 2016, p.15)

According to the *General Requirements to Apply for Initial Teacher Education Strengthening Grant Programme* (DIVESUP, 2017), national and international research activity and output, measured by number of research articles written up by full time teaching staff and published in international peer-reviewed journals, is an indicator of the commitment of university departments of education for the continuous improvement of their programmes

As the *Accreditation Criteria and Standards for Initial Teacher Education Programmes* (CNA, 2007) includes teacher educators' quality as a criterion for the accreditation and evaluation of teacher education programmes, the policy report *Initial Teacher Education Programmes: Analysis of Current Strengths and Weaknesses* (CNA, 2018) pays more attention to teaching staff than the rest of the documents, although mainly to express concerns regarding the current state of their professionalism. In the document, concerns are related to teacher educators' deficient teaching experience and pedagogical knowledge—particularly in the area of subject didactics—and insufficient academic level, as they do not have proper academic qualifications or research capabilities. Nevertheless, the report identifies a number of contributory factors for the situation, mostly related to inappropriate forms of institutional organisation:

A second critical area is human resources management—especially, in regards to academic staff—since one of its most salient weaknesses is referred to the contractual situation of teacher educators at universities. In this sense, the CNA evaluation criteria

clearly indicate that the “academic body should be enough in number and dedication to fulfill its functions and tasks (2007: 12)” (p. 61).

Prevalence of part-time staff on short-term contracts carrying the heaviest teaching timetable, excessive teaching load for full-time staff, high rotation, few promotion opportunities, and no clear career structure or incentive prevent teacher educators to get involved into research or professional development activities. Whereas the document describes the failure of university departments of education to facilitate teacher educators’ professional work, it does not suggest measures to overcome such inadequacies. Nor do the policy papers in this research propose actions, such as implementing a professional accreditation process or teacher educator’ standards, to enhance their professionalism.

Professional development, collaboration, and career paths

Policy documents pay limited attention to the continuing professional development of teacher educators, although it is referred as both an integral element of their professionalism and a key indicator of high-quality teacher education programmes (DIVESUP, 2016; CNA, 2007), which is illustrated in the following quotation from the *Accreditation Criteria and Standards for Initial Teacher Education Programmes*:

The unit [teacher education department] must encourage the improvement of its academics, its participation in research activities and in updating instances professional, and in national and international meetings in the area of specialty. (CNA, 2007, p.13)

At the same time, there is no mention of concepts like professional learning communities, associations and collaborative skills. Despite being emphasised that teacher education departments have the responsibility to support and steer the professional development of their teaching staff (DIVESUP, 2016; CNA, 2007; CNA, 2018), no detailed recommendations are given concerning actions to encourage teacher educators’ professional learning and development—such as the organization of regular staff meetings, the use of self-study within teams, and the observation of experienced colleagues. The implementation policy report (CNA, 2018) reveals that lack of opportunities, heavy workloads, and absence of managerial attention are context barriers hindering teacher educators’ professional development, as well as preventing them from being involved in collaborative working relations with colleagues or decision-taking within their departments. This means that they do not get the support they need to develop professionally. Additionally, apart from mentioning having pertinent school teaching experience (CNA, 2007), there is no other reference about the competencies required for

teacher educators to collaborate successfully with school mentors before, during and after teaching practice processes.

Career paths for teacher educators have not been defined by national policy. Although it is stated (CNA, 2007) that universities must implement a public and clear system for the selection, recruitment, induction, professional development, evaluation and promotion of teacher educators, no provision of an established set of competencies needed at each stage of the teaching career is given. Further, it is revealed that most universities fail to develop clear promotion criteria (for example, quality of teaching, initiation and research activity) for teacher educators, and deliver timely evaluation of their performance and competencies (CNA, 2018). Since induction programmes are not discussed in policy documents, initial training for teacher educators can only be addressed by institutional initiatives.

Discussion

Chilean ITE policy conceptualises teacher educators' profession as only related to academic staff at universities, ignoring school-based teacher educators or mentors. In this context, policy paid limited attention to university-based teacher educators and their professionalism, and accounts for the small scale of our qualitative content analysis. In spite of such scarcity, the study reveals that the professionalism of teacher educators is addressed from a very instrumental, functional approach, where what they do is decomposed into auditable categories. Hence, their professionalism is constructed in terms of what is needed for them to perform their work; that is to say, specific academic qualifications, and competencies. The documents share consensus when naming and briefly describing the professional competencies that teacher educators need, which are focused around academic and school-based knowledge, research skills, innovation practices, collaboration, professional development, and learning. No attention is given to other aspects of teacher educators' professionalism; for example, autonomy, leadership, focus on integrity and responsibility, skills and attitudes to account for the quality of the teaching process to relevant stakeholders (apart from fulfilling accreditation schemes), or commitment to ethical codes. Here we see that the construction of teacher educators, regulated by the dominance of neoliberal conceptions of professionalism, relies on managerial notions of competencies, with no recognition of their roles as reflective and autonomous collaborators and practitioners.

Significant stress on research indicates that it is advocated as a worthwhile means to improve the quality of ITE programmes, and the status of their teaching staff within universities, through the academisation of their professional roles. However, there is a risk of losing the emphasis on teaching if teacher educators are pressed to conform to demands of academic productivity. From such situation, a controversy arises between the

recognition of teacher educators as rightfully placed within academia and the struggles for concentrating on both teaching and research when for many, their teaching load is quite high compared with other academics, and experience as researchers quite low. Policies should focus on promoting the conditions and opportunities for teacher educators to develop their much-needed research profile (having sufficient time for participation in academic activities, financial costs and the availability of suitable programs). Instead, expectations of their research activity translated into concepts of publication output and productivity indicators suggest the ethos of managerialism present in policy-making. They need to prove their functionality and responsiveness with solid evidence –they need to be usable, creditable, and productive. Paradoxically, top-down managerialist approaches within universities can be associated to the precarisation of teacher educators' work thoroughly described by the CNA policy implementation report.

Policy mentions teacher educators' collaboration and professional development; however scarcely and without embracing these notions in any meaningful or detailed way. Therefore, it is possible to say that there is enough room for ITE policies to promote quality enhancement, cooperation and collaboration between relevant actors—government agencies, universities, schools, teachers and teacher educators—to support the practice and professional development of educators, from induction into the profession to lifelong learning. Given the pressing need to prepare high-quality teachers, the lack of a professional qualification framework or ethical codes for teacher educators is a discrepancy hindering the improvement of ITE in Chile. Attention should be given to the development of sound professional standards and ethical codes, with teacher educators playing a key and active role formulating these sets of professional characteristics and norms, and safeguarding the quality and ethical integrity of their own profession.

Chilean teacher educators' invisibility powerfully circumscribes their capacity to shape policy. As result, the dominant stakeholders in developing policies and actions to support them are the national government and universities. The policy documents in the study explicitly give universities and their teacher education departments the responsibility to promote and secure the quality of their academic staff. Education policies should encourage teacher educators to organise themselves in networks or associations in order to ensure that the profession is fully represented and have a voice to be heard in policy development, decision-making processes, and debates. Failing to acknowledge teacher educators, their diverse identities, qualifications, and work contexts can pose a barrier to any reform meant to improve the quality of education.

Conclusions

Evidence of the lack of greater policy interest in teacher educators reflects how the Chilean state, through their government agencies, envisions their professionalism. In

other words, as Snoek et al. (2011, p. 661) assert “if teacher educators are not considered a distinct professional group, and teacher education is understood as the mastering of an academic discipline with some additional courses on teaching strategies, there is little reason to develop distinct policies.” It is observed that what matters in the analysed policy is to define their professionalism, rather than emphasise measures or actions to support it, and legitimise teacher educators as practitioners with specialised knowledge and experience. Hence, policy merely assigns to universities the responsibility to promote their professionalism.

Given the failure to acknowledge teacher educators as a distinct professional group, there is a need to break the isolation among teacher educators from different backgrounds and working in different contexts. Enhancing professionalism among teacher educators requires them to take greater collective ownership of the vision of teacher education, rather than being mere passive recipients of reforms. Because of their strong influence on modelling teachers, it is relevant for teacher educators to maintain an active, critical and reflective awareness toward their role, a stance that allows them to assert more agency in the construction of their professionalism. To foster collegiality, ownership and professional agency would require support from government bodies and universities, as well as shared common values defining teacher educators’ professionalism and clear recognition of their responsibility for high-quality teacher education.

It should be no surprise, then, to advocate for more studies on the impact and effects of policy measures on the professionalism of teacher educators in Chile. The exchange of such research among key stakeholders could enrich processes of ITE policy-making by providing more comprehensive knowledge to enrich dialogues about what constitutes and how to enhance their professionalism. In conclusion, it would be possible to adhere to the view expressed by Snoek et al. (2011) that, when closing the gap between the separate worlds where teacher educators, education researchers, and government seem to live, both teacher educators and policy-makers can gain a better understanding of the proper actions and conditions to strengthen the professionalism of teacher educators.

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