

**THE MEANINGS OF BECOMING A FOREIGN LANGUAGES TEACHER:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**



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HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES SCHOOL
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The Meanings of Becoming a Foreign Languages teacher: A Phenomenological Perspective

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ABSTRACT: The current research aims to reflect upon the meanings of becoming a teacher of foreign languages through the lived experiences of four students of the Degree Program in Modern Languages (English - French) of the University of Cauca and three English teachers from public schools in Santander de Quilichao, Cauca. It is centered on the qualitative approach, in the scope of Phenomenology and Human Sciences. In this sense, this phenomenological research will permit to deeply approach the meanings of becoming a teacher from the lifeworld of embodied lived experiences.

Key words: *Phenomenology, Becoming a teacher, Lived experience, Lifeworld, Bracketing and Reduction, phenomenological attitude, Vocation, Theory-Practice, discipline, institutionalism.*

RÉSUMÉ: Cette recherche vise à être une réflexion et une compréhension des significations d'être professeur en langues étrangères à travers des expériences vécues à partir desquelles émanent des sensations et des sentiments dans le domaine pédagogique. Cette investigation se centre sur la méthode qualitative, dans l'univers de la phénoménologie et les sciences humaines. On a compté sur l'aide de quatre étudiants de la Licence en Langues Modernes de l'Université du Cauca et trois professeurs de langues dans les écoles publiques de la municipalité de Santander de Quilichao. De cette manière, la recherche phénoménologique : *Les significations d'être professeur de langues étrangères* permettra de s'approcher de l'expérience pour comprendre les qualités d'être professeurs liés au Monde de la Vie.

Mots clés : *Phénoménologie, significations d'être professeur, expérience vécue, monde de la vie, epochè et réduction, Attitude phénoménologique, vocation, théorie-pratique, discipline, institution.*

RESUMEN: La presente investigación fenomenológica es una reflexión y comprensión de los sentidos de ser docente de lenguas modernas a través de las experiencias vividas en las que emanen sentires y/o emociones dentro del campo pedagógico. Esta investigación se enfoca en el método cualitativo, en el ámbito de la Fenomenología y las Ciencias Humanas. Así mismo, se contó con la participación de cuatro estudiantes del programa de Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad del Cauca y tres profesores de idiomas del municipio de Santander de Quilichao. De este modo, la investigación fenomenológica: *Los sentidos de ser docente de lenguas extranjeras* permitirá hacer un acercamiento más profundo para entender las cualidades de ser docente desde el Mundo de la Vida.

Palabras clave: *Fenomenología, sentir docente, experiencia vivida, mundo de la vida, epojé y reducción, Actitud fenomenológica, vocación, teoría-práctica, convivencia escolar, institucionalidad.*

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Introduction

The current research aims to approach the inner meanings of becoming a teacher considering the lived experiences told by some pre-service teachers and some professional teachers from the Degree Program in Modern Languages of the University of Cauca.

The particularity of the phenomena we wanted to research about led us to select the path of Human Sciences methodologies and discover the possibilities offered by the Phenomenological *method*. This path represented a huge challenge to our reading, writing and researching skills, as well as it allowed us to reflect upon ourselves as students, classmates and future teachers.

This research paper is presented in the first person of the plural because we assumed the phenomenological question as a way of living a problem more than just state it from the parameters of objectivity. We wanted the research to be meaningful for us and to listen to our participants as human beings sharing experiences and not as *objects* to be described or categorized under clear and objective concepts or sentences.

Writing in first person is valid if we follow Van Manen's point of view: "Phenomenological method is not only to speak and produce text that demonstrates our understanding of something (...) but the recognition that a text can "speak" to us, that we may experience an emotional and ethical responsiveness, that we may know ourselves addressed" (2003, p. 240).

In the first chapter of this text, we describe how our research question was born and how we assumed some important methodological aspects to approach the phenomena of our interest, as well as our objectives, participants and justification.

The second chapter shows an approach to the concepts, authors and theories that inspired our reflections. It pretends to summarize what we could understand about Phenomenology, as well as it represents all the way that we still need to continue if we want to reach a more accurate understanding of a phenomenological attitude¹.

The third and fourth chapters are centered in the transcriptions and descriptions of the lived experiences gathered from the participants of the two perspectives in which we divided our research team. The third chapter talks about the meanings of becoming a teacher from the lived experiences of students in training from the Modern Languages program of the University of Cauca (Perspective A). The fourth chapter addresses the meanings of becoming a teacher from the lived experiences of professional teachers (Perspective B). Each perspective is described according to the *clusters of meaning* found during the phenomenological encounters. Lived experiences told by participants were transcribed in Spanish to maintain their particularity and originality.

Finally, the fifth chapter is our final reflection, not a conclusion. We rarely speak about conclusions in phenomenological research. Phenomenological reflections open doors, go deep into the problem and do not pretend to solve it or to finish it. In this last chapter we also describe our own experience as phenomenological researchers and we venture some recommendations we hope to be useful to continue the study of our research phenomena.

¹ *Phenomenological attitude*: it makes reference to the path we took for approaching a phenomenon. We took into account concepts such as epoché (bracketing), reduction, thoughtfulness and tactfulness in order to not influence the narrations made by the participants.

1. The Birth of a Research Question

1.1 Problem Statement

A phenomenological researcher cannot just have a question— He or she must live it
(Van Manen, 2003)

The consolidation of a research project is a sensitive issue, considering that it is charged of fears, worries and uncertainties about what this process really means to our professional, personal and future lives. Along our way as students, we face questions that help us to assume reflexive perspectives but, we rarely know how to organize them to fit the formal and rigorous parameters of the academic research methodologies. Most of the times, we consider that our daily experiences and curiosities will never be worthy enough to become a research project.

However, faced to this last exercise before becoming professionals, we wondered how to assume a meaningful research, how to state an evocative question which can give sense to our experiences and curiosities. We did not want to just *have* a question, but we did want to *live* a question. Despite our worries, we discovered the necessity and the possibility of doing a research exercise about a problem that had to do with us in an intimate relationship, that touched our intersubjective concerns and gave us the desire of looking for a light in our way to walk.

Then, following our intuition² and different critical-reflective readings promoted in class, we finally pinpointed a concern that touched our inner doubts: we desired to go deep into the meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher. It was the fact of becoming a teacher itself

² Contrary to the problem statements led by Natural Sciences, intuition plays a valid role in research guided by Human Sciences approaches, being our first intentional contact with the live-world and the source of wonder. “Phenomenological research begins with wonder (...) it can only be pursued while surrendering to a state of wonder” (Van Manen, 2004, p. 27)

and all the emotions, fears, challenges, doubts and worries linked to it, that fed our sense of wonder and encouraged us to design this project.

Gradually, we realized that before any doubt about the linguistics, the pronunciation, the methodologies, and all the foreign language's formal aspects, there is a big worry that is hardly ever enunciated: it is about what becoming a foreign languages teacher means. Perhaps, from a phenomenological intuition, we sensed that something was missing about the recognition of our teacher essence³ and all the roles that it implies.

It is neither a pedagogical absence of theories nor the lack of awareness of methodologies or strategies but rather that we have not said enough about the experiences and real feelings during our practices in the classroom when we assume our future professional role. Perhaps we have taken for granted an ideal and obvious sense of becoming a teacher based on theory or prejudices and we have ignored a series of daily experiences that deserve to be exposed and analyzed to give a deeper meaning to the relationship between the *knowledge-teacher* and the *feeling - teacher*.

Our daily experiences and feelings about becoming teachers were unconsciously present in our conversations, during “not important” meetings, breaks or informal talks whose details we did not dare to confess to our teachers and directors of OPE⁴, to our classmates and not even to ourselves. We sometimes wrote Experience Diaries about our first teaching experiences, but we did not get to manage them with the necessary rigor and sensitivity.

³ We use the term ‘essence’ strictly in the sense stated by Van Manen (2004) to which we will refer more precisely in next chapter.

⁴ OPE stands for ‘*Orientación del Proceso Educativo*’ which consists of two semesters of pre-service teaching in public schools and represents our first formal contact with our professional life assuming the role of teachers.

Perhaps, it is inside everyday life that we shape the meanings of becoming a teacher. These meanings arise from a routine that has been ignored or rejected, from a set of lived experiences rooted in the lifeworld that could give us lights to assume teacher roles based on thoughtfulness and tactfulness -concepts mentioned by Van Manen - and not on standardized recipes.

The essence of the question, said Gadamer (1993), is the opening, and keeping open, of possibilities. But we can only do this if we can keep ourselves open in such a way that in this abiding concern of our questioning we find ourselves deeply interested (inter-esse, to be or stand in the midst of something) in that which makes the question possible in the first place. To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being (p. 45)

Thus, we considered that our research question must explore the lived experiences of teachers and students in training to become teachers, just as they were lived and not under idealized theories. Our research question can be stated as follows: *How do lived experiences give sense to the multiple meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher?*

The apparent generality of our question is explained because our inquiry is rooted in Human Sciences, where questions are not meant to be entirely closed or clearly decanted. Questions stated from Human Sciences methods represent an openness to a phenomenon, a possibility to *inhabit* the problem instead of isolating it by means of neutral objectivity and theoretical constructions (Jaramillo, 2012). As the reader may have already noticed, we have selected a phenomenological approach -or attitude- to tackle our problem and glimpse a horizon to our deep questioning.

Phenomenology will allow us to approximate the lived experiences of Modern Languages students and some public schools' teachers to understand how the meanings of becoming a teacher are born and shaped. As Van Manen said, "we gather people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves" (2003, p. 80).

1.2 Justification

Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher himself or herself. (Van Manen, 2003)

What are the reasons which led us to address the question of becoming a teacher? Why is this question important?

The constant observation of certain phenomena that appear within educational establishments we visited, the different ways of living and feeling the pre-service practice (involving multiple gladness and heartaches), the experiences shared as irrelevant simple anecdotes, they are all the sources which led us to ask urgently the question about the meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher.

We observe cases, for example, in which some students entered university with the desire of becoming teachers, but once the pre-service teaching initiated the characteristics of their lived experiences forced them to change their expectations, either because they found a very different situation from what they had imagined or because of the high bureaucratic standards of an educational system with which they cannot reconcile their dreams of change.

Others on the contrary, fell gradually in love with the teaching profession and they ended up being unable to imagine in different roles. For certain other students, the relationship between the formal aspects of the foreign language (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) became difficult

obstacles blocking a deep-rooted teaching as vocation. Others, excellent for language skills, are unable to even imagine their life as teachers.

The afore-mentioned perceptions led us to identify the paradoxical meanings surrounding the concept of 'becoming a teacher'. *To be or not to be a teacher* is the Shakespearian question that introduces us to a struggle between what we often irresponsibly categorize as positive and negative within this profession and the real experiences that we do live every day.

Phenomenological projects allow us to navigate questions deeply rooted in ourselves, they transform us. Phenomenological questions arise from our historicity and that movement justifies them.

A phenomenological question may arise any time we have had a certain experience that brings us to pause and reflect. Even the most ordinary experience may bring us to a sense of wonder. Perhaps we suddenly think back to an event that struck us. Or someone made a comment about something that we experienced. And now we wonder: What is this experience like? How does the meaning of this experience arise? How do we live through an experience like this? And thus, it may happen that an ordinary experience may suddenly appear quite extraordinary: we become aware of the phenomenal phenomenality of a phenomenon! (Van Manen, 2014, p. 31)

Then, in our moments of pause and reflect, we were researchers and at the same time, we made some writing exercises in class that allowed us to delve into our worries and to put into sensitive writings our teacher experiences that we are very close to assume for the rest of our lives. It is worthwhile, being coherent to phenomenology, to transcribe some sections of our writing exercises and to perceive them as an essential part of the justification of the problem we

desire to explore. We must clarify about two things before: 1) We decided to write and transcribe the experiences in Spanish, as we consider the relationship between mother tongue, feelings and sensitive thought as a relevant and unavoidable issue 2) The experiences we register in this section do not fit as strict examples of pre-reflective experience as we will consider it later, but are just the exemplification of our first approach to our phenomenon and the beginning of our sense of wonder about our problem.

A: Recuerdo que cuando era muy niña, mi madre y mi padre salían a trabajar y como hermana mayor debía cuidar a mis hermanos. Así que durante las tardes jugábamos a la escuela y yo hacía el rol de profesora. En ese juego participaban mi tía menor, dos vecinos, una vecina, mi primo y mis tres hermanos. Yo les explicaba cómo aprender a leer, los números, a dibujar, etc. Yo disfrutaba mucho de estos juegos y ellos igual. Después durante mi vida laboral trabajé como cajera en un supermercado y allí, cada que llegaba una cajera nueva, yo era elegida su profesora o guía para empezar su nueva etapa en el proceso, explicándoles todo lo relacionado. En este orden de ideas, mi vida ha estado siempre ligada a la enseñanza.

B: Ahora que me veo enfrentada a las prácticas, estar frente a los estudiantes y compartir con ellos lo que he aprendido me parece magnífico, pero al mismo tiempo aterrador. Ser docente no estaba entre mis planes, pero por situaciones ajenas a mí, simplemente se dio la oportunidad. Espero que en algún momento de mi vida llegue el deseo de enseñar, aunque sea una labor muy difícil.

C: Sentí que con esta carrera podría viajar y sentirme libre. Jamás tuve ni tengo en mente ser docente a menos que sea de total obligación. Nunca he tenido la vocación para serlo, creo que me gusta estar más alejada de la sociedad en general, no me gusta la bulla ni el desorden

humano. Incluso lo pienso cuando entro en el salón de clase, donde se encuentran los 33 niños de segundo de primaria que debo manejar en la OPE porque debo graduarme. La verdad siento que tengo carácter (mal carácter) para manejar a los chicos y tratar de enseñarles las cosas lo mejor que puedo. Pero eso no sale de mi corazón, no porque quiera hacerlo.

D: Mi inseguridad de tener que hablar en público, o tener que dirigirme a estudiantes representa para mí una desventaja, inseguridad que hace estremecer mi cuerpo, como el titubeo, el temblor, erizarme, sentir que quiero orinar o tomar mucha agua. En ocasiones es tan evidente mi desespero que me hace sentir ridículo, enfermo o que sencillamente me equivoqué de profesión y que lo único que he hecho es perder mi tiempo.

E: A pesar de haber elegido una carrera como lo es una licenciatura y haber pensado desde el principio que ser docente sería mi futuro, siento definitivamente que no es lo mío, sobre todo cuando estoy dentro del salón de clase. Creo que he aprendido un poco de la labor, hablando específicamente desde la pedagogía -si se le puede llamar así-. Pero por dentro mi vocación y mi motivación no están ahí como debería estar en un profesor. Esa, exactamente creo que es la esencia de un buen profesor, es lo que todo profesor por obligación debería tener y yo no lo tengo.

F: La verdad a veces dudo de lo que soy. ¿Eres profesora? Digo, pienso, analizo... ¿Soy profesora? Si antes era una niña, una adolescente (...) quería ser médico, pero ahora ¿soy profesora? Si, ¡lo soy! ¿Qué es ser un profesor? (...) ¿en dónde me he metido? ¿Cómo vine a parar aquí? Y sí y mil veces sí, tengo miedo de no saber si soy o seré buena profesora, a veces me dan ganas de llorar, pienso que estoy en el lugar equivocado, perdida. A veces digo ¡no quiero ser profesora! Es muy duro enseñar, mejor me dedico a otra cosa, a ser traductora, a ser

*investigadora... pero profesora no. Otras veces recapacito y pienso en lo que quiero. Quiero cambiar, quiero que la educación se revolucione, este mundo debe abrir los ojos y ver de manera distinta la vida, los niños deben entender que soñar es vivir, que aprender es crear y saber es dejar el alma libre. Por eso, cuando estoy feliz, cuando no me siento agobiada, creo que ser profesor es un regalo de la vida. Pero ¿cómo ser una buena profesora, aquí en Colombia?*⁵

We emphasize that the previous narratives are not strictly pre-reflective material. However, they were our first exercises leading to justify our research decisions. We could realize that the senses of becoming a teacher cover big fears, peculiar body senses, hopes and hopelessness, some desires to go away or to stay and change something, motivations, vocations. All of them are senses and feelings seeking to be heard, told and understood.

As Van Manen observed (2003), many people state that phenomenological projects do not have any practical value since you can't do anything with phenomenological knowledge. This will be truth from the perspective of an instrumental rationality. The real question -continues Van Manen- is not what we can do with phenomenology but what phenomenology can do to us if we get really interested in it. After pursuing a phenomenological research about the beginner-teacher experience, Stark (1991), affirmed:

Reflecting on my experience of being prepared to be a teacher, I believe my training generally focused on the technical *how-to*. The emphasis was on conceptualizing teaching as a technique. This preparation affected how I experienced my first-year teaching. I saw teaching as a mode of *doing* rather than *being*. I saw knowledge as a commodity, collected during

⁵ Writing exercises performed during 'Énfasis I' course, September-December 2017.

teacher training, and pedagogues as people who passed this knowledge on to students. I did not see pedagogy as a personal encounter between self and others, nor did I critically examine my assumptions (...) In general, I accepted the role of teacher as prescribed by others.

Unfortunately, a role can alienate people from their authentic possibility for *being* (...) What about the *being* of human beings? (p. 295).

In the same way, our research project seeks to open our way to examine our assumptions and reflect upon what it means to be a teacher from real ground. It will help us as well as other students from our program to have a more thoughtful and human reflection about our profession. It will let us think about the classroom practices and the curricular design of our Modern Languages program.

1.3 General and Specific Objectives

The main objective of our research is to deepen into the comprehension of the multiple meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher based on the lived experiences of students from the Modern Languages program of the University of Cauca-Santander de Quilichao and professional teachers from three public schools from the region.

As specific objectives, we can mention the following:

- ✓ To foster a sensitive reflection (about our profession and our daily practices).
- ✓ To reflect upon the relationship between the meanings of becoming a teacher and some specific units of analysis grounded in experience, such as Vocation, Theory-Practice, School Coexistence-Knowledge and Teacher roles - institutions.
- ✓ To become aware of the phenomenological attitude and its implications in educational research.

1.4 Methodology

Barthes (as cited by Van Manen, 1989) mentioned that *some people speak of method greedily, demandingly; what they want in work is method; to them it never seems rigorous enough, formal enough. Method becomes a Law... the invariable fact is that a work which constantly proclaims its will-to-method is ultimately sterile: everything has been put into the method, nothing remains for the writing.*

For this research purposes we chose to assume a methodology rooted in a philosophical framework founded in human sciences considerations about knowledge, research and human being. Specifically, we decided to navigate the challenging reflections of the Phenomenological Method following the theorizations of Max Van Manen about the Phenomenology of Practice (2014) and the Sensitive Research in Pedagogy (2003).

From the very beginning, we had to understand the complexity of the word ‘*method*’ in this context and how we needed to assume it from the perspective of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is a method of inquiry deeply rooted in Philosophy. It constitutes a method in the sense that it is the way or attitude with which we decide to approach a phenomenon with the intention of understanding it, digging deep into it. It is not a method in the sense of the scientific research: it is not just tools, pre-established rules, guided experiments or strict procedures to be followed in order. Phenomenology is then a meaning-giving method that allows the researcher to creatively design and make decisions about how to conduct the research. In fact, it is usually the phenomenon itself that guides, shapes and induce the metamorphosis of the method.

Phenomenology is always a matter of attempts, bids and hopeful risks. Within a phenomenological context, method is never just an engine that will unerringly produce insightful outcomes (...) Phenomenology is primarily a philosophic method for questioning, not a method for answering or discovering or drawing determinate conclusions. But in this

questioning, there exist the possibilities and potentialities for experiencing openings, understandings, insights-producing cognitive and noncognitive or pathic perceptions of existentialities, giving us glances of the meaning of the phenomena and events in their singularity (Van Manen, 2014, p. 29)

Our inquiry about the meanings of becoming a teacher does not pretend to solve, fix or conclude anything. We will get closer to the lived experiences of pre-service teachers and teachers to open the understanding of this phenomenon that makes essential part of our lives. Even if we are not philosophers, we are able to read about and undertake a phenomenological attitude tending to “nurture a measure of thoughtfulness and tact in the practice of our profession and in everyday life” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 31).

Phenomenology is not restricted to philosophers and lately, more and more professional practitioners from different fields around the world have started to consider it for donating new meanings to their practical capabilities. Phenomenological studies foster sensitivities and enhance ethical-philosophical attitudes to empower subjectivity and create a mindful and caring wondering about our life projects.

1.4.1 Research Design

Even though there are no strict steps to design the phenomenological method, we find precious guides in Van Manen texts. Van Manen recommends (2003) a series of research activities that helped us to craft our phenomenological research. They are dynamic and interrelated:

- ✓ Turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world
- ✓ Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it
- ✓ Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon
- ✓ Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting
- ✓ Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon
- ✓ Balancing the research context considering parts and whole

We tried to follow these recommendations during our research process as well as we grasped the conceptual cornerstones expressed there, which will be better explained in the next chapter of this text. To approach the lived experiences that nurture the different meanings of becoming a teacher, we decided to address the question from two perspectives.

With Perspective A we glimpsed the lived experiences of students of the Modern Languages Program (English-French) at the University of Cauca in Santander de Quilichao. With this perspective we tried to deep into the meanings of becoming a teacher since the beginning of the career until the pre-service teaching. Through perspective B we approached the lived experiences of professional teachers graduated from the Modern Languages program of the University of Cauca who are currently working in public schools from the municipality for some years.

By following this methodology, we wanted to explore the experiences related with ‘becoming a teacher’ since the beginning of our career until the consolidation of the professional teacher. This transit allowed us to reflect about some of the transformations and mutations of the meanings of becoming a teacher based on different lived experiences throughout teachers’ lives and gave us a broad perspective of the donation of meaning to our phenomenon.

We would like to emphasize that it was not our intention to categorize, compare or contrast these two perspectives since such exercises would be incoherent with our phenomenological objectives. With Perspectives A and B, we wanted to enrich the possibilities of meaning and broaden the lived-experiences to a better understanding of the phenomena and its transformations.

1.4.2 Participants

One important aspect of phenomenological research is how to select the participants. We also asked to ourselves the same question stated by Vagle (2014): “How many participants should I have in the study and how do I choose them?” (p. 75). This is not an easy interrogation since it has to do with what exact sciences usually relate to validity and reliability of the study.

However, as we did with the word *method*, we understood that phenomenology connects in a different way with the terms of validity and reliability since it is founded in a diverse conception of truth⁶. Phenomenology studies do not look for statistics (which does not mean they cannot use them for specific purposes) and do not pretend generalizations of fixed data. Therefore,

The question of sample size is essential in research when using statistical calculation. In lifeworld research the selection of informants is different(...) I have not found there to necessarily be “magic numbers” of research participants (...) The phenomenon calls for how it is to be studied (...) If it seems to make sense, relative to the phenomenon under investigation, to spend a lot of time with one or two participants in a particular context over an extended period of time and gathering data in different ways, such as interviews,

⁶ We will refer to this conception of truth in the section 3.7 of next chapter.

observations, anecdotes and performances, then have one or two participants. (Vagle, 2014, p. 75)

Accordingly, we considered that the horizon we wanted to explore suggested to have few participants, trying to spend more quality time with them and designing as best as we could our first phenomenological research. Following Van Manen again (2014), the term ‘sample’ usually refers to the aims of empirical generalization which is impossible in phenomenological research. But the term *sample* rediscovers its meaning from its French root ‘*exemple*’.

The real question then, is not how large is the sample of interviewees, but rather how many *examples* of meaningful experiential description or anecdotes would be appropriate for the study to go deep into the selected phenomenon, and those examples could come from our own reflecting writing exercises or even one single person from another semester. Subsequently, our research team split into two groups to address the perspectives mentioned before. Group A got in contact with 4 students of the Modern Languages program from the University of Cauca in Santander de Quilichao belonging to first, sixth and tenth semester. Group B met 3 teachers from three public schools of the municipality: Institución Educativa Instituto Técnico, Institución Etnoeducativa el Palmar and Institución Educativa Núcleo Escolar Rural Caloto.

It is important to emphasize that Group A and Group B got constantly together reflecting upon the lived experiences gathered and making decisions about the research horizons and the way of writing the final document we present here as a unit of reflection of our research problem.

1.4.3 Contexts

Perspective A

The University of Cauca's Program in Modern Languages (English-French), seen from its pedagogical point of view, aims to direct the pre-service teacher towards the transformation of himself/herself and the surrounding world by making him/her aware of the responsibility of becoming a teacher. The pre-service teacher of this program is supposed to create an impact on the society by perceiving the world pedagogically. To do so, the Educational Program Project (PEP) intertwines theories, methodologies, educational law and regulations, and other trends that guide the future teacher towards the complex roles he or she is going to be involved with.

To this end, the program presents a broad curriculum that, from the beginning of the bachelor's degree, orients the student towards the world of education. Then, Pedagogical training includes the reflections about the process of human language development, the analysis and reflection on the concepts of education, language and society, the immersion in different theories about teaching-learning processes and language acquisition considering socio-cultural, psychoanalytic, inter-cultural and linguistic concepts. The academic curriculum established for pedagogical training in the program presents the following subjects:

SEMESTER	SUBJECT	HOURS PER WEEK
2	DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY	4
5	SOCIETY AND EDUCATION	4
5	PSYCHOANALYSIS	3
6	LANGUAGES PEDAGOGY AND MATERIALS DESIGN	3

7	PEDAGOGY SEMINAR I	3
8	PRE-SERVICE TEACHING I	4
9	PRE-SERVICE TEACHING II	4
10	ELECTIVE SUBJECT	4

By means of these specific subjects, the PEP attempts to provide the necessary tools that will be of vital importance at the time of the pre-service teaching, allowing the student to explore and understand the *how*, *where* and *why* to teach. Once the pre-service teaching is initiated in different public schools, the pre-service teacher features to make decisions in concrete circumstances, due to the direct contact he/she has with the community in the schools. The student's experiences lived during this process are the source and the motivation to our research.

Perspective B

As we mentioned before, with perspective B of our project we will focus on the experiences lived by professional teachers from 3 public schools.

The Educative Institution “*El Palmar*” is an Afro-Colombian Institution that looks for a personal, laboring and academic education towards a productive life project. It is located in Santander de Quilichao, Cauca and it has approximately 270 students.

The “*Instituto Técnico*” is a public and mixed school founded in 1913 that offers formal education at different levels such as: kindergarten, primary school and high school. It is located in the municipality of Santander de Quilichao, Cauca and counts approximately with 900 students.

The Educational Institution “*Núcleo Escolar Rural Caloto*” is a public and mixed school. Its purpose is to train and instruct young people who are able to lead different activities, specifically in the field of farming education from its context.

1.4.4 Gathering Lived Experiences and Getting Attuned

In most of inquiries the researcher is compelled to design certain “tools” to get in touch with the phenomenon and nourish the research study with valuable data. In studies inspired by phenomenological designs, we talk more about gathering data than collecting them, in the sense that the researcher needs to get close to the lived experiences which are full of *vibrating meanings* and must find the best way to perceive and getting attuned with those vibrations. (Vagle, 2014, p. 78)

Hence, the phenomenological researcher should manage to approach and unveil the vibrating hidden meanings conveying a sensitive proximity to the experiences of people and taking into account that not all truths are the same because experiences always vary. Phenomenology helps to access people's stories by listening to them to understand the essences of the phenomenon.

According to Levinas (1967), there is a knowledge that does not necessarily have a logical structure of theoretical-formal explanation but appears in territories where situations are lived and constitutes conditions for knowledge. In this sense, the truths based on experiences are not indefinite, irrational, disorganized or dispersed, but each person has a sense and function given to each of those truths gained through the experiences and inhabited on body and soul.

In this way, the researcher has the challenge to access the infinite and to immerse in the waters of the plurality of feelings, gestures, smells, images, intuitions and perceptions that

constitute the lived experiences, trying to revive them accurately. An important question arises: How to access to the experiential material we want to get involved with?

1.4.4.1 The Phenomenological Interview.

The Phenomenological interview is used to explore and gather experiential material. The dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer will allow access to the phenomenon thanks to the expressivity of narrations, exploring various facets of expression such as silences and gestures which are as meaningful as words.

The relationship between researcher and participant goes beyond Subject-Object or Researcher- Sample. Phenomenological interviews promote relationship in which the two sides of the investigation give themselves to the conversation and open the senses to allow the other to see the invisible of their truths.

Phenomenological interviews seek the infinity of people; people express in the most human way possible the experiences that have marked some aspects of their lives. They look for stories that are incarnated, that does not get stuck in the numerical walls and the scientific dramatizations.

We must admit that we are beginners in such a profound approach, but we did our best to maintain at least a phenomenological attitude** when meeting our participants and doing our interviews. Listening to Van Manen advice, we selected the appropriate places and time, we respected people's silence and we encourage interviewees to tell concrete stories of situations related to their teaching experiences⁷. Some of the questions designed to address perspectives A

⁷ Being coherent with phenomenological studies that allow the researchers to reflect upon their experiences, we wrote some of our feelings and lived experiences conducting phenomenological interviews in the final reflections of this document.

and B from our research question are presented hereafter, considering the units of meaning selected to initiate the first navigation of the inquiry.

We need to recognize that accessing to experiential material in the strict sense of phenomenology was a huge challenge and these questions represented just a guide. They mutated during at least four different encounters with each participant and during friendly conversations that we tried to let flow without losing our objectives. Also, we chose to talk to participants in Spanish, as we consider native language as the primal source of expression of sensitive experience.

Perspective A: The senses of becoming a teacher from lived experiences of pre-service teacher

Unit of Meaning: **Vocation**

Describe your experience and reaction when you realized that you had been admitted to a degree in modern languages. How did you feel? Can you give details about the exact moment, the time, the place, your sensations?

Have you felt that you had an inclination or a calling towards teaching any time in your life? How was it? What did you feel? Can you tell a specific story about that calling?

During your university study, have you ever wanted to give up? Think about any moment where you wanted to surrender. What were your emotions? Where were you when that happened?

Tell us a specific moment in which you have played your teaching role. How you have carried it out. How did you feel?

Unit of Meaning: **The Relationship between Theory and Practice**

Tell an event of your teaching experience where you have felt that pedagogical theory learned in class failed in your classroom.

Is there any special experience in which theory learned in the university contributed to your class? Describe in detail.

How was your experience changing the role from the student to teacher? How did you live or experiment those moments? What did you feel?

Describe an experience in which you had a great and successful class. What was your reaction and feelings that day? How did your students react and feel? What did you do that day in class?

Perspective B: The meanings of becoming a teacher from lived experiences of professional teachers

Unit of meaning: **The relationship between Discipline⁸ and Knowledge**

How do you feel when you perform your role as a teacher? Have you had any fears about teaching a class? Can you describe in detail the feelings of those fears?

Have you ever lost control of the class? What did it feel like? How was it? What were you doing exactly? What did your students do?

Do you remember a case of indiscipline you had with a student? How did you feel? Describe in detail

Unit of meaning: **The relationship between teaching practices and School regulations and Institutions**

Has your motivation been overshadowed by the institution where your work? How can you describe that feeling?

Have you felt affected by the rules imposed by the institution or institutions in which you have exercised your teaching role? Tell us about a particular case.

Have you ever lived a moment in which your expectations of becoming a teacher changed when you began your work in the institution? At what specific moment? Describe this moment in detail

⁸ The term *discipline* mutated during our research changing to school coexistence. We will address this mutation in chapter 4 of this document.

1.4.4.2 The Anecdote.

The anecdote is one of the most common ways of approaching lived experience. In fact, it seems to be a very natural way by which some particular concerns of daily life are brought to awareness. “Stories or anecdotes are so powerful, so effective, and so consequential in that they can explain things that resist straightforward explanation or develop a thought. Anecdotes bring things into nearness by contributing to the vividness and presence of an experience”. (Van Manen, 2014, p. 251)

Thus, we also used the anecdotes with the purpose of gathering specific lived experience. In this case, we followed Vagle’s instructions (2014) to guide participant’s experiences related to each one of the units of meaning presented before. Instructions given were:

Think about the event chronologically.

Describe what you saw, what was said, what you heard, how you felt, what you thought.

Try to describe the experience like you are watching it on film

Describe the experience as you lived through it. Try to avoid casual explanations, generalizations or interpretations (“this happened because...this typically happens... I wonder if...”)

If you want to use names in your description, please assign each person a pseudonym.

(p. 88)

After gathering lived-experiences through the recording and transcription of interviews and anecdotes, we proceeded to get attuned with the vibrations of the truths revealed by them, trying to maintain a phenomenological attitude and finally, living the complex process of writing as the

research itself. The following chapters are our humble reflections about our problem and about our own lived-experiences as novice researchers.

2. Phenomenological Insights: Approach to a Theoretical Framework

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. (Van Manen, 2014)

We have started to understand that researching is an infinite process that we cannot ignore in our academic and personal life. Sooner or later we get involved in the spirit of inquiry in order to grasp the world that surrounds us, our life and our academic practices. Thus, researching has become not merely a method of obtaining knowledge and collecting information, but also a desire of getting truly connected to the world and people around us.

The following section offers a summary of our first gaze into the world of Phenomenology and how some concepts and perspectives became relevant in our research process. We try to describe here our first insights about the cornerstones of phenomenological attitude and a description of our understanding -still limited- of the complexity of this issue. We accept our analysis is still cursory, but it represents to us a big step towards a comprehension and assumption of a perspective of research that we would like to follow.

2.1 Researching from Human Sciences

Carrying out a research based on Human Sciences approaches requires to take a look at some of the discussions that from centuries have been in the heart of the debate between Natural and

Human Sciences. Since XIX century, philosophers and researchers have been conceptualizing about the foundations of Human Sciences, their methods, their objectives and even, their status of ‘science’.

In the center of this debate, we found questions such as *What is science? How do we make science? What is required from a research to be scientific, valid, reliable? Are the cultural, social, emotional, philosophical studies of human beings in the category of science?*

Mardonés and Ursúa (1982) gave some light about these issues by affirming that the Western conception of science was mainly influenced by the Galilean tradition. For this tradition, born during Renaissance, the world can be explained following the language of mathematics according to which all the phenomena in nature can be measured, controlled and submitted to experiment in order to generalize some cause and consequence laws. The objective of research then, is to submit the variety of the phenomena into a general law and its constant verification, following a strict method: the scientific method.

Natural sciences then, explain a phenomenon that can be measured, observed, reduced or taxonomized so that researchers can make theoretical assumptions and solve a problem according to regulated research styles producing new factual knowledge which can be limited or restricted by susceptible results.

However, a problem appeared when some of the main concerns of human beings were supposed to fit the same scientific method. Can we understand human truths following a strict method of verification and measurement? In the introduction of his book *‘Truth and Method’* (1993), Gadamer affirms:

The following investigations start with the resistance in modern science itself to the universal claim of scientific method. They are concerned to seek the experience of truth that transcends the domain of scientific method wherever that experience is to be found, and to inquire into its legitimacy. Hence the human sciences are connected to modes of experience that lie outside science: with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself. These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science (p. 20)

With that consideration, Gadamer is claiming for the legitimacy of another type of truth that is neither dependent of the scientific method nor verifiable with its parameters. There are experiences then, strictly human that cannot be measured but comprehended, they are still knowledge. Those experiences do not look for being explained but understood, and they belong to fields such as History, Philosophy, Arts, Literature, Anthropology, etc.

Human Sciences study humans not as objects but as beings with consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, purposes and thoughts. Therefore, their methods require critical analysis, descriptions and interpretations in order to understand the meaning of a human phenomenon (Van Manen, 2003).

The same debate can be related with the common division of quantitative and qualitative methods. We constantly face questions such as *Which one is more appropriate? Which one is more reliable?* But we consider that research is not about effectiveness and consequently, any of them is more effective than another. It would be also inappropriate to affirm that an investigation is always successful because it was done from the quantitative method or vice versa. It is the phenomenon to study the one that shows the method and it could even appear as a wise combination of both.

The phenomena we wanted to approach called us to be studied from the roots of human sciences. We wanted to get close to a human phenomenon in depth in order to interact with a unique being and explore inner thoughts, emotions and experiences without classifying, comparing, measuring or labeling. Our research question has pedagogical links, and we consider Pedagogy as a Human Science that should be studied more from the sensitivity rather than the quantification. This is how we finally decided to assume the Phenomenological method to undertake our inquiry.

2.2 Historical backgrounds

“To the things themselves!” (Heidegger, 2010)

According to its etymology, phenomenology derives from the term phenomena – appearance of something- and logos -word or study-. However, many methodologies use the word phenomenon to describe the object of their research. What is precisely a phenomenon for Phenomenology?

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger described the phenomenon as that which becomes manifest and appears to as we find-ourselves-being-in-relation-with others and other things. Then, to phenomenologist, phenomena are not constructions or definitions of an encased human mind isolated from the world, as René Descartes had suggested (Vagle, 2014).

On the contrary, phenomena of Phenomenology are manifestations presented in the life of human beings who are interconnected, totally present in the world, feeling and living it. Thus, it seeks to understand how people built the meaning of their lifeworld from their own experiences.

Phenomenology was born in the XXth century as a philosophical movement that tried to approach a different concept of life and thinking. To Van Manen (2014), “Phenomenology was

the source for questioning the meaning of life as we live it and the nature of responsibility of personal actions and decision” (p.13) With these assumptions, Phenomenology pretended to return to a more sensitive reflection of human being and knowledge, walking away from the excessive cold rationalism inherited from XX century.

The concept of Phenomenology was first presented by Edmund Husserl, historically considered as the father of this philosophical approach. Husserl’s studies focused on discovering and approaching the world of phenomena and its components. He brought in the concept of reduction, as a method of putting aside any type of judgments that can limit the comprehension of phenomena. Hence, he became a source of inspiration for many authors such as Heidegger, Merleau -Ponty, Gadamer, Levinas, Satre, Derrida, Stein, Patočka, Scheler, de Beauvoir, Ricoeur, Blanchot, Marcel, Henry, Schutz, Marion and Stiegler.

For many years, a variety of authors have reconsidered the different concepts of Phenomenology, which remain still open to contemporary creative thinkers who make possible new practices and analysis towards original inquiries. As we have said before, contemporary phenomenological studies are not restricted to philosophers, but they are open to any kind of professionals desiring to donate more sensitive meanings to their practices. That is the reason why we can find phenomenological studies conducted by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, teachers, artists, etc. who look for more ethical-philosophical attitudes to confront the beliefs, prejudices and theories of their specific fields.

However, the core meaning of phenomenology remains. As Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe (2016) said “Phenomenological researchers seek to reveal aspects of phenomena that are rarely noticed, described, or accounted for. The intention of phenomenological researchers is to illuminate essential, yet often forgotten dimensions of human experiences in ways that compel

attention and provoke further thinking” (p.2). Consequently, phenomenologists aim to look for the essence of the lifeworld hidden in the everydayness of human beings.

Even in its more contemporary manifestations, Phenomenology continues inviting us to be aware of how our lives are shaped by culture, politics, social life and existence itself.

Phenomenology returns our reflections to the world itself, to the things themselves and how we experience and give sense to them inside an interconnected world (Van Manen, 2014).

Given the long history of Phenomenology, we can find continual and growing different ways to design research based on it. It does not have a unique concept, idea or methodology. Even if it has a set of similar philosophical understandings, phenomenological researchers interpret and apply this philosophy in different and ambiguous ways. Vagle states,

Some may lament the fact that there is not a single, crystal, clear, and unified way to craft phenomenological research. However, for me this lack of singularity, certainty, and finitude is the beauty of crafting phenomenology. (...) I don't perceive this as ambiguous in a negative sense, but rather, as an opportunity to explore and play with ideas, phenomena, and ways of inquiring about ideas and phenomena. (2014, p. 52)

This versatility allows the researcher to choose the way of proceeding. As we have said before, this research was inspired by the interpretations of Max Van Manen about how to do Phenomenology, specifically what he called Phenomenology of Practice that refers to the unveiling of everyday practice of living, and “that reflects on and in practice, and prepares for practice” (2014, p. 15).

Van Manen's phenomenological work has a commitment to pedagogy and writing. In this way, he provides a guide to start researching and creates a door to access the interpretation of our daily lives from a philosophical and reflective perspective, even for the ones who are not strictly

philosophers. This characteristic seemed appropriate to approach the phenomena we wanted to understand from a sensitive perspective.

In the professional fields, context sensitive research seems to have become especially relevant. It requires approaches and methodologies that are adaptive of changing social contexts and human predicaments... finding a way of making phenomenology more accessible to professional practitioners and researchers who would be interested in phenomenology but who do not possess a strong and deep professional philosophical background. (Van Manen, 2014, p.19)

2.3 About lived experience and lifeworld

Lived experience is one of the main concepts of phenomenological studies and represents a methodological component of them. It comes from the German word *Erlebnis* and refers to the original or prereflective dimensions of human existence. Lived experience is life as we live it, before any conceptualization, categorization or theorization. “Lived experience names the ordinary and the extraordinary, the quotidian and the exotic, the routine and the surprising, the dull and the ecstatic moments and aspects of experience as we live through them in our human existence” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 39).

Then, the notion of lived experience somehow deconstructs the methods based on codification, categorization and calculations. It points out the necessity to return with wonder to the meanings that arise in daily experiences because as Merleau-Ponty said (1993) “the world is not what I think, but what I live through”,

Lived experiences need a source, a place to be originated. The lifeworld acts as a fountain in which infinite experiences are produced, it is linked to the everydayness, to the daily life that we

easily take for granted in a natural attitude. Phenomenology invites us to return with wonder to the world, substituting the natural attitude by the phenomenological attitude that permits the necessary openness to see it as if for the first time.

The lifeworld is a world full of perceptions, thoughts, valuations, discoveries and body incarnations that make sense by living in it. Then, this world becomes authentic thanks to the empirical events are constantly flowing inside it. It is not anymore, a foreign world separated from the experiences of people, but a world that allows the interconnection of events and the circulation of vibrations of meaning to which the researcher can try to sensitize. Any lived experience -even the most 'irrelevant' one- can become source of wonder and consequently, center of phenomenological research.

2.4 Bracketing (Époché) and Reduction

How can phenomenology get prereflective experiences as they appear in an everyday lifeworld that we commonly take for granted? To break through the common taken-for-grantedness attitude and arrive to the lived experiences as we lived, phenomenology has two important moves: The époché and the reduction.

Époché and Reduction are the most representative concepts created by Husserl. Époché means abstention, to stay away from. With this Greek term, Husserl wanted to indicate that to reach our lived experiences, we needed to suspend or parenthesizing (bracketing) the assumptions that might obstruct our way: natural attitude of taken-for-granted beliefs and the attitude of science. (Van Manen, 2014)

Reduction comes from the word re-ducere, which means lead back. Reduction here doesn't mean reductionism. In Phenomenology, reduction means to go back to the mode of appearing,

the ‘now’ of the phenomenon. “Phenomenologically, I need to open myself (the *epoché*) and try to bracket my presumptions, common understandings, and scientific explanation; at the same time, I need to regard the phenomenon that was given in my experience (the reduction) and observe how the remembrance emerged” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 217).

Then, the process of researching lived experiences requires to hinder our previous knowledge, beliefs, experiences, thoughts, interests and values about the phenomenon investigated. Then we will be able to describe them and get close enough to understand them. In other words, the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate but that we know too much, our “common sense”, pre-understandings, and our suppositions predispose us to interpret the nature of a phenomenon. Carpenter (2007) states that a phenomenological study requires to put aside researcher’s own beliefs or what is already know about the phenomenon.

Époché and Reduction were two important movements that we tried to include in our research, considering all the pre-assumptions, theorization and preunderstandings about the meanings of becoming a teacher.

2.5 Writing: the art of showing

Phenomenology is considered a sensitive and expressive method. It allows researchers to go further in human life by touching the essence of everyday experiences. Lived experiences are full cognitive and non-cognitive meanings that cannot always be named directly.

How to write about lived experiences which are full of subtle meanings? Writing becomes a cornerstone in a phenomenological research. As Van Manen (2014) claims “writing a phenomenological text is a reflective process of attempting to recover and express the ways we

experience our life as we live it, and ultimately to be able to act in our lives with greater thoughtfulness and tact (p.20)”.

Most of the times, the description of lived experiences requires indirect language able to call up all the sensitive meanings presented in them. In this regard, this type of investigations demand that researchers acquire a poetizing activity that encourage them to become more like a “poet” than a normal writer. It does not mean that researchers have to use rhymes or verses to carry out the investigation, but rather they must acquire the sensibility, empathy, and the passion to describe and interpret the lifeworld along with all that is inside of it.

The phenomenological writing engages language in a more primal sense, this means that, the language endeavors to sing the word rather than abstractly speak it, in such a way the researcher can find memories which they never thought or felt before (Van Manen, 2003).

We consider this aspect of writing as one of the most challenging in our research, mainly because we are writing in a foreign language. We assumed it and we lived it as essential part of our research process.

2.6 A gaze to the notion of truth in a phenomenological research

Phenomenological researchers manage to approach the hidden lifeworld by bringing a sensitive awareness in the experiences of people. Koch (As cited by Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe 2017) argues that the researchers cannot know the thinking of the participants and capture the past exactly as it happened, nor can people themselves. In that sense, it may seem that there is not a reliable argument in the collection of the experiences and truths of the participants. Then, how to understand the reliability, the truth in phenomenological research?

As we mentioned before, according to Levinas (1967), there is a knowledge that does not

necessarily have a logical structure of theoretical-formal explanation, rather it contains a knowledge of lived shaping those truths presented in the body and soul of every experience.

Heidegger affirmed something essential: Truth is not about correctness or agreement, but rather an unconcealment. Consequently, it is not related to theories, judgements, beliefs and representations of thoughts, but rather, it relies on the reality of the beings and the world. In other words, *aletheia* -Greek word meaning disclosure, withdrawal and openness- became the axis of phenomenological research.

According to Van Manen: “The truth of *aletheia* is derived from the study of meaning and meaningfulness. Reflection or inquiry that is governed by *aletheia* involves a heedful attunement to things that present themselves to us in order to let them reveal themselves in their self-showing” (2014, p. 342).

In this regard, a phenomenological research is inspired by the truth of *aletheia* as a guidance to endorse its theory of searching the meaning of life as it is lived; contrasting the scientific truth based on correspondence -*veritas*-. Phenomenology is essentially focused on finding and showing what is hidden inside of the human experiences and how they are related to the otherness and the everydayness. Thus, *aletheia* allows researchers an opening to the world and beings, like a light to unhide what is concealed in the life world, ignored, diminished.

The lived experiences in our research will try to capture the emotions, thoughts, expressions and perspectives of the participant experiences. This research counted on this consideration of truth and reliability that we just started to understand by means of Phenomenology.

2.7 Some Previous Studies

Phenomenology has been the inspiration of various research studies from different fields. Research about pedagogy and education nurtures from phenomenological approaches and it has become a common methodology for understanding the complex and sensitive experiences lived in the classroom. Van Manen, the author who has inspired this research, gives especial importance to Pedagogy, considering it not only essential part of a specific field, but also of a general way of being-in-the-world-with-others. We present here some previous studies that might be related to our own inquiry, specifically to our methodology. They are research documents written and inspired in phenomenology as a method to approach pedagogical lived experiences.

Toward an understanding of the beginner-teacher experience: Curricular insights for teacher education. Author: Sheila Stark. Year: 1991. Ireland

This research is focused on the question What is it like to be a beginner teacher, as seen by the teachers themselves? Becoming a teacher herself, the author of this article explores the issue of the essence of starting a pedagogic journey based on the lived experiences of two beginner teachers. To do so, the researcher follows the path of Hermeneutic Phenomenology proposed by Max Van Manen, exploring the phenomenological interview to gain access to the meaningful experiences lived by teachers in pre-service stages.

The author uses first person to share the research final reflections, as she considered she was also essential part of the process, being aware of the “personal involvement of any researcher carrying out a phenomenological study” (p. 299). She offers meaningful lived experiences

transcriptions and writes a deep final reflection about Pedagogy as a way of Being-in-the World, the sense of Vocation, and Pedagogy as Caring and Being Cared for.

Fenomenología desde las percepciones de los docentes acerca del cambio paradigmático de la educación tradicional a la educación dialógica en el Municipio Falcón del Estado Cojedes. Naguanagua, Venezuela. Author. Francisco Rodríguez. Year: 2015. Venezuela

This research is focused on the transition of the educational paradigm where teachers are the fundamental part for the understanding of such changes. The authors of the research considered Phenomenology as the most accurate way to approach the perceptions of teachers about the paradigmatic shift from traditional education (behaviorism) to dialogic education (education from interactions with others) in Falcon Municipality of Cojedes State.

The research focuses on the lived experiences of teachers in classrooms, which were gathered through interviews and the implementation of a 4 open questions questionnaire. The participants were 10 recognized and retired teachers from the Falcon Municipality of Cojedes State. Final reflections of the research focus on the reflection of curricula and the necessity of enhancing more sensitive discussions about the perceptions of teachers, since the author considers that the process of paradigmatic change in education from a traditional model to a dialogic one, has only been promoted in the form, while the traditional models of education continue to persist deep down.

Relatos de Vida y Formación Docente: Experiencias vividas, Historias Narradas Author: Juliana del Pilar Santamaría Vargas. Year: 2010, Colombia

This research pretends to know directly the ways of building and understanding the reality of

pre-service teachers taking into account the narration of their life stories as a way to understand individual ideas related to collective conceptions associated with political, social and cultural factors. It outlines the necessity of a more sensitive approach the reality of the teacher's life in a complex context such as Colombia, going beyond pedagogical theories of specific skills training and focusing on the pedagogical being itself.

Even if this research is not specifically following Phenomenology as a method, we valued its contributions to the life narrations of teachers, how they were transcribed and valued as experiences and the subsequent reflections generated from them.

El sentido de Ser Maestro en una Propuesta Pedagógica Innovadora. Estudio de Caso del Colegio Gimnasio Internacional de Medellín. Authors: Luis Felipe Henao Londoño, Carlos Mauricio Hernández Arboleda, Juan Guillermo Paniagua Castrillón, Olga Lucia Posada Hincapie. Year: 2009, Sabaneta, Antioquia.

This educational research gives us a look into the understanding of how 4 teachers from a private school in Medellin built their comprehension of their roles of becoming a teacher and their assimilation of pedagogical practices inside an alternative curriculum proposal based on autonomy and freedom.

The meanings of Education, Student and School were explored by means of in-depth interviews that were lately analyzed following some precepts of Phenomenology and lived experience. The emergent categories from the exercise allowed the researchers to reflect upon aspects that nurtured the different meanings of becoming a teacher, such as: Wisdom, Passion, Dignity, Learning by Practice and Becoming a Teacher as a constant Learner.

Los sentidos del cuerpo sexuado en niños y niñas de 9 a 13 años de las escuelas públicas

El Tajo y Nariño Unido de Santander de Quilichao. Authors: Claudia Constanza Pinzón Romero, Luis Guillermo Jaramillo Echeverri, Juan Carlos Aguirre García, Erika Esmeralda Dávila Córdoba. Year: 2014

This research is about the exploration of children's sexuality through a phenomenological approach. Researchers tried to understand the different understandings that children had about their own sexuality guided by three phenomenological reductions inspired by Embree (2003).

The student's voices were the most important way to understand their different perceptions about their life-world regarding this topic. Researchers reflected upon two unities units of meaning: being a big or little person at school and the meaning of friendship and courtship. The research considered the school as the place where students find themselves and start to create bonds with others and approached the students with meaningful encounters and creative workshops.

Even if this research does not explore specifically the meanings of becoming a teacher, it allowed our research team to be familiarized with a phenomenological methodology inside an educational institution and the way of proceeding when understanding and valuing life experiences.

3. The meanings of becoming a teacher: Lived experiences from Pre-service Teachers

3.1 Vocational Metamorphoses in Teaching

We are constantly facing words and concepts that seem essential to our pedagogical life and are presented as clear, transparent and obvious. *Vocation* is one of those terms that we are supposed to *have* or to *find* if we want to be good teachers. We have been told that we cannot be teachers if we do not have it.

However, if we look closely, there is a diversity of meanings regarding this concept in such a way that we do not find any clarity, especially when we think about the way we live *vocation* in our everyday life. What does it really mean to have a vocation? Can it be attainable? Is the vocation an unconditional service? Is something with which you are born or something that can be trained and taught? What to do if we do not feel it?

Looking for the original meaning of words is usually a point of departure to scrutinize phenomenological insights. "Paying attention to the etymological origins of words can sometimes bring us into contact with an original way of life in which the terms still had living links to the lived experiences from which they emanated in their origin." (Manen, 2003, p. 77).

The word *vocation* comes from the Latin language '*vocatio*' (to call). Its root is based on a religious connotation because the Christian monasticism firstly used this term to refer the unconditional offer to the service of God. It was vocation that allowed monks to follow the strict rules of ascetism and cloistered life (Dawson, 2005).

Dawson explains the religious echoes of the word *vocation* when affirming: "It was a term used to describe a call away from the world of productive activity in order to dedicate one's life

to prayer and contemplation” (p. 223). In the same way, Beder (as cited by Jared R. French 2006) affirms: "A 'vocation' or 'calling' originally referred to the work of monks, nuns and priests who served God by removing themselves from daily life and serving the church. In this way they could achieve salvation and attain God's grace" (p. 14). Then, *vocation* is somehow related to an inner force that compels us to leave behind a certain life-style to focus on following an unavoidable destiny.

Over the years, the definition of term *vocation* has changed, allowing us to consider this concept from different points of views and from different sociocultural studies. At the beginning, *vocation* was related only to the fact of "being called" but the social transformations showed that this term is much more than a 'call'. The period of the Industrial Revolution is perhaps one of those moments in which the profession and vocation were affected socially and culturally (Larrosa Martínez, 2010). The need to achieve greater productivity and social development made humanity reevaluate the meaning of vocation because there was a requirement to train people in industrial jobs.

According to the above, some people consider that vocation is "to fulfill the objectives of a job". Others declare that the previous concept has nothing to do with vocation and they argue that the vocation is related to passion and pleasure people feel when they work.

The purpose of this passage is not to demonstrate which concept is right or wrong. On the contrary, we have as a purpose to get close to the different perceptions of vocation in teaching found in the lived experiences of students who are being trained to become teachers. With their narrations, we pretend to approach a more complex signification of *vocation* in teachers, as it appears in everyday life, and as it mutates with time, space and experience.

3.1.1 Merely a Calling?

Justo cuando salí del colegio, tuve un fin de semana en que tenía que decidir si estudiaba o no. No tenía las cosas claras. De todos modos, entré a estudiar e hice algo que me gustaba, pero a la final, después de ese año que estudie no me iba sintiendo bien. No iba a las clases con las mismas ganas. Me la pasaba más en la biblioteca buscando libros y leyendo. No quería laborar en eso. No quería hacer proyectos o cosas así. Vi una electiva en artes llamada “arte para entender la vida” y unas cuantas clases de inglés. Esas eran las clases en las que yo realmente me sentía a gusto. Nunca faltaba. En cambio, a las otras sí. Luego encontré que había una licenciatura en lenguas en la universidad sede Santander. No lo hablé con nadie. Fue decisión mía y pasé. Realmente como dicen por ahí: “cambia la vida”.

It seems here that the word *vocation* finds a deep sense that is revealed during a specific moment. It is the incarnated revelation of something that somehow calls our passion and compels to action and decision-making. Carlos -a second semester student of Modern Languages (English-French) from the University of Cauca- expresses the way in which passion for teaching was growing. Little by little he started to feel that calling when he says *“in this class I did not feel good. I did not want to work on that. I took an course in arts called “art to understand life” and a few English classes. Those were the elective classes in which I really felt comfortable. I never skipped those...”*⁹

This pre-service teacher unknown what is his true vocation; he studies something that he loves but he was undecided about his future, at the beginning he felt good but with pass of the time his

⁹ Translation made by the authors of this research document.

motivation changed and his doubt grow through what he wanted. When he starts to feel a calling for another career his life takes another route. Once he says *“I did not go to class with the same desires”* Carlos experimented new sensations for another career discovering that calling for what he loves. Sometimes for fortuitous of the life we arrive where we feel great.

Carlos discovered an interest thanks to his experiences, as a necessity of changing, of moving to a more comfortable place where he finally could feel *good*. *Vocation* forces to action, to move towards a life-ordering intuition that we cannot ignore: we need to do what we want, to look for the right place to be. Carlos continues:

(...) el hecho de cambiar de carrera fue porque alguna vez la gente me dijo como: “no pues...usted es bueno explicando, hablando. Sabe llegar a las personas. Si no ve la forma, usted encuentra otra hasta que lo entiendan”. Es más, en clase de inglés la profesora me decía: “usted sabe inglés, ¡ayúdeme con estos que no me han entendido!”. Me iba bien en clase. Ahora se trata de enseñar y no simplemente de resolver el problema que te habían puesto...

Therefore, Carlos felt this inner impulse of changing when he was convinced about a certain ability to help others. His *right-place-to-be* was not simply a place to be comfortable but a place *to-be-with-others*. Here, teaching as vocation appears as a calling, as a revelation that would have been impossible without the consideration of others.

As well, we do not ignore the right decision that he made when Carlos changed his insecurities for stronghold, leaving a simple career for taking a new role where he felt the vocation. After that, he was influenced by others and by his own desires. He perceives the life

from another perspective, it is not to do the things for do it but to feel what we do for the well-being of others. Carlos says “*now, I try to teach and not just to solve a problem*” it is here where we see what real and strong vocation does.

Teaching as vocation is then related to an ethical empathy. It is not only a calling “away” to fulfil our dreams or professional expectations, but the necessity to help others to reach their own. Robert Ebertz (2015) says:

When we talk about vocation, our focus is not on finding one’s dream job. If I think in terms of vocation, I will not just look for a job I like or a career that will make me rich, although enjoyable jobs and riches sometimes come to those who follow a call. Vocation is rooted in character and commitment to the value of others. It is about growing into a person who focuses their life beyond themselves. It is about living life in such a way that I make a positive contribution to the world.

According to Ebertz, it is almost impossible not to refer to the concept of *vocation* when we talk about teaching and pedagogy. Vocation is a hopeful vision to fulfill the goals and objectives of those who are learning an art. Professors feel that calling, answer to it and give everything of themselves to make a change in the life of others; their job is not only a job but a committed ethical life style.

The narration of Alejandro, a student of 9th semester, gives us a more elaborated perspective of vocation as a *calling to be-with-others*.

...Yo empecé a dar clases y tenía unos muchachos que venían de barrios vulnerados, entonces era como que ellos siempre estaban en conflicto, pegándose y así. Al comienzo se me hacía súper duro darles clase a ellos porque todo era violento y grosero. Después los fui tratando más y uno va conociendo las personas, uno les va hablando y se comienza a interesar por la vida de ellos y sentí que me llamaba mucho la atención eso. Uno se vuelve más sensible, por lo menos antes yo era una persona que decía...yo cuando sea profesor yo llego doy mi clase y me voy, uno para el que no hizo la tarea y cinco para el que la hizo y ya, y me voy y no me complico mi vida con nadie. Pero entonces uno se involucra en la vida de las personas, no pasar desapercibido, sino por lo menos dejar algo...Que la gente llegue y se acuerde después de ti y diga ¡ah mira el profesor de inglés que me decía esto, que me enseñó esto! Entonces ese es el profesor de inglés, porque todas las personas si necesitan que las traten como personas”.

Alejandro, who has already lived the actual experience of becoming a teacher in an institution, presents us a deeper understanding of vocation as the *ethical calling to be-with-others*. He outstands not only the precise moment of the calling, but also how it was transformed by the actual interaction with students and became a desire for the future, a necessity of leaving a remembrance, a living memory trace, a deep sense of posterity.

Additionally, this student makes a description of what he lived in his first classes as a teacher, here he learns to live together with other people. At the beginning each class did not mean anything to him but when he felt that calling everything was different. The sense of vocation created a beneficial atmosphere between student and teacher. In the same way, he saw how feelings of appreciation towards his students started to grow, and grades were no longer

important but the human beings. Alejandro attends to the calling and feels that his vocation is focused on to be useful for other people.

This narration shows us a way in which this person assumes his role not as a foreign languages' teacher, but first as a human being. During the interview, he told us that he realized a teacher must get involved in the lives of students and contribute in their formation. He feels that the calling towards teaching goes beyond managing some specific skills.

Another important aspect in this narration was when Alejandro said "*but then you get involved in people's lives, not to go unnoticed, but at least leave something*", we comprehend his intention: it is not just to give a class but it is to leave a bequest and be remembered as a good person. Vocation embraces a multitude of features which give a sense to our lives, each time that we take into account the magnitude of this term we enjoy what we are and do. As Alejandro, who started to be interested in the life of his students.

To be called here, means to be attentive to what we are and what we give. For this student, to feel *vocation* is not just becoming a teacher but being a model of life for his scholars. When Alejandro affirms that "*people need to be treated as people*" we understand that teaching as vocation is not exactly a calling from the outside, but the calling within our own humanity asking to be attuned with others.

Vocation also traces a line in the life-story of a teacher. When participants were asked to describe how vocation felt, most of them used a personal story or anecdote to try to precise such an abstract concept, like in the following examples:

Example 1

Cuando era tan solo un niño de 8 años, recuerdo que tuve mi primer contacto con la enseñanza y la pedagogía. Fue una de esas tantas mañanas en las que salía de mi casa para reunirme con mis amigos del barrio a jugar; dos niños y dos niñas que, junto a mí, compartíamos casi la misma edad. En esa mañana, una de mis amigas que se llamaba Michelle nos propuso jugar a la “escuelita”, es decir, recrear el ambiente escolar que vivíamos como estudiantes en esos días dentro de la escuela primaria; asumiendo el rol tanto de profesor como de estudiante. Todos aceptamos la propuesta de Michelle. Dos de mis amigos alzaron su voz para decir: ¡Que Juan sea el profesor! Yo no hice ningún reproche ante su petición. Así que asumí el rol de profesor hacia mis amigos quienes, por ende, asumieron el rol de estudiantes. Cada uno de nosotros nos dirigimos a nuestras casas para sacar cuadernos, lápices, lapiceros, reglas, borradores y todo un arsenal de útiles escolares para comenzar el juego. Una vez hecho todo esto, ingresamos al antejardín de mi casa y comenzamos el juego. Recuerdo que comencé alzando la voz con un tono algo fuerte diciendo: “Bueno niños, siéntense bien que vamos a comenzar la clase”. Ese día los puse a dibujar y colorear. No recuerdo bien qué cosa los puse a dibujar. Lo que sí recuerdo era que yo me acercaba a ellos para mirar si ellos habían seguido mis órdenes y para rectificar que lo estaban haciendo de manera correcta. Si ellos no eran capaces de hacerlo, yo les decía: “¡hazlo de esta manera! No es tan difícil”. Les ayudaba cuando tenían dificultad para hacerlo; los regañaba cuando veía que no lo hacían o cuando se ponían a hablar entre ellos (...) Siento que ese día me marcó tanto, que la frase “algún día quiero ser profesor” llegó a mi cabeza a los días siguientes. Fue ese quizás el momento en donde tuve contacto directo con los sentires que relaciono con la Vocación.

Example 2

Cuando era niña; la profesora nos preguntaba que queríamos hacer de grandes, yo siempre respondía que quería ser profesora. Pero no sabía en qué materia me iba a desempeñar, solo sabía que quería ser profesora, siempre había sido así. Desde que entré a estudiar en primero, yo veía mi profesora Irma enseñando; la dinámica, la forma de tratarnos me parecía tan bonita, eso me atraía mucho. Ella tenía su carácter, no lo voy a negar, pero ella era muy buena; no excluía a nadie, hacía rondas, canciones y nos ponía videos. Ella me enseñó toda la primaria. Esa experiencia, además de volver agradable mí tiempo en la escuela, me hizo querer estar allá al frente y tener un salón lleno de estudiantes enseñándoles todo lo que sé. La profesora Irma influenció mucho en mí; todo lo que ella hacía, yo lo quería hacer. Yo la observaba todo el tiempo y la imitaba: desde la forma de sentarse la copiaba, hasta la forma de vestirse. Esa es mi historia de vocación.

Both examples uncover a sense of *vocation* that was revealed during a specific moment and became a turning point of reference. These descriptions contain references to meaningful life events, body gestures, ways of being that shows us how *vocation* is related to our inner past and shapes our future decisions. It is not only a mystical calling indicating to separate us from the world and contemplate it. It is a calling from the humanity and connection we have lived with others and the faith we have in future change.

In the first example, Juan emphasizes on a lived experience from his childhood. It was such a remarkable moment that he can mention details, places, ages and names. He expresses the joy and comfort of that moment and how it marked the decisions of his future. He also mentions how he imitated behaviors and repeated words that he had listened to before.

In the second example, Adriana recalls many details of a meaningful encounter with a teacher that inspired her. She also remembers details and refers to imitation. She wanted to be and to look like a person who had treated her as a human being. She remembers her clothes, her body language, her attitude to others. These traits founded her sense of vocation and revealed her the path she wanted to follow.

In that sense, vocation becomes a seed in which grows the meaning of becoming a teacher. Vocation is a feeling inside Adriana and Juan, following them since their childhood by games, imitation, admiration or inspiration of a cooperative teacher. Hence, we perceive vocation as a calling because participant's narrations show us that although vocation was already immersed in them, it was discovered in certain stages of their lives through different situations and places.

Then, vocation is grounded in lived experiences. It is not a transcendental calling from the outside but rather the voice of our concrete memories showing us the right place to *be-with-others*. It has to do with inspiration, imitation, childhood memories and examples to be followed. It is our faith in a better future.

3.1.2 Expecting anything in return?

Me veía tan feliz y pues me emocionaba más porque ya estaba preparando las clases del próximo día, apenas llegaba empezaba, así como uno se acostumbra del colegio hacer los trabajos para el otro día, así mismo hacía para las clases. Decía bueno, con sexto hice tal actividad, para la próxima clase voy a cambiarla y así siempre las cambiaba no las repetía, daba el tema que tenía que dar, pero no repetía la dinámica porque yo quería que ellos estuvieran atraídos por la clase que no se sintieran aburridos. Y además no me interesaba el dinero como tal, es eso, porque ni siquiera me pagaban, no me reconocían mi trabajo.

In this moment of reflection, Juliana -a student of 6th semester of Modern Languages at the University of Cauca - told us a pedagogical experience with a broad and tender smile in her face. She related this story with her feelings about vocation. She expressed that the fact of not being paid never stopped her from preparing the best classes and even going home to continue working to perfection them.

We might find this phenomenon astonishing because this experience reveals a love and predisposition that is rarely found in our times which are mostly centered in profit, economic success and progress. When Juliana described her routine of arriving home and immediately carrying out extra work that implied part of her life time, some questions appear: How can somebody enjoy doing a task without receiving something in retrieval? Is vocation the act of doing something with pure fascination?

When we think twice about this lived experience, we have to admit that not everybody is willing to spend his time doing extra activities. Indeed, a great part of people is not going to do a job without remuneration. This dedication is born from the spirit of love and, criticized as it could be, represents a common characteristic of teachers in our country. Without receiving an appropriate payment, or any payment at all, they keep working inspired by their deep sense of vocation.

Teachers often view their work as having special set of goals that relates to a deeply held desire to serve others:

As teachers, the act of serving others and help them is a challenge that is presented in our everyday life. Thus, it exists that compromise with ourselves in order to feel us proud of our students when we realize they are growing and gaining strength through the knowledge and

also when we instill values on them. The reward from those teachers who work with love and without receiving any pay for their job is the feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction of giving to their students the best way to move forward (Winter J, 2010, p.28).

Thus, the pleasure of teaching is born within the heart of vocation. As Van Manen says pedagogy is a fascination with the growth of the other. (Van Manen, 1991, p. 13). A great teacher has his own love of learning and inspires students with his passion for education. He constantly renews himself as a professional on his quest to provide students with the highest quality of education possible (Orlando, 2013).

We do not pretend here to ignore the historic struggles for good salaries and relevant investment in education and we are certainly not suggesting that a teacher should work for free. We are just recognizing that vocation is linked to a passion that sometimes surpasses economic issues; and that make it a sign of freedom and happiness, especially for the pre-service teachers.

Entonces uno se siente feliz al saber que uno sí se está dando a entender bien y eso lo hace a uno esmerarse y seguir así, esforzarse para que el estudiante aprenda de verdad, ya que uno tiene la facilidad para hacerse entender esforzándose más. Sí, lo hace sentirse a uno muy contento y con compromiso, me hace sentir a mí con compromiso de que tengo que seguir así.

During a pleasant meeting of students exchanging narrations of the lived experiences of their pre-service teaching, Alejandro reflects about his joyfulness when he realized his students had successfully learned during his class. He taught English in a school from his birthplace and he did not receive any payment. These courses helped young people from his community, for free.

These lived experiences let us understand how vocation is related to an inner passion, a constant reflection upon daily performance, a strong desire of being better and a willing to help others. In such opportunities, the reward is to witness student's transformation with an idealistic spirit of success and contribution to the future. This sense of vocation without direct economic benefit is still lived in the experiences of the pre-service teachers from the Modern Languages Program.

3.1.3 Vocation and Profession

Nunca se me cruzó por la cabeza ser licenciada o pedagoga. Antes de entrar a cursar la licenciatura en lenguas estudiaba administración, por eso enseñaba matemáticas y comprensión de lectura a niños. También les daba refuerzos, pero no porque yo sintiera afecto o tuviera el don de enseñar sino porque se me daba la posibilidad de hacerlo. Por lo tanto, para mí fue fácil transmitirlo. Además, eso realmente significaba un ingreso económico para mí; por eso lo hacía.

When Daniela shared her reasons to enroll the Modern Languages Program, she described teaching as a career to live out for a financial income. For her, teaching does not symbolize an inner passion or a calling. In Daniela's case, teaching is considered as a type of ability. She said that she had always had a skill to speak in public and transmit what she knows. For those reasons, she chose teaching as her profession. We can notice something particular when Daniela struggles with the description of *vocation*. Something different from other interviewees, and related to the tone of her voice, the absence of sparkling in her face or fire in her eyes.

Vocation is not presented here as an inner passion or a fire that compels to action. Here, the decision-making was only led by a rational imperative of choosing a profession. Buijis (2013) defines professionals as an organized group of individuals who acquire a specialized knowledge and skills that are of acknowledged social benefit. Professionals claim autonomy along with a remuneration for their work, a fee for service.

Therefore, a profession can be any career having a set of standards which are regulated and implemented by organizations and institutions. However, teaching presents many challenges inside the classroom, such as finding a balance in class, overcoming failure, frustration, transforming lives, and understanding misbehaviors. Thus, some questions began to concern us: Is it possible to build a vocation for teaching just as a profession? Could the way we think about teaching influence the way we teach? Joseph Buijis (2005) claims,

whether we think of teaching as a profession or think of it as a vocation does make a difference in how we deal with students, what we do in the classroom and beyond, how we interact with colleagues, what commitments we are willing to make, what expectations can be reasonably imposed, what career goals we might set, by what standards we should measure success, and how we view our relationship with the institution in which we work (p. 326).

In other words, considering teaching from an inner vocation or from a profitable profession, might change the way in which we experience it. Not to feel 'the calling' is usually a big concern of pre-service teachers who struggle to hide the emotional charge of their first experiences in classrooms.

Enseñar se ha vuelto para mí un deber, una obligación, algo que debo hacer para obtener dinero, ya que hasta ahora es lo único que he estudiado. Sin importar cómo me haga sentir; los mareos, dolor de cabeza, sueño, cansancio o el sentimiento de dolor que me cause en mi corazón y alma hacer algo que odio; aun así, debo tomar la responsabilidad de empezar a trabajar mientras busco la posibilidad de hacer lo que me apasiona. Cuando pienso en lo que debería estar haciendo y sentir que aún no existe esa posibilidad, comienzo a deprimirme. Aunque suene patético, siento lástima de mí misma al ver lo que puedo llegar a hacer. ¿Por qué no me gusta enseñar? Me hago esta pregunta todos los días desde que realice la OPE. La verdad, no sé la respuesta. Cada vez que trato de hallar una respuesta termino llorando y llegando a la misma conclusión inconcreta: no nací para esto, no tengo el carácter, ni el sentimiento para hacer. Dicho de otra forma, comenzar una profesión por vocación es lo mismo que encontrar el amor verdadero –por cursi que suene- si una persona se casa con alguien que no ama, que no lo conmueve o lo estremece, ¿cuál sería el objetivo? Pero si dos personas se aman con pasión y saben que no podrían vivir si no se tienen el uno al otro, que saben, de alguna forma, que nacieron para estar juntos, hay una razón más poderosa. Esto es lo que siento cuando estoy enseñando; siento que hago algo por necesidad, no hay ninguna emoción cuando lo hago, me siento vacía, incompleta y frustrada. Cuando entro a un salón de clases y los niños o jóvenes no prestan atención y comienzan a hablar, no los culpo; sé que la culpa no es de ellos sino mía. Debido a que los estudiantes saben qué profesor le gusta lo que hace y quién está ahí solo por el dinero. Yo sé que ellos saben que a mí no me gusta enseñar.

Liliana is a student of 9th semester of the Modern Languages program. She is good at English and French but when asked about vocation, she wrote the previous narrative. A narrative of her

emotions during the pre-serving teaching, a list of feelings that she seldom comments to others or even confess to herself. Even with all the necessary skills in terms of language competence, her discomfort incites body sensations such as dizziness, headaches, and constant fatigue. She even mentions a pain in her spirit.

Liliana is not the only one with these feelings. Her lived experiences will surely echo other students' lives. They have a talent for languages, but they do not feel *vocation* as a force, as a necessity or calling. Liliana compares *vocation* to love in a relationship. How to marry someone that you do not truly love? How to be a teacher if you do not love it? She constantly asks to herself: Why I can't fall in love with teaching? And her answer is: *I was not born to be a teacher.*

Many questions arise from this testimony. We are far to believe that *vocation* is something with which we were born, with well as some people seldom believe in love at first sight and others simply not. As far as we have understood from our phenomenological encounters with, pre-service teachers *vocation* appears precisely when experiencing otherness in a sensitive way, which led us to perceive ourselves in a committed way. Sometimes one experience can allow us to perceive this type of otherness. Sometimes more experiences are required. So, is it possible that universities' curriculum offers a more realistic sense of teaching to students like Liliana, to make her fall in love with her future profession? Can *vocation* be taught?

In a very similar dilemma, Stark (1991) returns to Van Manen:

According to Van Manen, pedagogy is a certain questioning and doubting. Did I do the right thing? What can I do about this? Pedagogy is not a technique we can learn, a process or content, nor even action or intent. Pedagogy is a way of observing, listening and relating to

others. It is a way of being-in-the-world with them. If pedagogy is unteachable, perhaps, as educators we need to focus on helping student teachers understand the essence of teaching and then help them to strive toward it (p. 13)

Equally, if *vocation* -with all the variation of meanings we have described- is unteachable, perhaps we need to help students as Liliana understand the essence of it: *vocation* as a calling *to-be-with-others*, not from an idealistic definition of a mystical calling or an innate talent, but from the soil of lived experiences from the life-world. How to do it? Maybe by giving a closer look to the relationship of Theory and Practice, as it is lived by the same students.

3.2 Building bridges between Theory and Practice

To talk about *becoming a teacher* without mentioning terms such as theory-practice is almost impossible. *Practice makes perfect* is a well-known phrase in our academic context, but a close regard to the relationship between theory and practice is probably necessary, considering the lived experiences shared with pre-service teachers.

Can teachers be good teachers only with the theory? Can they be good teachers just by practicing? Are pedagogical theory and practice inseparable factors? Do we know enough theory to take charge of a classroom? Is our practice (teaching) like the pedagogical theory that we have learned and studied?

Those are questions that many pre-service teachers have asked to themselves during their academic studies, remaining still unsolved.

3.2.1 Broken Bridges

Fui profesora en una escuela de primaria que era como un hospital psiquiátrico donde nada de lo que había aprendido me sirvió, ni Vygotsky ni Pávlov, ni Freire ni la famosísima teoría del amor... nada puesto que allá los niños están acostumbrados a los gritos, a los pellizcos a las malas miradas de las directivas docentes y funcionarios. Llegar y enseñar aquí ha frustrado mi perspectiva como docente. La verdad no esperaba que enseñar fuese una ardua y complicada tarea, sentí que no había estudiado para enseñar inglés sino para llamar la atención y corregir el comportamiento de los estudiantes.

In this anecdote, Daniela describes her feelings when facing one of her first teaching practices. It is the narration of a crucial moment of a student in our program: to enter a classroom full of children...and feeling that any of the *theories* learned at the university could be used to connect with this micro-cosmos, described by her as a psychiatric hospital.

Daniela uses the ambiguous term ‘love theory’, perhaps to emphasize that not even the most humanistic class she had taken in college could fit in a difficult context where children are used to be constantly shouted and punished. She affirms that she was convinced then, that she had not studied to be an English teacher, but to correct behavior. This narration ended with a facial expression revealing boredom and a deep sigh that immediately changed all the mood of the interview.

Another student refers:

Luego me tocó dar clases en un salón de primaria con 34 estudiantes y ese sí era el contexto real, no el contexto idealizado por la teoría de la universidad. Allí en ese primer día de clase me sentí frustrada, me sentí en shock, sentí que había sido engañada por la universidad ya que una cosa es el ideal que te crean en la cabeza antes de dar clases y otro es el estar allá en una escuela parado frente a tantos niños y esforzando tu voz para tratar de calmarlos y llamar su atención. Mis ojos recorrían velozmente la mirada de cada niño y niña, yo los miraba y les veía esa sed de querer aprender. Pero, de igual manera todos deseaban hablar al mismo tiempo y ese sentimiento de impotencia al subir tu tono de voz llamándoles la atención para que te escuchen eso nunca te lo enseñan en vivo y en directo, ese sentimiento nace el primer día de clase y es constante, a veces pienso que algún día terminará pero en mi recorrido corto como estudiante y docente noto que subyace ese sentimiento, que está latente y quiero que mi clase sea como la planeé pero desafortunadamente muy pocas veces logro ese objetivo.

The tensions between educational theories and practices are revealed in these stories. Students of Modern Languages express their mixed feelings when they perceive a broken bridge between what they have studied in the classroom and the actual reality of schools. The previous student even highlights a feeling of ‘being deceived’ by university, since it trained her for an ideal context that was far from what she found in the schools and the reality of her student’s eyes.

In the field of pedagogy, theory and practice should be connected with more stable bridges. Students’ lived experiences regarding this aspect, represent a shock and most of the times, a reason to quit. We agree that within the curriculum of Modern languages of the University of

Cauca, pedagogical theory is composed by teaching methods based on human competences which allow students to achieve linguistic and socio-cultural enrichment of a language.

Therefore, this theory is presented as a set of progressive knowledge for educational purposes that empowers student teachers to act in classrooms. In teaching, practice makes part of pedagogical theory. Many pedagogues and educators relate these two terms (theory-practice) as a complement to education. In addition, they agree that the theory is part of the practice and vice versa. It means that, theory would not be certainly complete if it does not contain in itself the component "practice". In this way, people talk about teaching impregnated with pedagogical theory and practice. This would correspond to the fact that "teaching requires a bit of theory, and the theory will not be entirely successful if it does not evolve and is perfected through practice". At the beginning, it seems that there won't be any problem regarding pedagogical theory, practice and its functions.

Unfortunately (for student teachers' terror and pain) they do exist and pre-service teachers are constantly living experiences that confront them with the fact that pedagogical theory and practice are not completely tuned. When pre-service teachers realize that pedagogical theory learned years ago does not help them to the actual decision-making in classroom, a feeling of anxiety and disappointment arrives.

Cuando en la universidad nos hablaron sobre las diferentes maneras en las que podíamos “enseñar” inglés, todo parecía bastante agradable, pues desde la teoría no podía percibir qué tan profundo me marcaría el hecho de “enseñar”. Hacer manualidades era divertido y leer las teorías que algunos autores e investigadores reconocidos habían creado sobre a las diferentes maneras para guiar a los niños no parecía traspasar las barreras del mundo terrenal. Sin

embargo, llegó el día de iniciar la OPE. Y allí fue donde me quité la venda y bajé de la nube de las manualidades, las exposiciones y de pensar que todo iba a ser bonito. Un día de OPE, para ser precisa el primer día, llegué al salón donde debía dar clase con actividades para “romper el hielo” con los niños. Estaba emocionada de poner en marcha lo que estaba en el papel a un contexto real con niños que consideraba tiernos e inocentes. Pero parecía que cada vez incrementan más el desorden, eran muy pocos quienes me ponían cuidado, la mayoría estaban en otro cuento. Sentí que había estado muy alejada de la realidad. después todo siguió igual y casi que peor. No sabía qué hacer, quería llorar por la impotencia, rabia y tristeza que sentía. El temor de una mala nota en la OPE no me dejó que saliera corriendo y dejar ese “infierno” atrás.

This experience depicts the great amount of frustration, fear and despair that pre-service teachers might feel when observing the gap between theory and practice. According to this student of 9th semester it is like falling to literally, ‘hell’. All the enthusiasm and motivation gained during various semesters, seemed to vanish in just one class. Student insisted on the fact that it did not get better with time, but worse. She was in a cloud of ideal theory, blindfolded. As a consequence, the pre-service teachers feel vulnerable and unable to do the teaching work. They feel that they have been prepared for a world that only existed in the theory. A world that vanishes in the practice of teaching because that place does not correspond to what is described in pedagogy.

When summarizing her experience, and with a sad expression, she added:

La única sensación que queda es que pasar cinco años en la universidad aprendiendo dos idiomas y enfatizando en el desarrollo de las cuatro habilidades no sirve de mucho en un salón de primaria, ya que ahí, de dos horas de clase se logran dictar de los temas que se quieren desarrollar, máximo de 30 a 40 minutos. El resto de tiempo el docente se dedica a llamar la atención, a llenar logros difíciles de cumplir en cada estudiante. Es imposible llegar a los estándares de calidad que el gobierno propone en las aulas de primaria con el comportamiento de los niños y más aún en grupos tan grandes como los que tienen en las escuelas de hoy en nuestro país.

The broken bridges between Theory and Practice are not particular of Pedagogy. Many areas of knowledge deal with this situation. Is it possible to create new conditions in which Theory and Practice are not a contradiction or a disappointing transition?

In fact, Phenomenology represents an effort to understand Theory and Practice from a different perspective. Van Manen (2003) clearly establishes “Theory, as an intellectual achievement and property, theory as a membership into the circle of initiates (...) can be a staple that feeds our intellectual and moral hunger and can be the addictive substance that induces a cognitive amnesia. Wakefulness requires that we constantly try to work in the tension between the theoretic and what lies outside of it” (p. 14)

This wakefulness that Van Manen refers is directed to the lifeworld. The Phenomenological attitude is the rupture with the excessive conceptualization of the world that lead us to forget about what happens in it. It does not mean that we forget about theory. It means that we need to accept the tension between theory and lifeworld, permitting us to go and see what lies outside theoretical conceptions and nurture theory with more sensitive concepts. Theory, to

phenomenologists, is not a set of enthroned intellectual precepts, but a way of perceiving attentively the life-world and try to understand it.

Beginner teachers have not realized yet that teaching is a journey which must be traversed alone. They need to know that it is fine to make mistakes during the process of finding who they are as teachers, and what type of pedagogy fits them and their students. They need to understand what it means to *be-in-the world-with children*, a way of being that do not undermine theory but that is willing to reflect upon it and change it based on lived experiences.

Vocation and *Theory and Practice* have appeared to us as the main clusters of meaning to reflect upon when trying to understand the lived experiences of pre-service teachers. Their anecdotes seem to gravitate around these units. From the phenomenological territory, we tried to listen and approach them. They were presented as essential, but also vague, uncertain and full of memories, feelings and expressivity. They shape the meanings of becoming a teacher.

4. The meanings of becoming a teacher: Lived experiences from professional teachers

When we try to get deep into the meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher, we realized that it wouldn't be enough to just listen to pre-service teachers. We needed to project our research towards more experienced anecdotes and life stories. Then, we had some phenomenological encounters with professional teachers, people who have lived their roles for more than five years in public schools. Their narrations allowed us to have a broad horizon towards the understanding of our researched phenomena.

From these encounters, we selected two clusters of meaning which seemed essential in the lived experiences of professional teachers: the relationships between Discipline and Knowledge and

Becoming a Teacher and Institutions. We proceed then, to narrate our insights about these meanings.

4.1 When discipline becomes a method

To understand a single person is already extremely complex. Let us imagine how more difficult it is to dwell with 30-40 people gathered together; in addition to an exercise of established prohibitions based on what is called good and bad behavior. How to deal with the rules and at the same time with so many worlds? How can teachers live with these complexities?

Discipline schema in schools is an aspect which must be approached with a sensitive attitude without being naïve but cautious, considering that it has historically been the axis of strong disputes since approximately 19th century. However, it has played an important role during our interviews and phenomenological encounters with experienced teachers.

Even if in the Colombian context the notion of discipline has theoretically changed towards the concept of School Coexistence, pretending to be a more open and comprehensive term to refer the set of agreements to regulate the relationships between teachers-students and students-students; we find that the term discipline in its pure and old connotation has not disappeared completely. In fact, it constantly appears during the narration of the lived experiences of the interviewed teachers.

The word discipline comes from the Latin word *discipulus* and from the verb *discere* which means to learn. It means to impose order to achieve learning. A disciple is then someone who is subjected to discipline in order *to learn*, that is, to be educated to be productive to the world. Discipline could be understood as a set of techniques used to adapt individuals to society by the acquisition of specific regulations and rules.

It would be impossible to refer to this term ignoring the well-known work of Michel Foucault about this issue. In his book *Discipline and Punish* (2002), he traces the story of education institution until the beginnings of the military training. The barracks, the hospital, the industrial workshop, the prison and the school institution will have something in common: “The meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body (...) they discovered the body as object and target of power (...) the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces” (p. 136).

Then, the school was analyzed as one of the institutions that, as well as prisons, exercises a disciplinary regime through the normalizing judgement which is applied even to the smallest faults. In this sense, those who are closely involved in the field of education are under the yoke of a law that aims at standardization, their failures are worthy of a punishment and *educate* becomes the synonym of *correct* defects.

Foucault’s analysis has had many interpretations and reconsiderations during the last decades. We might accept that this sense of discipline has somehow changed and that most of the teachers and institutions do not practice it exactly as this French author described it. However, and even with all the new conceptualizations about School Coexistence, there are some raw lived experiences that we can relate to this primitive sense of discipline. How do teachers live discipline every day?

Miércoles 6:50 am, llego al colegio. Hoy la clase es con grado cero. el salón está sucio y lleno de barro porque el colegio es campestre. Todos los pupitres están amontonados y llenos de polvo y el tablero casi descolgado de la pared. Yo sé que tengo que hacer aseo rápido porque

los niños comienzan a llegar. Voy por el trapeador, está muy sucio pero tengo que lavarlo aunque termine con las manos llenas de tierra. busco un trapo pero no hay, así que los pupitres tienen que esperar. Comienzan a llegar los niños con sus padres. Uno de ellos me ve trapeando y me dice: ¿dónde está la profesora? yo contesto: Hoy les toca inglés. Yo soy su profesora. ¡mucho gusto! Cuando termino de trapear, los niños entran y pisan. Por más que trato de asear, ellos siguen haciendo regueros de barro, entonces comienzo a poner los pupitres. Cada grupo de niños tiene su respectiva mesa y su respectiva silla; lo que no entiendo es porqué unos están en pupitres grupales y otros en sillas individuales. Un niño dice: -Ese puesto es de Martín, ¡él es malo! - Yo le digo -¿cómo así? -Entonces llega la profesora que siempre está con ellos y me explica: -Profe, lo que pasa es que ellos ya saben cuál es el puesto y cómo tienen que sentarse-. Se comienza a enojar. Coge uno de los asientos individuales y toma de los brazos a uno de los niños y me dice: -Por ejemplo, Pepito que es bien cansón, insoportable y no pone atención se sienta aquí solito y lejos de los otros que hacen su trabajo. Igual que él está Julio, Pacho... - Me nombró ocho niños que no merecían estar con sus otros compañeros. Cuando ella los organizó gritando a todo el mundo les dijo: - ¡A ver ya! ¡quieticos! Pongan atención porque ya saben.

Angela's story is so vivid that we can walk in her shoes for some miles. We can imagine her and ourselves arriving to a new classroom full of little children, and immediately be confronted to such a deployment of disciplinary rules. Students had been already tagged, designed to specific places according to a standard of good and wrong. We can feel a deep empathy with an Angela holding a mop, powerless in front of a dirty classroom, a father doubting about her role, and an

angry teacher using a rude language that does not seem to fit with the students' ages or with a deep sense of meaningful education.

This feeling of impotency and anguish seems to be present in experienced teachers when talking about School Coexistence. They struggle every day trying to find new ways of approaching students and finding a balance between *controlling a class* and teaching what they are supposed to teach. Many times, and even with regret, they yield themselves to the temptation of using disciplinary *methods* that they know obsolete, just because the pressure of the institution and the environment seem to be stronger.

De repente, todos los niños empezaron a hacer ruido, a pararse de su puesto y hablar con los demás compañeros como si yo no estuviese allí. En ese momento me irrité tanto que quería gritarles y decirles de todo, pero me contuve. Obviamente elevé mi tono de voz, les llamé la atención y les dije que a partir de ese instante quienes estuviesen hablando o parados en su puesto, los anotaría en el tablero para que la próxima clase hiciera un poster en inglés y lo presentaran en cada salón. En ese momento, todos se quedaron atónitos y revivió la calma en el salón, así que puede dar la clase tranquila. Como ese método me funcionó, estoy implementándolo y los niños que forman la indisciplina o alteran la convivencia escolar, deben hacer manualidades, posters y hacer su presentación. Ellos no se sienten cómodos, pero cumplen con lo estipulado y pues a mí me duele ser amenazante, pero es la única alternativa que he encontrado. Siento que los chicos a veces necesitan presión o ser amenazados para que cooperen.

For Diana, discipline has rooted so deep in student's behavior, that she feels that there is not a way of teaching without threatening, altering her voice and transforming punishment in a method. Even if students are not comfortable, they are answering and learning. Even if she is not completely comfortable, it is working. What does it mean here to learn? To answer?

These experiences reveal a sense of discipline that is still founded in traditional behaviors. It does not matter how much conceptualizations there may exist to rebaptize it, we still listen to the echo of Foucault's perspective: there lies the necessity of control, the fear of losing control: over bodies as well as spirits. Experiencing discipline this way is not teacher's fault, but it reveals the complexity of an entire education system that sooner or later, forces people to fit some specific roles that might distortion all our considerations of real and meaningful education for life. Is it possible to escape, to re-significate disciplinary experiences to find a more ethical perspective?

4.1.1 Dwelling among disciplinary experiences

La semana pasada mis estudiantes y yo estábamos haciendo un ejercicio en el cual yo les decía una oración en español, mis estudiantes debían traducirla a inglés y escribirla en el tablero. El tema de la clase era el verbo "to be" en presente simple con los adjetivos posesivos. Entonces un estudiante tomó una actitud desafiante, ya que no estaba dispuesto a participar de la actividad, me dijo que no deseaba salir al tablero. Para ese momento, el ambiente se tornó bastante incómodo. Yo le sugerí que debía hacer parte de la actividad. Después, le dije que lo que le estaba proponiendo no era un favor, sino que, como profesor y autoridad en ese momento del aula, él debía respetar la metodología de la clase. Sin embargo, el estudiante se mostró descortés frente a mi sugerencia, por lo que le pedí que se retirara del salón advirtiéndole que

no le sería posible el ingreso a mis clases de nuevo. Más tarde, el estudiante debió ofrecerme disculpas por su actitud desconsiderada hacia la clase y en respuesta a esto el estudiante asumió el compromiso de no manifestar nuevamente aquella actitud. Posteriormente, puedo decir que dentro de mi calidad humana apareció de manera ineludible un sentimiento de rabia ante esta situación. Sin embargo, como profesor hay ciertos aspectos en los que debe existir una autorregulación de los instintos, es decir que, si yo no hubiera estado en el lugar del pedagogo en ese momento, inevitablemente hubiese sido capaz de agredir físicamente al estudiante. No obstante, la posición del profesor se condiciona bajo ciertos parámetros que podrían sancionar una situación como esa. Aunque eso no me impidió que humanamente sintiera rabia.

Let us imagine Santiago from what he agrees to tell us about a lived experience which he categorizes as significant in one of his English classes. We can go deep into that situation, trying to empathize with some feelings and thoughts emerged from that moment. Probably, it was a human anger's manifestation facing an alteration of the calm in his class. Maybe there were a lot of questions dancing inside his head: *What must I do? Should I lay aside my teacher's role and act as I viscerally feel?*

Over the course of that awkward situation, a student with a rebellious attitude quickly made an experienced teacher to *lose control*. Santiago knew, tasted and felt exactly each detail of that moment. He dares even to confess that he could have hit the student. How could we get attuned to this description from an experienced teacher?

During his teaching role, Santiago had to call his virtue of serenity. As an experienced pedagogue, he seems to be aware that "pedagogy must not be sought into the abstract theoretical discourse or into the analytical systems, but directly in the world we live, in the specific situations

of the real life” (Manen, 2010, p. 46). That is how, in few seconds, Santiago could look for an appropriate language to address to his student, to keep his serene mind and not lose his sense and reason, avoiding carrying out an inappropriate action or answer. However, the fact he was been controlled by some rules, standards and what he mentioned “pedagogues role” could not have stopped the act of attack physically and verbally the student, but inside him, he felt the necessity to activate his own “break system” that system that as teacher he has, that is to say, his teaching role moved him to act in a good way according to the pedagogy and especially, in an ethical sense.

Santiago achieved to interpret in an opportune way a manifestation of arrogance equally inherent to the human condition and he managed to re-significate it in a universe where reason and instinct usually fight. Santiago gave a sense of moral consciousness to that situation. His gestures and voice expressions gave signals of the conviction he felt when he made this decision and indicated the absence of regret.

Another teacher referred,

No sabía que dentro del grupo de mis estudiantes algunos de ellos habitaban en lugares alejados de la institución. Había un estudiante en particular quien asistía a clases una hora tarde de haber iniciado la jornada y nunca hubo alguien que le llamara la atención por sus llegadas tarde. Para ese entonces yo era docente recién llegada en la institución y resultó que un día, aquel estudiante llegó a mi clase tarde como era de costumbre entonces yo le dije que no podía entrar a mi clase, pero al final lo dejé ingresar, admitiéndome que había perdido la contienda con él. Una vez el estudiante ingresó al salón, empezó a sacar cuadernos de asignaturas diferentes a la de mi clase y comenzó a hacer las tareas que le fueron asignadas para la casa, en ese instante me sentí muy indignada así que rápidamente tomé sus cuadernos.

El estudiante asegura que la manera en que yo actué fue brusca e inmediatamente se levanta de su silla y comienza a insultarme y amenazarme. Y debido a esto se presenta un gran inconveniente en la institución pues este caso fue llevado hasta la fiscalía.

Yo estaba exigiendo puntualidad con el horario de mi clase, pero seguidamente del hecho fue necesario hacer el denuncia en la fiscalía y supervisión. Las medidas que se tomaron para el estudiante fueron la suspensión de matrícula de una a dos semanas, en el caso incluso hubo estudiantes compañeros de él quienes testificaron a su favor, pero también hubo otros que estuvieron a mi favor y esto más tarde daría origen a una enemistad entre los mismos compañeros. Fue la polarización los que estaban a favor de la profesora y los que estaban a favor del estudiante y entre mis compañeros docentes también, debido a que ninguno se percató de informarme que aquel estudiante habitaba en un lugar alejado de la institución y debía caminar bastante para poder llegar, yo me di cuenta de esto ya cuando todo había ocurrido.

Isabelle's anecdote let us perceive how the fact of being a teacher implies a constant reflection about what it means to commit a fault. After several late arrivals of her student, she had never realized the reason why he arrived late; to the contrary, she had just judged him and retaliated against him to control the forward situation that was stealing her calm, even, her teaching authority. Just after this shocking experience, she understood how wrong she was about it. That situation moved Isabelle to reflect on how she acted, there she realized her student arrived late for reasons right out of his control, his distant place of residence.

Through a reflective attitude, Isabelle thought about her teaching work, thus, that moment shook her head and heart and she started to reinvent her Pedagogy concept and laying aside her student's arrival late. She perceived and got interested in her students' lives. We do not look for

blaming Isabelle's acts, but we are trying to understand her experience and there, we feel that she lacked the time and confidence to consider that act in depth. Perhaps, she had many *pressures* and work stress and those things did not let her to see the importance of make a balance between the curriculum and her students' personal lives.

Isabelle describes here an experience that still surprises her, perhaps because among her reminiscences she did not find any other episode that had touched her as profoundly as that one. An educational institution uses school schedule as an established chronological rule. Thus, students who do not comply it, are submitted to a sanction. As Isabelle told us, when she scolded his student, it was her sense of authority which compelled her to act in a disciplinary way.

After this incident, certain conflicts started, hurting both parts (*student-teacher*) since the fault committed was a misrepresentation, an overreaction, a moment of human misunderstanding. Isabelle depicted in this story, the big challenges we face, as human beings, becoming teachers in the middle of concepts such as authority, discipline and rules.

Isabelle and Santiago stories remind us that there will always be a student who imprints our *voyage* in teaching profession, someone who makes us reflect about the world and its rules. One single students' life can permit us to question about limitations we have, pointing a way to explore ourselves. The student who dares to break our calm with a late arrival, an inappropriate tone or gesture...that student impulses us to question about our disguised inhumanity, our monstrous peculiarities, our mistakes when considering good students as an invariant and obeying standard.

These moments of lived experiences regarding discipline opened a door towards a better understanding of how experienced teachers give meaning to their daily roles. It is only when they can dwell among students in an ethical terrain, that they can start changing the word discipline for

a real *coexistence*. Not only in name or paper, but in real classroom actions, in the concrete everydayness of the lifeworld. In this ethical terrain, you must not *control* the class, but rather *be-with-your-students*.

There are different colors, vivid, warm and cold ones, all of them different, even unique. Among them, the discipline strolls between the black and white; darkness and paleness want them to seem equal. As little coals, they accumulate themselves, acting completely identical. Their uniforms lead them to forget what they are and how far they can go. Nevertheless, maybe some rebel coal gets out of that mold and gets on fire. Then, the same coal changes his black and white color to yellow, red, blue. In that way, the other coals crave to leave their comfort and to explore among other colors. Although, every single coal takes a different way and color, all of them shine by their own light, thus they are the result of what moves them to be different.

A Man from the town of Negua, on the coast of Columbia, could climb the sky. On his return, he described from his trip. He told how he had contemplated human life from on high. He said we are a sea of tiny flames. “The world,” he revealed, “is a heap of people, a sea of tiny flames.” Each person shines with his or her own light. No two flames are alike, there are big flames, flames of every color. Some people’s flames are so still they don’t even flicker in the wind, while others have wild flames that fill the air with sparks. Some foolish flames neither burn nor shed light, but other’s blaze with life so fiercely that you can’t look at them without blinking and if you approach, you shine in fire. (Galeano, 1989, p. 5)

Santiago, Cristian and Isabelle are fires of different colors who have lived in different times and places in the educational field. Their experiences have been inherent to the different relative grades of cultural conditions of various towns. Regardless of the days and hours, they have made use of discipline for trying to create their most ambitious products.

In fact, we do not look for the condemnation of discipline, but we want to take the flambeau that light the cave of the problems which affect us. That dilemma has to do with the imposition of labels which classifies us as capable or incapable people. Those labels quietly limit us: *Capable or incapable for what exactly? Aren't we artificial machines capable or incapable to give a sense to our lives?* Hence, beyond the systematic designs of rules, standards and scholar laws there are human beings who deserve to be writers of their own destinations, that is to say, as human beings they deserve to face any situation from their experiences linked to their daily life, to confront it and solve it as they feel, taking into account the diversity of thoughts.

4.2 Faces of Institutionalism

The second cluster of meaning that lived experiences of professional teachers allowed us to uncover is related to Institutionalism. We will use this term as the set of establishments, regulations, official practices and government standards that are usually related with teachers' role as a professional practice inside a specific system.

Experienced teachers are constantly facing the reality of a set of institutional requirements coming from governmental and educational policies that do not always coincide with their initial vocation expectations or seem to become barriers blocking the original sense of education as the seed of transformation. To the Colombian philosopher Estanislao Zuleta (1995), the relationship between education and system moves between conflict and adaptation. To this writer, the worse in education is what it has from adaptation while the best is what comes from conflict. Here, conflict is understood as the ability to be critical and transform the world without taking things for granted.

The set of measurement and classification parameters¹⁰ established by institutions can take the teachers away from the reality of schools and students, replacing it by standardized shadows. To adapt to the system could separate teachers from the lifeworld, and the experiences lived from the terrain of this separation can cause wounds in vocation and lead to despair and monotony.

How do teachers live Institutionalism in their everydayness? How does it affect or nurture the meanings of becoming a teacher?

4.2.1 Being modeled by standards and curriculum

Uno siente que el sistema educativo del país no apunta a que los estudiantes de verdad aprendan algo para la vida, sino que simplemente aprendan algo para mostrar un resultado internacional, pues uno ahí ya se da cuenta que los que manejan la educación a nivel económico o a nivel de gobierno no quieren apuntar a lo mismo que uno quisiera como docente, una conexión, y esa presión nos hace tomar diferentes decisiones, posiciones. Yo por mi parte, por ejemplo el hecho de que uno tenga que cumplir un currículo específico con tal de darle respuesta a lo que preguntan en unas pruebas ICFES, eso ya es una presión para uno porque uno no se puede salir de lo que se debe enseñar y eso a uno lo afecta en su trabajo porque uno a veces ni sabe cómo abordar una clase ya que es eso lo que tiene que enseñar, no se siente libertad en hacer o enseñar otra cosa. Sí, eso lo afecta a uno y a veces uno se pregunta qué es lo que está haciendo con esa presión, uno no se siente a gusto.

¹⁰ In Colombia, the Ministry of Education constitutes the regulatory authority of these parameters.

Even if this narration is not exactly a pre-reflective experience, it contains some important descriptions of how it feels to manage institutionalism. We can imagine Cristian in one of his classes, feeling "misplaced" by not knowing how to address issues imposed by a bureaucratic order. He refers to those moments of distress, of hopelessness when he finds himself in front of the vile face of a high school curriculum directed by the ICFES, the standardized and mandatory test that usually defines the accessibility to the public university in our country.

Zuleta (1995) also affirms that Colombian high school curriculum is the vaguest, confusing and profuse thing in our education system. He compares it to an extravagant salad of diverse subjects (geography, geometry, "patriotic legend", etc.) that students consume for six years until they can finally get rid of it in the ICFES test. Despite all the acquired professional teaching skills, Cristian still feels hostility when he must prepare his students systematically for this 'extravagant salad'. It seems to be an overwhelming experience that teachers constantly refer when asked about their everydayness in school, as the following examples demonstrate:

Con las normas, yo creo que la presión del ICFES... eso hace que uno sienta una gran presión encima, los estudiantes tienen que sacar un buen puntaje y hay que prepararse y prepararlos a ellos, pero a veces ellos no lo logran, ven el ICFES como, "yo presento esto rápido y me voy" y luego no ven que eso afecta al colegio cuando llegan los resultados, a mí me evalúan dependiendo del puntaje que obtengan los estudiantes y en ocasiones ellos sólo dicen "No, yo contesté a las patadas" "yo contesté al tin-marín" ellos no lo ven como importante, no parece que les interese ni el beneficio propio, ni el de la institución. Este es un tema bastante molesto

...Por ejemplo el hecho de que uno tenga que cumplir un currículo específico con tal de darle respuesta a lo que preguntan en unas pruebas ICFES, eso ya es una presión para uno porque uno no se puede salir de lo que se debe enseñar y eso a uno lo afecta en su trabajo porque uno a veces ni sabe cómo abordar una clase ya que es eso lo que tiene que enseñar, no se siente libertad en hacer o enseñar otra cosa. Sí, eso lo afecta a uno, pues a mí me afecta y a veces uno se pregunta qué es lo que está haciendo con esa presión, a veces uno no se siente a gusto.

There is a common word in the previous narratives: pressure. Pressure that is felt as an oppression, as a burden that affects the well-being of the class. This pressure not only causes uncertainty in the teachers but also it is capable of afflicting family life, being responsible for a decrease in motivation among teachers who still treasure the enthusiasm for teaching, making them slip into the emptiness of monotony and adaptation.

Consequently, Cristian felt oppressed while preparing his classes because he had his hands tied to the curriculum. He was not satisfied with his job and was constantly wondering how to teach the next topic. The pressure and lack of freedom become inhibited elements which may affect teachers' performance and development.

Other teachers relate institutionalism with more specific experiences inside the classroom and within particular school environments.

Cierto colegio privado de S.Q. me contrató como profesor de inglés por 4 meses, la clase era con 11 estudiantes de grado 11, eran adolescentes de buena familia y buen modo de vivir (económicamente). La rectora del colegio quien había sido mi rectora cuando yo estudié no me reconoció, simplemente me dijo lo que debía hacer el resto del año lectivo, me dio un

programa el cual se había elaborado hacía 15 años atrás. Ella misma, junto con otra profesora de inglés se encargaron de hacerme seguir el programa al pie de la letra, no me sentía libre de dictar otro tema, me sentía totalmente oprimido y coaccionado por las exigencias de la I.E. El espacio de trabajo (salón de clases) era muy cómodo: ventilado, amplio, cerrado para evitar el ruido externo, pero en más de una ocasión, la profesora de inglés, abría la puerta del salón sin dar previo aviso, asomaba la cabeza y preguntaba ¿qué están haciendo? Al final de cada clase, me llamaba aparte, me pedía el material con el que trabajé, y siempre me cuestionaba ¿por qué estás haciendo esto así? –Yo creo que podés hacerlo de la manera en que yo dicto clases- Es la sensación de impotencia más grande que he sentido dentro un aula, siempre observado de mala manera.

This anecdote shows how a pre-established curriculum can create the sensation of confinement and powerlessness. The teacher describes his classroom as a very comfortable, quiet, illuminated and ventilated place. However, he was not free. There were always people observing his moves, not precisely to be helpful but to judge him and persuade him to adjust his teaching decisions to a desired plan. In fact, we could say that he was being constantly ‘observed’ by a 15-years old curriculum, immutable and omnipresent.

This feeling of being constantly observed and almost persecuted by a powerful education system, is portrayed in the following anecdote:

Entré a trabajar a un colegio católico de estrato muy alto, solamente de mujeres. Lo acepté porque el pago era muy bueno, aunque desde la entrevista tuve la sensación de que no era buena idea entrar ahí. La sensación fue correcta. Ahí te vigilaban constantemente, todo el día, cada

minuto. No solamente lo que enseñabas y cómo lo enseñabas... todo esto tenía que ceñirse a su visión católica de la vida moral, incluso el currículo. Por ejemplo, los profesores de biología tenían que tener cuidado con lo que explicaban sobre la teoría de la evolución o con la educación sexual, los profesores de filosofía con los libros que hacían leer a los estudiantes, porque literalmente, para ellas, en pleno siglo XXI, existen libros malignos y prohibidos. Pero también vigilaban tu forma de ir vestida, tus zapatos, tu peinado, tu maquillaje. Podías ser llamada a la oficina de coordinación por haber elegido mal el peinado. La hora del almuerzo era la más dura. Tenías que hacerte cargo de una mesa y vigilar los modales de las niñas, cómo cogían el tenedor, dónde ponían los codos. Incluso había una señora viejita encargada de pasar revisando que las estuviéramos instruyendo de la manera apropiada. La hora del almuerzo era la más difícil para mí. No podía comer bien. Era el momento en que sentía todo el peso del encierro, quería salir corriendo, insultar a alguien, gritar que no había libros prohibidos ni mucho menos. A veces hasta temblaba, de ira o de impotencia. No resistí más de un año lectivo y ni siquiera sé cómo, o sí, por el dinero. Desarrollé gastritis en esa época, no podía dormir, todas las mañanas sentía que me tenía que disfrazar para ir al trabajo, ponerme máscaras que ni siquiera sabía que podía ponerme. A veces me enfermaba a propósito. Literalmente me enfermaba. Hasta mirarme al espejo me parecía terrible. Hasta ahora, evito pasar por ese colegio. Eso no puede ser educar, definitivamente.

In this narrative, the teacher felt the curriculum and the educational system as a heavy burden. The imposition of the rules, the catholic model, the correct manners, the dress code, the controlled subjects... all these aspects disturbed not only her own teacher's perception, but also dig deeply into her body. She literally felt a coercive system in her stomach, in her necessity of being sick

and scream and escape. Her inability to look at herself in the mirror suggests how she could not accept to be modeled to that role that did not correspond to her beliefs about education. She even avoids walking in front of the school, as if this represented a silent rebellion against a system that tried to manipulate her spirit and body. This cannot be education, she added at the end.

We felt that her sensation of feeling developing the disease of gastritis on her body was a result of being a teacher who worked under pressure and was exhausted living monitored as a bird in a cage. Possibly a sensation of fear that was growing constantly until affect her body. This feelings and emotions were revealed on her body because the human being is body and being. All that happen with our being is connected to our body, because being and body cannot be separated they are one working together on us. We felt that becoming a teacher implies to experiment damages to our body, as the fact of using a wrong tone of voice we can develop problems of voice, there are some diseases that can appears in our body as a result of an overcharge in our being or soul, we are susceptible to be hurt in an external way by the context in which we work, those external conditions arrives to our being and becomes physical problems that limit our normal life and limit the development of our current abilities as the loss of appetite, inflammation on our stomach and irritability. In fact, in medical terms, according to the World Journal of Gastrointestinal Pathophysiology, the gastrointestinal tract is one of the diseases that has become a great clinical problem occasioned from job stress. In this way, as teachers, we face to health problems that can affect us not only in an external way but also in an inner way due to our vulnerability lived in some difficult context.

4.2.2 Navigating unknown oceans

Participants also have some experience with institutionalism that made them feel overwhelmed. When navigating unknown oceans, water can be a beautiful place, but its depths also lead sailors to face the bewilderment of the unknown. However, there are abysses in which men find opportunities for which it is worth risking.

We never know what we will find in the path of our lives, that is why experiences no matter how sweet or bitter they are, always surprise us with the magic of the unknown. We met Isabelle, who had to teach a different subject from her own. Within that path she encountered multiple singularities that marked her spirit, they marked her not only because they were good or bad, but because they left an imprint of a soul full of feelings.

...hay algunas materias que no tienen un docente específico, entonces cuando estaba en Inzá, el colegio donde trabajaba era agrícola, pero allí no había un docente quien se encargara de esa área y a mí me tocó dar una clase llamada Tecnología Agrícola. Ese año fue durísimo para mí porque yo no sabía ni qué enseñar, yo me decía, "yo concursé fue para inglés y tengo que enseñar inglés" ... Tuve que estar preguntando a los demás, mirando en internet qué enseñar incluso los muchachos sabían que yo no sabía. Era incómoda esa situación, era como si yo les estuviera mintiendo... hasta les pedí disculpas a los muchachos, yo aprendía mucho de ellos, ellos me decían "es que allá hacemos esto, en la casa cultivamos tal cosa y yo decía "¡Qué chévere! Traíganme la muestra" ... pero yo sabía que en esa clase ese año no se hizo nada. Me tocó decirle al rector que para el siguiente año no me volviera a dar esa clase, entonces a partir de allí, me daban ya ética o religión, otras materias que tampoco tenían un docente específico, al

parecer no había un docente licenciado en religión, esas materias estaban huérfanas, entonces a quien le falta horas, pues se las asignaban.

The experience narrated by Isabelle shows uncertainty and frustration about unexpected obligations to which she was not ready but was required to accept. This teacher felt oppressed by the different established rules that forced her to adopt some ‘orphan subjects’ that she had neither studied nor taught before. What should teachers do when they must teach a different subject of their area of expertise?

Isabelle felt she was lying and hence betraying her students as well as her teacher ideals. Lying afflicted her, it caused her anger and impotence. It disturbed her each time she had to teach this subject to which she had never been trained. Although she accepted she learned a lot from students, she could not avoid asking the coordinator for a change, convincing him not to force her to lie again.

Professional teachers indicated that Isabelle’s experience was very common. In order to complete the mandatory hours of teaching, you can be assigned to any subject, you can become the *foster father or mother* of an *orphan subject*. For many people, this imposition from the institutions is a possibility to open to other universes, but for others it is overwhelming.

Although lying can be considered as a product of human intelligence, in most of communities it is seen as a moral fault; and for Isabelle it was a significant attack against her students, she felt that somehow the educational system pushed her to that precipice from which she could hardly escape. Lying caused her anger and impotence, it disturbed her and displaced her.

Cristian, Isabelle and Santiago's stories take plural nuances, there are experiences that absorb us thus we feel identified with times, places and even feelings. These teachers decided to tell us their stories without becoming obsessed with lying about what they lived. Maybe, they understood that our purpose was linked to listen to people without judging them, only with the fervent desire of comprehending how they had built their meaning of being a teacher over the time.

Cuando llegué a la institución yo creía que iba a enseñar inglés, pero no, mi carga académica fue de español, más horas que de inglés, español de décimo y once. La experiencia no fue buena, me gusta el español, pero enseñarlo es otra cosa, y el ambiente se ponía muy pesado. También me toca dar ética e informática. Yo le pregunté a un profesor de biología que también había tenido que enseñar ética y él me pasó una carpeta con puros talleres de ética y de informática así que cuando llego a la clase les comparto algún cuento con moraleja, ellos hacen un taller con respuestas máximo de 15 renglones para mantenerlos entretenidos, lo hago porque no me nace dar esas materias. La institución no me las impone, sino que hay que cubrir esas horas, es como a quien le faltan horas se las dan, bueno sí, en cierta forma me las impone, qué pereza dar ética, una niña le dijo a su prima que yo no sabía dar ética entonces me metí a Wikipedia para saber qué era la ética. Con la informática yo veo tutoriales en YouTube de los temas que me dan en el programa. Sinceramente yo llego tarde los jueves, no voy a dar las horas completas, profesionalmente está mal, no sé si hay alguien que se sienta así como yo

Santiago is a stranger in a town, he is a disoriented foreigner in the territory of Ethics, Spanish and Computer Science. Teaching English is what gives meaning and sense to his work as a teacher, but for now he tries to look for strategies to win the battle with curriculum impositions. He has learned to fight and somehow navigate this dark ocean, but he accepts he usually chooses non-

professional boats or just escapes by swimming very slowly until the hours are over. Should teachers be forced to navigate like this, just because of school impositions generated by budget balance? Are there subjects that we can just label as *orphans*?

Cristian shares the same experience of adopting a subject, but with a different nuance,

Yo sin tener ninguna experiencia enseñando ética, tuve que asumir ese rol. Uno a veces enseñando inglés o francés se enfoca mucho en lo que es hablar y escribir y todo eso, pero de pronto deja un poco de lado el pensamiento crítico. Enseñando ética encontré la oportunidad de salirme un poco más de la estructura y poner a volar la mente y la imaginación de mis estudiantes. Poner a dialogar a los muchachos sobre lo que ellos pensaban resultó ser un buen ejercicio y pues no enfocaba mi clase a la teoría, sino que más bien les daba la oportunidad de dejar volar ese pensamiento que a veces ellos querían expresar, pero que en ocasiones no tenían el espacio para hacerlo. Ahora hago lo mismo con una materia llamada cátedra de la paz, estoy orientando una hora en cuatro grupos y me ha gustado porque con ellos me he dado a la libertad de no seguir un currículo, sino más bien como seguir unos temas y desarrollarlos más libremente. No siento esa presión de seguir un currículo y siento que a los muchachos también les ha gustado, eso para mí es una buena experiencia, espero que un futuro no se me presione y no se me tilde de no haber seguido un currículo como siempre en todas las áreas se obliga o se manda.

Adopting a subject that was a bit foreign to his university education was not entirely a dark sea for Cristian. On the contrary, it became a lantern which illuminated new paths, new possibilities of surrendering to others and new ways of understanding them. We interpreted Cristian from the

naturalness with which he told us about his inherent experiences in the institutionalism world, the universe that subtly surrounded his ambitions for versatility in education. At the beginning, he considered strange to teach Ethics and it never crossed his mind to get so used to it. He never imagined it could appear as a rewarding experience. As time passed, the sea seduced him unexpectedly, and he managed to invite students to navigate with him.

We return here to Zuleta (1995) reflections, with lived experience to give more sense to his affirmations. Education and Institutionalism are always playing in the same ground, and probably the best way to play the game is to assume a healthy conflict and not a defeated adaptation. Teachers experiences are in the heart of that balance.

Discipline and institutionalism are the two clusters of meaning that appeared after phenomenological encounters with professional teachers. The meanings they donate to their profession are full of experiences referring these units, from which emerge the complexity of *'becoming a teacher'*, always mutating.

It is not necessary to catalogue or put into digits how it is viable or not for a teacher to assume the responsibility to teach a subject in which he is not specialized. There is a singularity that cannot be enumerated and makes us experience the world in a different way. The phenomenological exercise invites us to interpret the processes and social structures, leaving aside a judgment about the stories we consider strange, such as the singular experiences of Miguel, Isabelle and Santiago.

In this way, we realized that like Miguel, who positively assumes his task of teaching ethics and getting out of a curriculum, there are also many others like Santiago, who is terrified to teach a subject in which he is not specialized. In this sense, we understand that singularity is a resident of our lives and it allows us to get closer to teachers' stories, being leaves of the same tree.

5. Cruising through our final thoughts: Last Reflections

Becoming a teacher... is it possible to conclude a reflection about the meanings of *becoming a teacher*? Phenomenological encounters rarely lead to concluding paths or full stops. The uncertainties were the summit of our research because they awakened in us a fervent desire to explore the meanings of becoming a teacher from the immersion in our pedagogical experiences and by getting attuned with other experiences.

Many times, in our lives we have hunches that move us and show us risky paths to follow. We consider this research was a risky path. It was a trip in which we constantly doubted about our landing place. We decided to navigate through the route of phenomenology in order to develop our research project, and it actually became a water current that somehow changed our perception of the world. It was a difficult and challenging journey, and we know we still have many things to learn. However, this research meant more than just carrying out a graduation requirement; it gave us a meaningful learning about understanding the complexity of the human being and invited us to assume our future teacher roles from a *tactful and thoughtful* ethical field in which we can *get attuned* to human beings. We are not philosophers at the end of this process, but we can assume now, or try to assume a phenomenological attitude to understand the complexities of the profession we chose.

Phenomenology as an art to understand the lived experience of human beings in the lifeworld, takes writing as the main source to perform the analysis of the experiences that were told. In this process and referring to the writing we can say that it was our biggest difficulty because to write in phenomenology it is necessary to feel what we do, years of study and a lot of inspiration at the moment of expressing what we think. We tried to get that inspiration from our interior and although we all did it, some of us had more inspiration than others, to the point that we delegated

several colleagues to take charge of capturing our ideas. It was a very nice process because we also learned to know our skills both individually as a group.

Additionally, phenomenology appeared as an invitation that seduced our spirit of inquiry and let us discover the scope of the qualitative method along with the inside of the lifeworld. We are grateful to have chosen the route of phenomenology, thereby we freed our minds and -as pre-service teachers- we could free our souls. Now we know that we are not alone in this journey. We know that teachers are made of experiences attached to the humanity of our beings, and from now on we are going to be attentive to them.

Subsequently, the meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher are shaped step by step, by considering the schools' contexts and the lived experience involved in the process of becoming an educator. This learning-teaching process is complex and is immersed in many doubts. Even though the University emphasized on the fact that we are going to be teachers, we often wondered in silence about what were the meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher or what was required to become one.

In the course of this research, we rediscovered *vocation* as an element that implies more than practicing a profession with love. The term vocation can be experienced from different perspectives; as a call, as a passion, as a hobby, as a pleasure, as innate. Vocation is full of subjectivity, it alludes to what we have longed for and kept in our hearts as one of our purest and most prominent illusions, it is a component of our blood that travels and shakes our being when we talk about it, when we dig into memories. Then, remembering vocation implies embarking on an excursion to the past for being spectators of what we once dreamed to be, and find ourselves face to face with a present full of expectations. Is this present a consolidation of our dreams or we just got lost in the way, wasting time and wishes?

During the research, we looked into the abyss that sometimes separates the theory from the practice. The theory does not guide us towards what we should do as teachers; it is the day to day in the classroom that teaches us how to act in facing of the reality of this phenomenon. Hence, we understand that theory without practice is just words by the wind, but through the lived-experiences and phenomenology, we can create a more meaningful relationship between theory-practice, which means that we can go inside the experience to go back to theory and make it more sensitive, enriching our practice. In this sense, we can say that human beings are not the same, so theory cannot be a forced mold, but rather – and from that sensitive contact with the other- we could learn to build more human and sensitive theories that truly seek to understand humans.

When knowledge is strictly related to discipline, it is condensed to a series of limitations that condition the students by some educational models that do not give them freedom to explore according to the natural appetites of each one, but tend to limit them to reinforce scientific or technical knowledge that coldly create docile , submissive and transformable bodies, to be able to transmit an apparent unquestionable knowledge. It seems to become a need to demonstrate an omnipotent knowledge in order to not loose “prestige” within the educational discourse and practices. We found among the participants that some of them have developed “defense mechanisms” trying to preserve their good image and their job positions. Even though the term discipline has changed during these years, we find very little difference regarding the experiences related to power and deeply rooted in institutions.

The cold discipline has viciously hit freedom, and is commonly used in cases in which good coexistence within educational institutions is lost, cases that become increasingly recurrent and complex, situations that make vocation suffer, hopes for change collapse and watercolors of enjoyment vanish with a gray dejection. There are those who, on the other hand, have not stopped

crushing their illusions of assuming the discipline as prehistoric, many have fought to overthrow those fatalities, those teachers have found themselves an essence that has allowed them to travel fully in the pastures of education and even now they have found that balance for which they had fought so much.

Discipline and institutionalism are related by adaptation. For some teachers, to adapt to the institution in which they work was possible, thus the system guided them with its standards and teachers simply followed them with any problem. But for many others, that adaptation was a leap of faith that led them to ask if they really wanted to be teachers, hence, they felt embroiled within a grid system that did not leave them being free to teach their subject by their own ways. By walking along the world of institutionalism that teachers live in, we found that they had to call one virtue, to be versatile, hence we listened to all the participants and how they had to assume some roles that went beyond their training during their university degree. Professional teachers coincided in expressing their unconformity about the institutional policies, but all of this led them to take own decisions, one of them reflected on a deep way about the decisions he believed that a teacher should take in assuming the reins of their profession.

The creation of a rational debate about what means to be a teacher tends to fall into an idealization, in a vile game of the intellectual arrogance that transgresses an individual comprehension of lived phenomena. Being a teacher is a pleasing expression of altruist attributes which have to be walk with prudence, paying sensitive attention to the multitude of meanings that digresses freely in the life-world. Through the experiences told here, we revealed that becoming a teacher is to abandon a little our own being and start to treasure insights that let us approach sensitively the academic challenges. Educational crisis, learning problems, strategies, curriculums...It seems appropriate to stop and raise essential issues about becoming a teacher.

What does it really mean to become a teacher? In this research project, we have tried to attend those feelings that pass through the mere linguistic codes and give them a human transcendence. We believe it could be a small step to meaningful transformation.

Our degree project left us a colossal love for the phenomenological research. We became dwellers of singular, unique and untold experiences which came from human beings who feel, exist and perceive life in their own awareness. We hope this research project can give fruitful and valuable insights for teachers and beginning teachers who recognize themselves behind these verbatim narratives. Likewise, it became a great experience for all of us, we worked as team and faced the challenge of reading comprehension, writing, interviewing and debating together.

5.1 Phenomenological Interviews Diaries

It seems appropriate to add in this last chapter some of the reflections we constantly made when trying to understand phenomenological concepts, especially the ones related to our experiences with phenomenological interviews. Researcher's insights are allowed and even necessary in these type studies.

Insight 1

I had never made phenomenological interviews before. My first thought about them was "It will be piece of cake. I just have to ask questions, being attentive to what the interviewees say and record. Nothing special". However, I was completely wrong. Years ago, I made some interviews in other areas or subjects (sociolinguistic, psychology, social service, among others) for knowing specific details about social events and personal information but those interviews were totally

different to the phenomenological interviews. The method could have been the same (questions, recordings, dialogues...) even so, the purpose couldn't be.

In phenomenology, I was looking for lived experience, feelings, anecdotes which would have shocked the participants, making them to open the bottom of their hearts. A difficult task that I was unable to achieve at first time. Why were the interviews tedious and complicated? Why did phenomenology show me how wrong I was? The next sentence may sound funny but... the last two questions are harder to ask than answering. The response is easy: "speaking from the bottom of the heart is a difficult task for human beings." This action exposes us to others, revealing our secrets, our fears, even worse, revealing our weaknesses which can make us vulnerable.

That was the reason why the phenomenological interviews were complex to carry out. I remember one of them. I interviewed an eighth-semester student of modern languages. We didn't know each other very well. We studied together in the same class two years ago. We greeted a couple of times at the university but we never share enough time to get to know each other and become good friends.

We agreed to meet in the park of her neighborhood in order to interview her. That day, I made a short conversation about the university and my degree project with the purpose of breaking the ice between us. After talking with her, I started asking her the questions. Everything flowed well during the questions in which she counted on her experience as a pre-service teacher. However, when I asked her about how she had felt in those moments, she just said how difficult it was but never mentioned feelings. This occurred in many questions during the interview. Her silence and not mentioning her feelings told me that it wasn't an easy task for her. From my part, I understood her situation and I welcomed her silence as an answer to my questions.

Insight 2

I lived great moments I felt fine and enjoyed each second from these narrations. Now I appreciate what we do, what we live and what we are as human being, there are little things which we depreciate in this life such as quotidian conversations. Value the human beings and do not see them as numbers but as people! Do not forget that the most important in this world is the human being. Phenomenology tries to understand what we are in-the- world.

Insight 3

Once when I was playing, I took the role of journalist in spite of feeling a bit grieving. I felt that to be a journalist and to do questions to strangers was totally uncomfortable and I would keep blushing. That was what usually happened, I had to get used and confront it in a bit more serious way when I had to do it in the university for some sociolinguistics tasks when it was required. Even so, it was uncomfortable for me. It was also uncomfortable to think that I looked like a robot reading some standardized questions and wait for the interviewee to answer what I needed and be willing to be interviewed.

That feeling of looking like a robot and of discomfort at the moment of being like a journalist and interviewing the other person, almost vanished because with the research process I learned a different type of interview, which precisely tries to eliminate the concept of robot part of those who are immersed in the interview. The phenomenological interview tries to reach more to that human part of both the interviewer and the interviewee and allows it to be more of a guided conversation so that it is comfortable but without losing sight of what one wants to obtain from the conversation.

Therefore, when I did my first interview I felt anxious about whether it would work or not, and above all to have that connection with the interviewee in order to listen to her and that she had

the confidence to tell me her feelings, memories and most important experiences, At the end, she was an open book for me...

Insight 4

What is memory? In the world where we live "memory is the perfume that endures" We remember what has left an imprint in us, what we still evoke through people, aromas, places, sounds... Remember is a beautiful verb which comes from the Latin re-cordis, it denotes to pass again through the heart, in other words, to remember makes us re-live people and feelings. To remember is to navigate on the dark and crystalline waters, traveling through our lived and foreign experiences and creating bonds of affection with others. It is also a privilege of the human being to return on the path we once traveled to examine what we experienced and how we acted according to our culture and society. That is why lived experiences we will present have attracted us and moved us to give meaning to the memories these teachers have shared with us from the depths of their hearts.

The way in which we could approach the human expressions are linked with looks and gestures, some of which also narrate with intensity the lived experiences. From them, senses and silences arise that create new bonds and go through the words, that "infinitude of language that takes into account the gesture, that gesture that talks in its body and not only in its voice, therefore in, the silence, the body positions... in brief, a body connected to language and not only to a phonetic noise" (Jaramillo, 2012).

These were just some of the many writing exercises we achieved to do during our process. We presented them in this chapter of final reflections, because we reaffirmed this way that the

question is not what are the discoveries or ultimate findings that phenomenology can do, but rather what phenomenology can do to us.

5.2 Last Phenomenological encounter: “An approach to the lived experiences of foreign languages teachers”

As a last activity in our research project, we decided to bring together the professional and the beginner teachers from perspectives A and B. Both of them were either graduated or currently studying in the University of Cauca. We created a space where they could share openly their lived experiences as teachers in order to capture the meanings of becoming a foreign languages teacher. We did not mean to compare or contrast the experiences, but to put them together in order to see deeply.

The layers of meaning got strongly embedded in our spirits, their words brought to us a sense to all the theory we read. Then a particular effect occurred, their words began to address to us. We realized that their anecdotes spoke to us. This effect established a feeling of understanding that produced a sense of nearness and intimacy with the researched phenomenon.

This meeting gave us fascinating anecdotes because it approached us to each person without prejudging or creating assumptions, but rather we were *all ears* to listen to the daily life of professional teachers and pre-service teachers. In this sense, their stories - of joy or sorrow- astonished us and touched our human sensibility.

To carry out this last activity, we allowed ourselves a change of attitude by letting the phenomenological philosophy arrive to our lives. We dared to propose different ways of gathering lived experiences surpassing the traditional ways of collecting information.

Phenomenology taught us about a human virtue of understanding and being conscious of the

otherness. It showed us that behind a person there is always a story, waiting for being told. Each lifeworld has the power of making us react to the sensations that it produces in our bodies.

We did not *collect data* during that encounter. We shared meaningful experiences in conversations, smiles, movie fragments, music and snacks.

5.3 Phenomenological reflection

To discover a different reality throughout phenomenology was one of the missing windows in our lifeworld. In this part, we do not want to explain the words we used, we do not want to explain all the things that were exposed in this text, conversely, we want to share our real experiences with phenomenology.

Following the above, we are going to share some stories about how we lived our research, how we got ourselves immersed in those unknown oceans described before, in which vocation, institutionalism, discipline and theory- practice covered and linked our perspective, our thinking, and our sensations. Therefore, we will transcribe some fragments of our writing reflections as researchers. They have been kept unedited since their purpose is to convey feelings and not exactly grammar precision.

“I remember when my classmates and I were so excited about “Énfasis” (name of our research design course) because we knew it meant to work in our research to get our graduation of the university. I was happy but I felt disappointment and I started to feel something that I cannot describe what exactly it was, maybe a fear, I was anxious, I was stressed, I was even in dark. But that day, when our teacher, that one who was going to lead our research, she started to give an idea and a summary about how our project would be if we decided to pick phenomenology as a research. Thus, I said to myself “it would be ok, I do not know anything but I am going to learn a

lot” and also I was worried because I had a travel to United States and my classmates said every time “you must consider to travel because this project is important” so, I knew it but both things were important to me. For that reason I promised them to work hard and I think I tried, I did not know if it was enough but anyway to be in USA made me feel how phenomenology was catching me in its deep ocean, I thought different and to have phenomenology on my mind, I could see that experience in a particular way, I dare to say I understood that another person in front of me, he/she can show me in a simple thing an immense universe. Otherwise, I cannot lie, everyone was worried about our team work because we were 10 people working on the same project, therefore it had a high level of agreement but it was not a setback for us, due to we were clear on our objective that it was to carry out this research as an example of an excellent team work. I admit, we had some discussions nevertheless we found solutions about those discrepancies thus, we lived in harmony. Now, I can say my life is not the same, my point of view has changed, I understood that a human being is too complex. The way I see, perceive and feel people it is a modified sensation where I cannot see the other as a simple other but I do see as a social and living being and we cannot forget that sensation”

“I remember the fear I felt in the first class of research, because I saw that the thing has already become serious, of academic life or death. I felt afraid to hear that with this subject I could stay a few more years in the university. I felt the need to be serious about this new process in the career and be responsible. That day the intrigue felt in the air to know what was going to happen from that moment on”

“When I first heard about doing a qualitative research, I could not stop thinking about the idea of how hard it could be to carry on this type of investigation. But then something happened, we were doing a brainstorm of ideas to be developed and we started talking about our classes. At

first, it came up as an excuse for lack of inspiration, because in those days, we were doing the OPE. However, it ended up being the beginning of our research process. We found in phenomenology the perfect tools to expand our ideas. It gave us a started point which was the lived experiences. For me, it was an unknown path; I was worried about all the concepts that I had to grasp, also the complexity of the readings was, at times, frustrated. I wonder, many times, if it was a good idea, if it was viable, due to the fact phenomenology implied to acquire skills that can take a long period. Nevertheless, all those boundaries were disappearing and the reading, along with the concepts, became much easier to understand.

In this journey, we presented a challenge, writing a sensitive text in a group of 10. From the first moment, we knew the huge responsibility that all of us had. We worked together in every aspect of the research. For instance, when the readings were complicated to understand, we made discussions about them, then we wrote reflections which were used in the research. Finally, phenomenology made a huge impact in the way I perceive both researching and people. Now I am more conscious about people's feeling and how they are embedded in the everyday experiences. I learned that, in phenomenology, everything can have a relevant mean. This makes researching an unlimited adventure”.

“At the beginning it was difficult trying to understand what phenomenological research was about. I had to spend much time, many readings and explanations to feel that I finally a little close to it. The theoretical readings were complex; they caused me stress and anger, I did not understand some aspects. How complex is to understand the human being if I am one? I questioned many things about our project, however after starting to read and interact with teachers and students in interviews, I realized that each person creates a different world from their soul and has experienced their life in a special way. That is where phenomenology makes sense, it shows us that

we should not cage our feelings and experiences in numbers, but rather let them fly in a dance of words that emanate experiences told from the insides impregnated with memories”.

“After assuming more sensitive phenomenological research in each class I felt more human, more sensitive and understanding in front of the experiences of others, I felt that I could not be in a better place and with a better method, I was and I am in love with phenomenology because it opened paths for me that maybe without its help I would never have traveled. Listening to so many different experiences made me feel nostalgic and joyful, sensations that I feel humanized not only in academic matters, but in my social and affective life, it showed me that many people do not see or rather do not want to see that the simplest thing is the most beautiful thing in life”

“It was not easy to have chosen an approach such as this one, but there was something that each one of us had and it was the idea of wanting to investigate by the side of the human being, sensitivity, subjectivity...a really important aspect that we had forgotten because we had gone down the path of reason and conclusion, but what happens to the feelings that we live daily? And it was from there that this journey began, full of surprises and much personal and group enrichment, full of lived experiences. We can say that each one of us had a small fragment that inhabited us and by daring to unite each fragment we were able to reveal that pearl that united us and shaped us.

That pearl was the phenomenology that already inhabited us. At the beginning everything was unknown we did not have the slightest idea of what the word phenomenology meant and that ignorance made us feel nervous or afraid of perhaps carrying out an investigation in the qualitative approach that was not taken into account or qualified as "boring or uninteresting", that was the uncertainty of many of us at the beginning, but it was at the moment of meeting authors, reading their investigations and that importance that is given to the human being

because it is taken as what is a being, not a numerical object, was what made me personally fall in love with phenomenology.

But this pearl had to be organized, assembled so that it would not remain imperfect and it was the commitment and responsibility acquired in this work that made us gradually give perfection to this pearl and to this day we continue to polish it because it is the result of many fears, anxieties, which at some point we felt while carrying out this project.

In a few words, doing research became a process full of feelings for us as researchers: Not knowing where to start or not knowing how to begin in a researching process produced us fear and stress. we kept quiet in the "Enfasis" courses because none of us had an answer about what phenomenology really was and the elements that made part of it. The few words in our mouth were lost in the air trying to explain to teachers and classmates the concepts of "lived experience, lifeworld, epoche, phenomenon, among others. That was a cause of anguish. We felt that the writings were paragraphs that did not have an order, a structure, a body (head and feet). This became like a road through which we walked without knowing to what place we were going to arrive. Nevertheless, the readings exhorted us and guided us saying, in our words, "the phenomenology is a research that reveals itself in coming days".

5.4 Recommendations

During this research process we could perceive that the activities we carried out with participants left us significant and enriching ideas to create spaces of coexistence between students and teachers. This was a result of the good synergy which was experienced during the activities in the meeting, revealing the necessity of enhancing more encounters like this.

Thus, we recommend creating spaces where both beginner and professional teachers would have the opportunity to continue sharing their lived experiences. Through those meetings -that

could be organized as seminars or annual conferences- they will learn from each other and understand, a little more, about how lived experiences shape the meanings of *becoming a teacher*.

After our phenomenological research process, we could consider a reorganization of the academic curriculum of PLLMI-F, regarding the subjects that are specifically directed to pedagogy. We could affirm that these subjects should be addressed earlier and from the first semesters of the program, allowing students to get familiarized with the process of 'becoming a teacher' from meaningful experiences, observations, visits, conversations and self-reflection.

We also invite the program of Modern Languages (English-French) of the University of Cauca to navigate and encourage researches guided by the qualitative method since it makes part of our human science formation and Pedagogy is essentially and above all, a Human Science. In this regard, we encourage students of PLMIF to explore the field of phenomenology, because it let us understand the different meanings of the everyday experiences. This method approached us to the real value of people during a research. They transcend from a character -an individual in a investigation- to a person - a lived embodiment of experiences.

In this sense, we recommend teachers to deepen the qualitative method during the subject Research Method course considering that this subject is the beginning of our research project, since there are many students who could feel identified to qualitative research. They do not know so much about it and for that reason they have to do quantitative research because their training tends to mainly focus on it. From our own experience, we propose qualitative methods to have the same percentage of reflection during the Research Method course, so students are going to have the freedom to choose which one they are willing to navigate.

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