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## Teacher Professional Development: Perspectives from a Research Experience with Teachers

*Desarrollo profesional docente: Perspectivas desde una experiencia de investigación con docentes*

*Desenvolvimento Profissional do Professor: perspectivas a partir de uma experiência de investigação com professores*



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### Abstract:

**Objective.** To analyze the scope of realization of professional learning communities with teachers and management teams who implemented that intervention during two years in a high school in the south of Chile. **Methodology.** In this applied research, teachers participated in phases of diagnosis of training needs for professional development. Based on this, a proposal of work sessions theoretically and methodologically linked to the professional learning communities was structured. The proposal was designed and implemented together with the school's management team. After the implementation, the study followed with qualitative interviews and focal groups about the experience conducted with 17 participants; these instances were analyzed by thematic analysis following the phenomenological approach. **Analysis of Results.** The analyses allowed the emergence of three elements related to professional learning and agency capacity. It was especially evident that teachers recognized their capacity to take charge of their professional learning by considering work routines, focusing on learning as a positive factor among teachers and being important in all phases of a collaborative work design.



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**Conclusions.** The findings show that, although specific stimuli, spaces, and moments are required to encourage teachers' work, it is possible to improve based on their own capacities, i.e., within each establishment, there is the possibility of achieving learning for all. This call is addressed to pedagogical leaders, who can modify their roles and adapt to professionals recognized as agents of change.

**Keywords:** Teacher development; qualitative applied research; professional learning communities.

#### Resumen:

**Objetivo.** Analizar el alcance de la realización del proyecto Comunidades Profesionales de Aprendizaje, con el profesorado y equipo directivo que implementaron dicha intervención durante dos años en un liceo del sur de Chile. **Metodología.** En esta investigación aplicada, el profesorado participó en fases de diagnóstico de necesidades de formación para el desarrollo profesional. A partir de ello, se estructuró una propuesta de sesiones de trabajo vinculadas teórica y metodológicamente con las Comunidades Profesionales de Aprendizaje. La propuesta fue diseñada e implementada junto con el Equipo Directivo de la escuela. Luego de la implementación, el estudio siguió con una indagación cualitativa vía entrevistas y grupos focales sobre la experiencia con 17 protagonistas; estas instancias se analizaron por medio de un análisis temático con el enfoque fenomenológico. **Análisis de resultados.** Los análisis permitieron la emergencia de tres elementos relacionados con el aprendizaje profesional y la capacidad de agencia. Se evidenció especialmente que el personal docente reconoce su capacidad para hacerse cargo de su aprendizaje profesional mediante las rutinas de trabajo; centrarse en el aprendizaje como factor positivo entre docentes; y reconoce que esto es muy importante en todas las fases de un diseño de trabajo colaborativo. **Conclusiones.** Los hallazgos dan cuenta de que, si bien se requieren estímulos, espacios y momentos específicos para incentivar el trabajo docente, es posible mejorar a partir de sus propias capacidades, es decir, que dentro de cada establecimiento está la posibilidad de alcanzar aprendizajes para todos y todas. Este llamado está dirigido a los grupos líderes en pedagogías, quienes pueden modificar sus roles y adaptarse a las personas profesionales que se reconocen como agentes de cambio.

**Palabras claves:** Desarrollo docente; investigación cualitativa aplicada; comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje.

#### Resumo:

**Objetivo.** Analisar o escopo de implementação das Comunidades de Aprendizagem Profissional com os professores e a equipe de gestão que implementaram esta intervenção durante dois anos em uma escola de ensino médio no sul do Chile. **Metodologia.** Nesta pesquisa aplicada, os professores participaram de fases de diagnóstico das necessidades de treinamento para o desenvolvimento profissional. Com base nisso, foi estruturada uma proposta para sessões de trabalho teoricamente e metodologicamente ligadas às Comunidades de Aprendizagem Profissional. A proposta foi elaborada e implementada em conjunto com a equipe de gestão da escola. Após a implementação, o estudo continuou com um inquérito qualitativo por meio de entrevistas e grupos de discussão sobre a experiência com 17 participantes; estas instâncias foram analisadas por meio de uma análise temática seguindo a abordagem fenomenológica. **Análise dos resultados.** As análises permitiram identificar três elementos relacionados à aprendizagem profissional e agência. Ficou especialmente



evidente que os professores reconhecem sua capacidade de se responsabilizar por sua aprendizagem profissional levando em conta as rotinas de trabalho, focalizando a aprendizagem como um fator positivo entre os professores e importante em todas as fases de um projeto de trabalho colaborativo. **Conclusões.** As conclusões mostram que, embora sejam necessários estímulos, espaços e momentos específicos para incentivar o trabalho dos professores, é possível melhorar com base em suas próprias capacidades, ou seja, que dentro de cada estabelecimento existe a possibilidade de alcançar a aprendizagem para todos. Este apelo é dirigido aos líderes pedagógicos, que podem modificar seus papéis e adaptar-se aos profissionais que se reconhecem como agentes de mudança.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento do professor; pesquisa qualitativa aplicada; comunidades de aprendizagem profissional.

## Introduction

Professional development of teachers is currently the focus of educational research and policy through a story-oriented approach so to promote the concept of teachers as protagonists of the necessary changes to foster better learning for all students. An example of this view is found in reports from international studies such as [Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos \(OECD, 2019\)](#) which reports on the importance of ongoing training aimed at helping teachers to improve their performance in diverse and relevant areas, such as responding to differences among students and working collaboratively with their colleagues to become lifelong learners who grow in their profession.

From the above, we also understand the relevance of the processes that occur both in the classroom, understood as an effective meeting space between teachers and students, as well as in other various meetings outside the classroom, this latter being a space to achieve professional learning with peers. On this matter, studies led by [Tardif \(2004\)](#) have been pioneers in gathering diverse influences on professional learning, and have given light to the fact that professional learning responds to various experiences of encounters and disagreements between teachers and knowledge, colleagues, pedagogical leaders, and themselves through reflective processes. These dynamics are an essential part of the present study, aiming to help pedagogical leaders to facilitate professional learning environments pertinent to teachers, as recommended [Vaillant \(2019\)](#) for the school communities.

As shown, the research thus reflects the consensus regarding the contributions of educational research to the professional development of teachers, where it has been pointed out that research should generate knowledge with the directly involved actors, and not from those involved. It is well known that resources in education are never sufficient; therefore, the protagonists of these processes should not continue to be on the sidelines. In this way, we understand the professional development of teachers as a professional learning process that occurs mainly in the practice of teaching ([Sawyer & Ramirez Stuke, 2019](#)), and as such, it



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should be promoted from there. In order to observe classroom activity from this perspective, methodological complexities are particularly relevant, like in this applied research. Method that allows to approach together with its protagonists the scope of the interventions.

The Chilean case stands out for the unfinished dialogue between social movements of teachers, students, and the legislative power, that has promoted numerous laws in the field of education since 2009 to date; an excess of regulations that have increased the tension and social problems.

Specifically for teaching work, the Law 20.903 ([Ministerio de Educación, 2016](#)), the last one in regulating teaching, describes the processes that accompany potential professional development. Moreover, it states that education professionals are responsible for their progress in their professional careers and that pedagogical leaders must collaborate in the continuous improvement of teacher performance. Specifically, Article 10(e) establishes that the head of the establishment and its administrative team must lead their educational project aiming to raise the quality of the school specifically on develop professionally of teachers looking educational goals. This law indicates that management teams must carry out pedagogical supervision in the classroom, a task mainly carried out by the Technical Director. Besides, Law 20.903 ([Ministerio de Educación, 2016](#)) specifies that management teams must be agents of the professional development of teachers through the generation and monitoring of training plans for teachers, as well as promoting pedagogical innovation and collaborative work among teachers. The plans must be designed by the director of the educational institution together with the management team, in consultation with the teachers who perform technical-pedagogical functions and the Teachers' Council.

Based on the above, the literature indicates that teachers' development as professionals requires structures and practices that favor such process, but that also recognize the abilities that each one of them already has or is already developing. In this sense, the concept of agency makes it possible to understand the possibilities for the growth of a person's abilities based on their environment ([Rigby et al., 2016](#)). This concept proposed by [Sen \(1999\)](#) conceives as the premise of any growth people's potential and their capacity to intervene in reality autonomously and not as dependents.

From this viewpoint, understanding how work is organized with others becomes crucial. The Collaborative Professionalism as understood by [Hargreaves & O'Connor \(2018\)](#) is series of levels of collaboration that begin with an initiation or emergency leading to transformation. This latter being a process where deep levels of collaborative activity occur, becoming more complex and precise in terms of structure and methods, and there is a greater confidence in the professional relations among teachers. The experience of this researchers indicates that this path is not easy, but that it is necessary to move forward in order to strengthen learning and professional development.

Due to the time and complexity of researching with teachers, this study refers to the results of an extensive process of work with teachers and school administratives of a secondary school in a city in southern Chile. The teachers participated in phases of diagnosis by means of semi-structured interviews with voluntary participation of training needs for professional development, information from which was structured a proposal for working sessions linked theoretically and methodologically with Professional Learning Communities (Aparicio Molina & Sepúlveda López, 2018). The proposal was analyzed and implemented together with the school's administrative team, made up of the Head of the Pedagogical Technical Unit, the Guidance Officer, the Area Coordinator, the School Integration Program Coordinator, and the Director. After two months of implementation, we discussed the scope of the experience with the protagonists, teachers, and administratives, as described below.

## Research Method

The work presented arises from the development of an Exploratory Experience of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in a high school in the BioBío Region. This study is an applied research with focus in a case that was invited to participate considering its readiness for continuous improvement and willingness to participate in a long time study. This study considered three key stages all of them development by a qualitative approach (Packer, 2003; van Manen, 2003). First, the diagnosis by semi-structured interviews with voluntary participation of 10 teachers from different areas of learning who referred to the relevance of strengthening collaborative work, second, the articulation of results with PLC strategies with techniques to strengthen the collaborative work between peers of the teaching community. These stages made it possible to link the experience of teaching from the perspective of the protagonists, with the renowned proposal of PLCs (DuFour et al., 2010; DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Graham & Ferriter, 2010), especially concerning the development of skills for collaborative work. This led to a frank dialogue between the needs and perceptions of the local teaching community with recognized models for teacher professional development.

The third stage consisted of the implementation, during the one year, of a PLC experience structured as a serie of: working sessions organized in the Teacher's Council predetermined schedule, to address central issues for teachers such as the meaning and value of professional recognition based on the experience of practicing teachers; analyzing relevant pedagogical activities carried out by teachers that have had an impact on education in contexts of vulnerability, and the generation of strategies to improve pedagogical practices based on others' experience (Aparicio Molina & Sepúlveda López, 2018; Aparicio Molina & Sepúlveda López, 2019).

The work sessions were organized by the research team and were carried out at the weekly meeting of the technical board. The idea was to create meetings considering the internal



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dynamics of the school, flexible to the times and needs of the teachers, and actively involving the teachers' administrative team. According to the main foundations of the current qualitative research (Packer, 2013) the research considered at all times a subsequent evaluation of the scope of the experience with the people involved.

The participants of the study were teachers and administratives of the educational establishment and they took part in the diagnosis and then the design and implementation phase of the PLC. During the diagnosis phase, participants acted as informants. They then participated in the meetings to learn about the results of the diagnosis and PLC proposal generated by the research team. The management team had a direct participation in the revision of the PLC proposal, making suggestions and changes. Teachers who were part of the PLC experience also participated in order to learn about the experience. They all voluntarily agreed to participate and signed an informed consent form in accordance with the model of the Ethics Committee of the university sponsoring the research.

Finally, this research report considered the inquiry into the meanings given by the participants after one year of intervention with the research team to understand the experience of teachers and principals from their subjectivity and interpretation of reality by semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The interview (Packer, 2013; Sandín Esteban, 2003) is characterized as a strategy to generate relevant information from the life experience of the interviewees. According to the literature, interviews are conducted with subjects who, according to the design of the research, are key to understanding the meaning of the experience referred to. For this reason, in the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with head teachers who participated in all phases of the project (4 professionals), and with teachers who underwent the PLC experience as well (3 teachers).

Focus groups (Sandín Esteban, 2003) are a technique aimed at analyzing an experience or topic shared by the group of participants from a collective perspective. In this case, the two focal groups of five teachers each one, were specially developed to address with teachers the scope of the experience lived throughout the working sessions. In the focus groups, quality criteria such as homogeneity were met since all teachers were all workers of the educational establishment with a contract especially for carrying out teaching tasks. Another criterion was heterogeneity, which was met through the diversity of subjects taught by teachers, some of them technical-professional and others scientific-humanistic. Another factor that made it possible to achieve this criterion was the presence of men and women of different ages and teaching experience. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in spaces provided by the educational institution, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the participants who evaluated the PLC experience through the two different data collection techniques.

**Table 1:** Description of participants

Strategy	Participants
Interview	Teacher 1, Nursery Education, 23 years of experience
	Teacher 2, English, 10 years of experience
	Teacher 3, Cooking, 6 years of experience
	Administrative 1, 17 years of experience
	Administrative 2, 20 years of experience
	Administrative 3, 38 years of experience
	Administrative 4, 14 years of experience
Focus Group 1	Maths Teacher, 15 years of experience
	Science Teacher, 28 years of experience
	Nursing Teacher, 2 years of experience
	English Teacher, 5 years of experience
	Language Teacher, 5 years of experience
Focus Group 2	Tourism Teacher, 5 years of experience
	Language Teacher, 2 years of experience
	Science Teacher 1 year of experience
	Special Education Teacher, 7 years of experience
	Maths Teacher, 20 years of experience

**Note:** Own elaboration from data of research.

Regarding the analysis, the debate about methods in qualitative research is extensive, this research does not want to minimize the diversity of possibilities that exist to generate information as well as to analyze it (Mieles Barrera et al., 2012; Packer, 2013; Sandín Esteban, 2003). However, according to the approach, along with a long tradition of researchers, we recognize as relevant to educational research, corresponding to phenomenology in this study a thematic analysis was conducted (Packer, 2013). We sought to deepen the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2013) through the identification of ideas, forces, and phrases that were catalogued as emerging codes, which were organized by the recurrence of themes (van Manen, 2003). This process was reviewed through a re-reading of all the transcribed documents, founding the thematic classifications after gathering the codes under common, recurrent central ideas, as presented below.



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## Results

Both teachers and management team of the educational establishment, both in the interviews and in the focus groups, commented on their experiences. From these conversations, we identified codes and a series of themes connected among them, ending up being a continuum of reflections that allow us to understand the totality of the scope of this experience. According to the participants this experience allowed them to analyse their routines, and to propose new strategies to address teaching. Consequently, the most recurrent themes were:

### **The need to know and change routines:**

The teachers who participated both in the interviews and in the focus groups referred to the work of peer teachers as something occasional and organized by head teachers. For this study, there were routines associated mainly with the development of directed activities with a shared structure and which responded to some of the needs they have identified. In this way, week after week, a specific space and time was created so that teachers work together solving different themes.

The PLC experience proposed and implemented caused tension in both teachers and administratives, because both groups observed this method of work from what they usually did, that is, from their routines. For teachers, the traditional routine of working among peers corresponded preferably to listening, and administratives tend to work establishing guidelines for teachers. Thus, the experience of group work sessions where members of the management team had to form a working group and participate actively, allowed for a review of what was understood by peer work; in the words of the teachers: *We broke the routine, we broke with the chatter we were used to in the councils* (Focus group 1)

Administratives of school also perceived the tension, as observed in the interviews, and is the reason they decided to make changes: *we will carry out changes, as department meetings so that the teachers can meet and talk about their experiences* (Administrative 2). They add the need to look to the future and transform the way of thinking and organizing teaching work: *we will visit classrooms more often, we could see the need of our colleagues to improve collaborative work* (Administrative 2).

It becomes clear the need for a break with traditional routines and models in the practice of teaching. With regards to this, administratives indicate that *we got only to the first part; there is a lack of verification and follow-up to see if the person has assimilated it or not, and how he or she interpreted it* (Administrative 3). This reflection is an impulse to change traditional strategies, since it is now understood that change is not episodic, but permanent and manifests in the practice. As such, a change will carry out responsibilities for both working groups.



The collaborative work carried out allowed identifying the need to know the routines and generate changes in them, which allowed establishing real possibilities for permanent change and systemic improvement for the school.

### **Focus on group work**

After participating in the intervention, teachers and educational leaders reflected on the scope of the professional learning-oriented working groups. The working groups focused on learning allowed the construction of a collaborative work dynamic oriented to professional learning as a way to improve and strengthen the students' academic achievements.

In the same way, some of the exercises performed during the sessions helped breaking the traditional way of relating between colleagues, such as working groups with random people. On the one hand, they met with people with whom they did not meet frequently or did not necessarily have a friendly relationship, but discussed aspects that they actually did have in common: teaching. This strategy allowed them to meet and focus on the purpose of the meeting: *The workshops created the opportunity of sitting down, calm, away from all this madness, and ask yourself, am I doing it right?* (Focus Group 2). Thus, the meeting with colleagues who were not necessarily friends facilitated the active work of all during the sessions.

The challenge of dialoguing with others, and of agreeing beyond personal affinities and common projects, brought value to the PLC model thanks to interaction between peers focused on teaching work and teaching skills. Also, working with others in infrequent groups allowed new roles to emerge, facilitated getting to know each other on a professional level, and also challenged them to respond without being distracted by conversation or pending tasks. In the words of teachers, it was a space for a true encounter with specific purposes: *to work, to sit down to talk, and to put together a strategy to achieve something* (Focus Group1).

### **Professional development of teachers and administratives**

A third major theme that emerged strongly was that of autonomy to advance in professional development. This is because, based on the characteristics of the experience, emerging tensions led to a necessary questioning of the ways to develop professionally. The experience of working sessions according to the PLC model was a space of active meeting between professionals, where, along with breaking routines, allowed them to work together and project opportunities for their own training.

Based on the above, the teachers criticized the PLC experience because, although the teachers were considered in the diagnosis phase, and the management team participated in the previous organization of the sessions, no thought was given to the possibility of the teachers



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participating in such organization and contributing with themes. Thus, the teachers indicated that they had the skills to form collaborative work strategies among them and that therefore they should be the ones to manage them. *All the groups came up with the idea of organizing encounters to share experiences every two months* (Focus Group 1).

The conception of themselves as capable of influencing professional decisions is essential to promote transformations in the continuing education of teachers and is totally different from the traditional demand for training or qualification that teachers usually present to their administratives.

At the same time, the absence of teacher participation in the previous organization of the sessions allowed administratives to feel that they were participating in a complete professional learning experience, because they were able to learn about the diagnosis and include elements that were important from their own experience *We felt that we were being listened to, we said don't do this or give more time to this because we know how we are, we made a contribution based on what you were proposing from an external perspective* (Administrative 4).

This process favored the management team the working relationship both with the research team and between them as professionals: *By working within your project, we, as management team felt freer, we felt a more horizontal and even more playful participation* (Administrative 3).

## Discussion and Conclusion

The current scenario for teaching in Chile has made it possible to create conditions in which both obstacles and facilitators can coexist to move toward the professionalization of teachers following PLCs parameters of professional development. This is part of a series of analyses of the reality already presented, such as the predominance of a phenomenon around collaborative work called artificial collegiality (Hargreaves y Fullan, 2014), understood precisely as collaborative work meetings between teachers organized by education leaders, with objectives established by these leaders but that result alien to genuine meetings and companionship of teachers. Thus, according to Hargreaves and Fullan, these meetings do not cause a real change in teachers' beliefs and classroom practices.

As observed in the reflections made by the teachers after an intervention, it is not enough to meet with the other teacher to work in a group, but it should be oriented to professional learning and recognition of the teaching experience or trajectory.

Moreover, according to critical approaches such as that proposed by Apple (2018), schools reproduce the structure of our society. As it is with diversity issues, that is, the differences in treatment by gender, or socio-economic aspects. In this way, teachers work in institutions that mostly reproduce hierarchical and vertical management models in which they are subordinated

to an unquestionable power. The guiding factors for the exercise of this power are national education policies, the curriculum, and institutional projects, which are reflected in many of the actions of direct leadership.

As a result, this study finds elements that hinder the professional development of teachers from the perspective of PLCs, such as the distance between administrative's participation in experiences such as the PLCs contrasted with the teacher's perception, despite recognizing that it was a significant opportunity for training. For teachers, administrative and bureaucratic issues persist over pedagogical reflection. Consequently, as in other instances of professional meetings described by teachers, there was a subordination of the meeting to the administrative. Added to this, the few instances available for collaborative work are reduced to what was described above as Artificial Collegiality, that is, it is reduced to formal and specific bureaucratic procedures to increase the attention paid to joint planning of teachers and other forms of teamwork (Hargreaves y Fullan, 2014). Consequently, it is not possible to move toward a culture of collaborative work with an emphasis on teaching practice if there is not a willingness on the part of school administratives to truly include teachers in the definition of these practices.

As Vaillant (2019) argues, teacher professional development can occur in a relatively autonomous and personal way, but within an intersubjective and social space so that teacher learning should be understood as an experience generated in the interaction with a context or environment with which a context to which teachers are linked. For this reason, principals must promote a context of collaboration to achieve better learning among teachers.

When there is distance in that, how results show is critical in the process of implementing a regulation on the Professional Teaching Career that evaluates teachers and stimulates their continuing education. Especially because it is evident that models such as PLCs cannot be installed in schools without policies providing real possibilities for teachers, beyond the management teams, to influence their learning. Thus, a truly transformative experience in this area will be one that discovers and points out some aspect of the situation that has relevance for a practical task, such as it is teaching practice in assessed contexts. This is an element of success of the PLC implemented, although it generates dissonance with the traditional way of fostering professional learning.

The act of complaining among teachers is not unusual. Several studies have revealed that in countries such as the United States, both teachers and academics have seen that the system of accountability is harmful to professional development. This was observed after the complete implementation of the Education Reform in the United States of NCLB (No Child Left Behind), when the effects on the design of classroom instruction were evident (Finkel, 2010). Thus, an accountability system based on standardized test results puts incentives on teachers to focus their job on developing instructional plans based on the achievement of learning objectives



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assessed in those tests, therefore discouraging learning more associated with the promotion of creativity (Lobascher, 2011). In this way, even experienced teachers may believe that their instruction is not meeting the academic needs of students, a belief that limits their possibilities of learning professionally (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009) and modifies their interactions with students (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008). Students are spending more time preparing and learning strategies to pass the test than in a dialogue to generate transformative learning (Krieg, 2011; Schlechty, 2011).

However, it is also possible to identify in this study facilitating elements that propose to question *What is it to be a professional for a teacher today?* Since decades ago the teacher's job has passed from being a transmission of content to understand it as a relationship in which people intertwine knowledge (Tardif, 2004; van Manen, 2003). This means that during their practice, teachers engage with students, with teachers, and with themselves beyond the sole mastery of certain topics. Thus, the ability to teach and to learn on a professional level is also related to the teacher's beliefs regarding professional learning and their agency abilities. Such beliefs have been understood as true motors of teacher development, decisions, and attitudes regarding the innumerable school situations (Durksen et al., 2017). For this reason, thanks to actual experiences, teacher's capacity to act as agencies emerges as a facilitating factor, believing that they can intervene in their professional learning processes as long as the institutional and bureaucratic structure allows them to do so.

The idea of agency capacity, previously raised by Sen (1999) as the possibility of achieving their objectives, goals and purposes, to choose and make decisions, emerges as a finding of this research as it arises in the light of the interrelation between the different meanings given to the research experience by the participants. Both teachers and principals realize that they can improve from their own capacities and towards what they value and gives meaning to being a teacher.

Teacher's beliefs have been widely studied and analyzed as the main lines of their professional development. On the other hand, the concept of agency capacity that teachers have regarding their professional learning, as indicated by Biesta et al. (2015) refers to how teachers do something to grow professionally, which in turn shows how committed they are commitment to the context in which their practice occurs.

Thus, beliefs about professional learning and agency capacity are issues that connect in the reality reported by the teachers and administratives who participated in our interviews and focus groups. In this way, beyond the emerging tensions, there is a call for proposals regarding how professional development practices and the participation of those principally involved in them should be. Teachers recognize that they can take charge of their professional learning and that, although specific stimuli, spaces, and moments are required, there is room for improvement. This call is addressed to pedagogical leaders, who can modify their roles and adapt to a professional who recognizes himself or herself as an agent of change.



Along the lines of the facilitating elements, it emerges the vision of pedagogical leaderships, which emerge from their own context so that rather than continuing the implementation of the traditional definition of leadership understood as influencing others to achieve the objectives and goals of the institution, be closer to what Blanchard (2007) proposes, “unleashing the power and potential of people to serve a greater good” (p 12). In this sense, an effective school leader must enhance the development of the capacities of others, that is, be an instrument for the development of teachers, students, and the other members of the educational community.

Finally, as the study showed, by actively participating in the organization of the experience, administratives feel capable of generating future changes. The evidence of a diagnosis, a work plan following the diagnosis, joint design, and participation in implementation were all stages that constituted a coherent work plan that generated achievements. In them, we observed the real sense of agency capacity and how favorable it is for professional development, since, the psychological empowerment of teachers is a mediating variable between leadership style and commitment, which is effectively affected by the actions of educational leaders. Activating professional empowerment, that is, the ability to interpret their role in the workplace, requires agency experiences in which teachers not only give their points of view but actively participate in the generation of meaning and objectives of their organizations, that is, in decision-making. Evidence indicates that delegating functions is a step, but is not sufficient in this area (Köiv et al., 2019).

Undoubtedly, this study presents opportunities for further research on how to strengthen the professional development of teachers based on collaborative work models that recognize the capabilities of its protagonists. In the same way that limitations are observed in its implementation due to its focus on a single secondary school and the interpretation of an experience in this context from the teachers and principals.

### **Declaración de contribuciones**

Las personas autoras declaran que han contribuido en los siguientes roles: **C. A. M.** contribuyó con la escritura del artículo; la gestión del proceso investigativo; la obtención de fondos, recursos y apoyo tecnológico y el desarrollo de la investigación. **F. S. L.** contribuyó con la escritura del artículo; la gestión del proceso investigativo; la obtención de fondos, recursos y apoyo tecnológico y el desarrollo de la investigación.

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