



# BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

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FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

*Pathways Towards a PhD: Foreign  
Language Mexican Teachers' Life Stories*

A thesis submitted to the department of languages

For the degree of

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# **PATHWAYS TOWARDS A PHD: FOREIGN LANGUAGE MEXICAN TEACHERS' LIFE STORIES**

## **Abstract**

There is a lack of important information regarding professional development. This is why this study offers and expands the traditional focus on professionalization by offering insights into the link between early year experiences and professional development in Mexico. From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, it is not merely what teachers saw and did as learners that influenced their thinking about teaching and learning, but it is the emotional experiences associated with their schooling histories that play a central role in understanding teaching activity (Johnson & Worden, 2014). Thus, by using a timeline scheme, an interview and their Curriculum Vitae (CV) this thesis explores the implications of how crucial experiences shaped seven Mexican professors' beliefs, emotions, agency and identity. Consequently, this study is twofold: 1) it intends to get insights into the early years experiences that could inspire adult professional development or create barriers and 2) to contribute to the discussion about professional development and PhD degree achievement. Preliminary results suggest that there are decisive/critical moments and emotions in school life, which have later implications on professional development.

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## CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Researching life history helps to understand how identities are built and deserves our attention because “*patterns of life stories can be related to their wider historical, social, environmental, and political context*” (Adriansen, 2012, 41). In order to know what is behind professors’ lives, experiences and beliefs it is necessary to recognize the importance of the early stages.

Today “*early childhood literature is growing as the result of recognition that early experiences shape long-term human development*” (Krishnan 2010, 3). Nevertheless, very little is known about whether early years experiences have an effect on professional development. This is the main reason why this study offers insights into the link between experiences and the decisions that triggers seven PhD professors’ decisions to obtain their degree.

Human development has been studied through different sciences. Previous studies have based their methodologies on individualistic views. Nevertheless, it was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was a socio-cultural viewpoint. This Vygotskian perspective tells us that cognitive growth first occurs on a social level and later on individual level (Vygotsky, 1978). This view can reveal facts about education that may be difficult to find using traditional theories (Jafari, 2015).

According to the qualitative paradigm and the nature of inquiry type of research, this study is subjective, multiple and socially constructed by its participants (Tuli, 2010). Implicitly, this means that there is no way the results can be generalized (Farzanfar, 2005). Concluding with the specifications, my role as a researcher this time is only “*to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world*” (Creswell, 2003, 9).

## **1.1 Purpose of the study**

This study was carried out with the intention to shed some light into teachers' professional development in Mexico and to increase the knowledge in areas of professional development that may not have been addressed previously. In addition to that, to provide relevant information to policymakers at all levels of the education system as they design and implement education reform policies. Therefore, the aim of this research is twofold:

1. To get insights into the early years experiences that could inspire adult professional development or create barriers and
2. To contribute to the discussion about the factors that support professional development.

## **1.2 Research questions**

In light of the gap in the literature presented above, this research addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences in school years that participants considered to be crucial to develop professionally and obtain a PhD degree?

RQ2: How these experiences shaped language teachers' teaching practices and identities?

RQ3: What pedagogical implications can be suggested for teachers education programs at postgraduate level?

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

The significance of the topic can be seen not only in the research site but also my main with the study was in discovering what experiences were crucial moments for teachers. The results

could be used to suggest program improvements. In my near environment, the information will help me in the construction favorable conditions for further professionals. In a world made up of words, there is a permeable relationship between life and narratives. Thus, these stories can also enlighten others to continue in their process of professionalization.

The study will also help to obtain trustworthy and timely information about the process of development in Mexico. As well, as to chart their professional development and work trajectories. And at the same time, the project will include emerging information about teachers' expectations.

#### **1.4 Chapters summary**

This chapter briefly introduces the general idea and context of the study. Chapter two will discuss issues and main concepts related to professional development and it will explain other concepts underpinning my study. Chapter three gives detailed description of the design of the project; it introduces its participants, context and the methodology used for this study. In addition, the data collection instruments and procedure of the analysis is also provided. Chapter four presents the general results of this investigation, as well as interpretation of the findings. Chapter five provides the summary of the findings, the limitations in this inquiry and a brief discussion as a conclusion.



## **CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section is meant to provide the theoretical background of the relevant literature that guided this research and provided support for its methodological framework, analysis and conclusions.

The literature review when conducting a research for a Master's degree dissertation is vital as it helps understand nature of inquiry, the core notions of the study and how the researcher constructs his own view from authors that may or may not support his perspective. There are two main reasons why it is important to have a literature review: first, is a box full of information that frames the study and provide readers with a coherent, focused summary of current state of knowledge of specific topics and second, a literature review opens doors for new areas of inquiry that may demand further investigation.

This paper has been divided into three main parts. First and as introduction it is presented a brief summary of some theories (1.1) that have studied human development. Then, the socio-cultural theory (1.2) is presented as a core notion for the study. Second part belongs to professional development (2.3 and sub points), here is presented the core concepts that have to do with construction of a professional self. Last section (2.4) gives a brief summary of what has been researched about this topic.

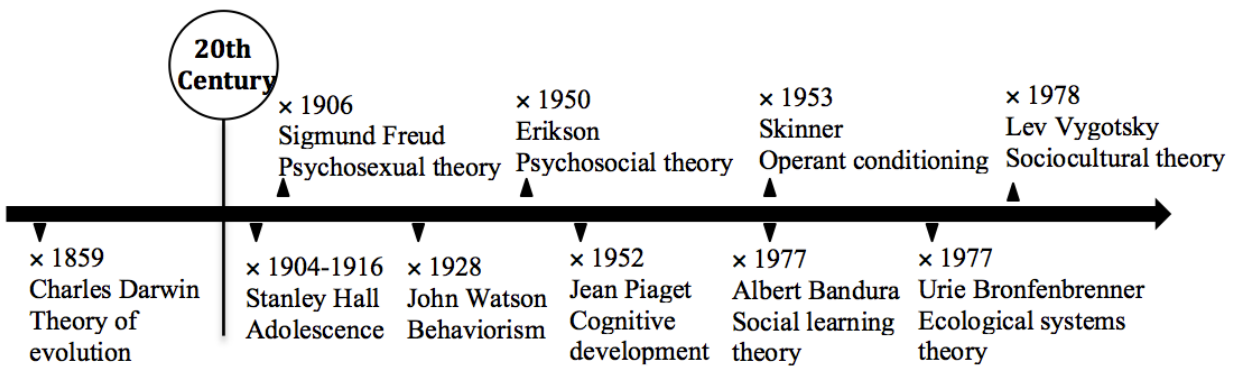
### **2.1 Developmental theories**

Human development has been studied through different sciences and each of them settles different characteristics of learning according to their perspective. This section will help us to see through the right lenses (perspectives) that guided this study.

In order to understand the developmental process of becoming PhD, this literature review first introduces a short historical description of theories that explain learning and development and then, the theory that led this study.

The following illustration belongs to some development theories that have been recognized by the area of sciences:

Figure 1: Life Span Development (Krishnan, 2010)



Charles Darwin was the first in emphasizing about the development of nature. His theory basically stated that the change through time occurred in populations of organisms in response to changing environments. The interest in human development became very popular years later and consequently several theories emerged.

Another famous theorist was Stanley Hall, he contributed a large amount of work in understand adolescent development, some of which still holds true today. Stanley Hall published a massive book about adolescence and it instantly received recognition for being the first work ever published that synthesized the preexisting theories into a systematic portrayal of the life stage (Ross 1972). Almost unanimously, Freud’s psychosexual theory emerged. This theory believed that during childhood their sexual impulses shift their focus from the oral to the anal to the genital regions of the body. Then, Erikson’s theory surfaced from Freud’s view. Erikson expanded the picture of development at each stage by adding the social factor that permeates children in every

stage. Freud's psychosexual and the Erikson's psychosocial theory belong to the *psychoanalytical theories*, which discuss the relationship between biological drives and societal expectations (Krishnan, 2010). Years later the *cognitive developmental* theorist Piaget illustrated his beliefs on innate mental structures that influence how experiences are organized and interpreted. These innate mental structures are deriving of how a child constructs a mental model of the world. He disagreed with the idea that intelligence was a fixed trait, and regarded cognitive development as a process which occurs due to biological maturation (Torres, 2010). On the other hand, the *system theory* by Bronfenbrenner (1977) belongs to the contemporary theories. His main contribution is an illustration of inner circles called the "circles of influence". The "*child or learner at the centre, embedded in the microsystem of home, family, health services and school, it emphasized the child's experience but moved outwards through the mesosystem and exosystem to take account of less direct influences*" (Plowman, 2015, 3). According to Krishnan (2010), Bronfenbrenner's theory has a bearing on the works of Bandura and Vygostky.

So far many of the most of the relevant developmental theories have been described. Nevertheless, throughout this study a socio-cultural perspective is adopted. This is another developmental theory and the one that guided this study, for this reason it was decided to have it in a separate section.

## **2.2 The socio-cultural perspective**

Vygotsky's trajectory started early (1926-1934 approx.) than Bronfenbrenner's theory and his *sociocultural theory* maintains that children's knowledge is socially constructed. Every human has a training path that has shaped him in specific ways of being, thinking and acting (Vygotsky 1986), Each of us present features that characterize us, both individually and collectively,

consciously or unconsciously, these are manifested in what we do everyday and as teachers, these are manifested in the classroom (Leal, E. 2010).

Contrary to what individualistic views have said, cognition, from a sociocultural perspective states that humans construct their knowledge based on individual and contextual factors into consideration. This means that children's acquisition of their culture's values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies is in response to social interaction with more knowledgeable members of society. One of the main principles in Vygotsky's theory is the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD), the ZPD represents a metaphoric space where engagement in social interaction (activity) exposes what an individual might be able to do with assistance; in other words, one's potential versus what one can do on one's own (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Another important principle for the sociocultural perspective is scaffolding. This term is used to refer to adults providing specific support for children. In the classroom for example, scaffolding involves providing the learner with hints or clues for problem solving in order to allow the student to better approach the problem in the future (Woolfolk 2004). Scaffolding is seen as a key technique in the guidance for developing children's thinking in the latest report into promoting thinking and raising cognitive outcomes (Hargraves, 2011). According to Hargraves (2011), scaffolding takes place in the zone of proximal development and involves challenging the child's thinking in a sensitive and appropriate way, based on careful judgments about what the child understands at that point in time.

Part of this process of acquiring knowledge is internalization, viewed from the sociocultural perspective it consists in a *"negotiated process that reorganizes the relationship of the individual to her or his social environment and generally carries it into future performance"* (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, 203). The process of internalization is simple to understand. It starts with the externals or interpersonal symbols and moves to the internal or intrapersonal thinking (Bazerman,

Simon & Pieng 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). According to Garfield and Ben-Zvi, when students learn, their previous *“knowledge does not go away, it becomes integrated with the new knowledge”* (2009, 72). Then, the externalization shows off to express the understanding from the first stage; this could be presented in verbal or nonverbal message.

Mediation is also part of the process, it is found in the middle of the social level and individual level. Vygotsky claimed that *“every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; in other words first between people (inter-psychological), and then inside the child (intra-psychological),”* (1978, 57).

The term mediation is central in this process because:

Internalization, or the transformation from external to internal does not happen independently or automatically. Instead, it takes prolonged and sustained participation in social activities [...] within Vygotskian sociocultural theory that underlies the transformative process of internalization (from external-social to internal-psychological). Humans do not act directly with their environments, but use, Vygotsky argued, various tools to mediate their activities. Adults teach these tools to children through their joint activities, and these tools serve simultaneously to regulate the child’s behavior and to make available various means of self-regulation to the child (Johnson and Golombek, 2011, 3).

These tools, or mediational means, represent cultural artifacts and activities, concepts, and our social relations with others. Both language and cognitive processes are cultural artifacts, whose nature varies from culture to culture. In this study mediation is taken as one of the core notions for development, this is the reason why in our next sections the subject is retaken, now in professional development.

### **2.3 Teachers’ professional development**

In Education, as far as literature defining professional development (hence PD) is concern, it has been defined in a number of ways, but most simply, as teachers’ life-long learning and

growing. For many authors, the concept of professional development encompasses two main notions: the formal and informal learning. Fullan (1991,326) for example, stated that professional development includes "*the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from pre-service teacher education to retirement*". As well as Harwell (2003) who mentioned that professional development can come in many different forms: "*workshops, degrees, coursework, conferences, training sessions, online podcasts, discussion boards and classes, can all be forms of professional development*" (p. 7). This study confirms the importance of recognizing both the formal and informal experiences.

Supporting the above mentioned, throughout this paper, the term professional development will refer to:

Day's (1999, 4) definition of professional, which consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives.

Many fields require members to participate in ongoing learning approved by the profession, sometimes as a requirement for keeping their jobs. Professionals often also voluntarily seek new this new learning. Sadly however, professional development has been limited to attendance at courses and conferences to meet requirements.

In this study professional development may be conceived of as an enhancement to the status of the profession as a whole, exemplified by the evolution of an all-graduate profession, and it may also be conceived of as an improvement to knowledge, skills, and practice (Evans, 2008).

### 2.3.1 Mediation and collaborative development

Learning to share with others and listening is part of the everyday learning. From a social capital theory it can be argued that it is not just the teacher's individual skills that make them good teachers, but also their connections and interactions with others (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). *"Teacher-learners cannot talk about teaching without reflecting on what they went through as learners, while group learning adds meaning to the teacher's self-development as professionals"* (Singh & Richards 2006, 17).

Mediation is somehow closely related to collaborative development. As new teachers, to get involved in the school activities is creating a social context that helps them negotiate entry into the academic discourse community and acquire disciplinary knowledge. This mediation occurs during the internalization, or the transformation of knowledge from the external level (social) to the internal level (individual). This does not happen independently or automatically and it takes prolonged and sustained participation in social activities (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Examples of these negotiation entries activities occur in the classroom, in meetings or in the lunchroom.

Working in collaboration on classroom tasks offers many benefits. *"Teachers who undertake professional development undertake a wider array of teaching practices and are more likely to cooperate with other teachers"* (OECD, 2009, 88). Sadly enough, in Mexico policies are not emphasizing in such sharing of learning and cognitive performance. This is probably because the majority of the policies are focused instead on the importance of individual competencies. However since long ago science has demonstrated that group work has a beneficial effect on the performance and self-esteem of both genders as long as it takes place in a favorable atmosphere (Wegner, Friederike & Weber, 2014).

In relation to classroom atmospheres, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (2013), there are four types of teachers. There are the renewed, who are constantly learning and challenged. The

disenchanted teachers, the ones that were once very excited about change, but through negative experiences have become discouraged; nevertheless, they can be re-enchanted one day. Then, there are the quiet ones, who are more likely to work with two or three people to make improvements rather than the entire school, and that's the best way to work for them. The fourth group is where we find the resisters and reprobates. Debate continues and there still resistance to believe in the importance of professional development in collaboration with others.

### **2.3.2 Emotions in professional development**

From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, it is not merely what teachers saw and did as learners that influences their thinking about teaching and learning, it is the emotional experiences associated with their schooling histories that play a central role in understanding teaching activity (Johnson & Worden, 2014). Researchers use the word emotion in ways that reflect their different theoretical viewpoints (Oatley, 2000). This study recognizes that emotions are socially and culturally derived and, along with cognition, they mediate learning (Swain, 2013).

Teaching and learning are not only concerned with knowledge, cognition, and skill. They are also emotional practices (Hargreaves, 2001). In relation to emotions in education, as teacher it does not take too much to realize that emotion in the classroom goes “*beyond honorable and sacred ideals of love, care, trust, and support towards a more profane realm of unsettling and darker emotions in teaching such as guilt, shame, anger, jealousy, frustration, and fear*” (Fineman, 1993 in Hargreaves, 2001, 1057). All these emotional experiences turn and transform learners and teachers not only as cognizant beings but affects them as entire human beings and sometimes for the rest of their lives.



It is in narratives anecdotes and stories of learners' experiences that the centrality of emotion and its connections to cognition becomes evident (Swain, 2013). It was shown many times that positive emotions facilitate retrieving positively tainted memories, whereas negative emotions do the same with negative memories (Edlinger & Hascher, 2008). Frustration, boredom and insecurity emotions on the other hand are related to person's activation, interest and motivation and are the point of intersection for cognitive processes (Hascher, 2005).

### **2.3.3 Agency and identity in professional development**

The term "agency" has recently become a relevant notion in the study of development, however it has been used since long ago in different contexts like philosophy, diplomacy and sociology. In this study, agency will refer to power people have to think for themselves and act in ways that shape their experiences and life trajectories (Cole, 2017). Since this work is on life stories, agency and identity will be constantly mentioned.

According to Mora, Trejo and Roux (2014) agency is one of the four key elements that influence the constant reconstruction of identity: culture, society, agency, and subjectivity. There are many interesting studies on agency by the Australian government; they argue that the sense of agency is identified at a very early age. Children start developing sense of agency when they start gaining freedom and start making decisions that have influence in events, and have an impact on their world (DEEWR, 2009).

Concerning identity, we understand identity as a phenomenon that is in continuous change, being reconstructed across contexts and discourses (Norton, 2000 in Mora, Trejo, & Roux, 2014). Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons (2005) state that teacher's identity balance three relevant dimensions in their work: a personal dimension, professional dimension and a situational

dimension. According to Day et al., identities are formed through the ways these dimensions are interacting. Along similar lines, Burke (1987) states that teacher development is being persuaded by series of:

Positive and negative teaching models, as well as by other previous meaningful processes such as personal determining factors (previous teaching and professional experience, conceptions, beliefs, routines, practical knowledge...), family determining factors (family experiences, teaching partner...), institutional factors (promotion, selection, training and resource allocation policies...), contextual factors (students' profile, career profile, structure and methodology...) and social factors (social and technological changes...). (p.31)

There is an unavoidable interrelationship between professional and personal identities (Day, Kingtona, Stobartb & Sammons, 2005; Cooper & Olson 1996). Events and experiences in the personal lives of teachers are intimately linked to the performance of their professional roles (Acker, 1999). Teachers' personal knowledge of adolescents, for example, includes their own histories, memories, and constructions of knowledge from their own adolescence (Day *et al.* 2005). This two identities are "integral to one another, and that there are often tensions between these which impact to a greater or lesser extent upon teachers' sense of self or identity" (Day et al. 2005, 601).

According to Burns (1992) the term 'hidden pedagogy' embraces different factors such as beliefs, attitudes, expectations and decisions which serve as a sustainable basis for observable behavior. The teacher's decision-making are influenced by each teacher's experiences, individual conceptions and their interactions with local contexts. Teachers also rely on their background knowledge which is "a complex knowledge structure composed of interrelated sets of organized actions" (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986, p.75 cited in Woods, 1996).

The following sections of the literature review will be closely related to the contemporary conceptions of identity, which at the same time are related to the codes and categories in the

analysis: Contemporary conceptions of identity share four basic assumptions: (1) that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation; (2) that identity is formed in *relationship* with others and involves *emotions*; (3) that identity is *shifting, unstable, and multiple*; and, (4) that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over time. (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008, 732)

Retaking the notions of agency, all along this study it is going to be referred to this autonomy development that involves both an individual dimension of *self-agency* and the social dimension *social-agency*, entailing respect for others, negotiation, collaboration and interdependence (Calvert, 2016). In order to evolve, it is necessary the interactions with the environment to enhance these agencies. As children grow and develop they become more able to explore their world independently (Brown, 2014). As they develop they can raise more individual capacity for self-awareness and self-determination (Carson, 2012). In other words they start consolidating their social roles. The well-recognized psychologist Erikson stated that this mediation takes place in puberty and that this ego identity is nothing but the sum of childhood identification.

## **2.4 Previous studies**

Traditional research on professional development has studied almost everything from university to retirement. However, about the significance of early years in late professional development there have appeared only a few ones with different focus.

Researchers like Dubow, Huesmann, Boxer, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2006) called their study “Middle Childhood and Adolescent Contextual and Personal Predictors of Adult Educational

and Occupational Outcomes”. They concluded that childhood and adolescent social behavior was related to educational status in early adulthood, which in turn predicted occupational status when the participants were in their 40s.

Uusiautti and Määttä (2013) carried out another study called “Brisk attitude and optimism: top workers’ childhood experiences forming the basis of success at work”. In their research they attempt to focus on “top employees of the year” and their early experiences, as well as mentors in their lives. They found that the most significant key to success at work adopted from home was caring upbringing as parents did not set any ambitious goals for success for their children but made the children think about their future and have an optimistic attitude to life.

There are also on the other hand, interesting studies on teacher’s autobiographies and narratives. From those previous studies we can make inferences such as “the context can enhance self-agency” or “teachers become guides to make some decisions”; however, it is still very short information about the impact in his/her professional development as a professional doctorate. This study illustrates the value of taking a narrative approach, and builds upon the insights provided.

## CHAPTER THREE. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research design adopted for the study will be discussed and detailed description of the participants; instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures will be provided.

This chapter is divided in seven sections. Firstly, the qualitative research methodology that frames this study is introduced. Secondly, it is given more in-depth methodological descriptions (case study and explorative research) about the study design will be given. Thirdly, the setting and the participants that took part in are presented. Fourthly, a description and definition of each data collection instrument is provided. The preceding point specifies on the procedure of the data collection. Finally, the data analysis and the arrangement of the codes and categories are explained.

### 3.1 Qualitative paradigm

Due to the nature of the research questions and the need of an in-depth understanding of the teacher's stories, the tradition that helps to collect the data is the qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2003, p. 181) points out that qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. In addition, qualitative researchers look for involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility. Similarly, Burns (1999, p. 22) says, "*The aim of qualitative approaches is to offer descriptions, interpretations and clarifications of naturalistic social contexts*". In other words, the human behavior is presented as it is with no predetermined variables, which may occur in the process of the study. Thus, the information gathered in this was for illuminating purposes as it revealed participants' subjectivity instead of having findings on a single perspective as quantitative studies have been focused on

(Creswell, 2007). This study in particular, gathered information on certain connections between past experiences and the present (Austin, 2015).

### **3.2 Life History Research: A Case study**

In light of the above, the overall research methodology that frames this study is a case study. It is opted for a case study due to the analytical procedures adopted and because of the kind of data obtained lent itself to this kind of analysis. According to Creswell (1998), a case study “*involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system*” (p. 73). The issue explored or the phenomena of study in this case are the experiences in early years that were considered decisive for language teachers to develop professionally and to obtain a PhD degree.

A case study is also an exploration over time that goes through a detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 2007). Hence, this is also an explorative research too. The exploratory research purpose is not only to cognize a phenomenon but to expand on the qualitative findings of a particular area and to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon (Creswell 2003).

This study is also considered under the criteria of life history research (hence LHR). This type of exploration contemplates structured or semistructured interviews as one of its main technique but it does not have singular definition since it borrows methodologies and techniques of data production, which span many field and disciplines (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). LHR tries to uncover the complexities individuals, which draws from the biographical experiences of the individual and how they negotiate a particular landscape of development (academically, professionally, socially, culturally, and psychologically) (Pillay, 2003).

About the aims of LHR it can be underpinned by different epistemological approaches and theoretical standpoints: it could focus on narrative, story-telling and language; focus on perceptions of/ interpretations of truth and reality; focus on social relations or focus on empirical exploration of the narrator’s life (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). The advantages of LHR are that it allows for the exploration of complexity and interrelationships. It also allows counter-intuitive findings to emerge and it also generates powerful information on case studies.

### 3.3 Participants

The participants of this study were seven PhD professors. The PhD professors who were invited have been at some point involved in academic activities with language faculty in the BUAP. The first step was to invite them to collaborate in the project. There were sent around 11 invitations and only 7 accepted. In Table 1, the characteristics of the participants information is presented:

Table 1. Participants’ Information

Participants	Age	Years of Experience	Gender	Nationality	Location
1	40	21	M	Mexico	Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
2	52	25	F	Check Republic	Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
3	53	32	F	Mexico	Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
4	48	18	F	Mexico	Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas
5	40	22	M	Mexico	Universidad de Quintana Roo
6	37	14	F	Mexico	Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
7	44	21	F	Mexico	Universidad de Quintana Roo

Source: Personal research

They were all language teachers living in Mexico (see Table 1 below). There were only two males and five females. Some of their characteristics (see Table 1 below) are: their age ranged from 37 the youngest to 53 the oldest; they are all teachers and researchers; all of them have finished a PhD; they have been language teachers for more than 10 years and all of them belong to public language faculties, located in different parts of the country (UQROO, UNACH, UABC and the BUAP)

### **3.4 Instruments for data collection**

As was previously mentioned for case studies it is crucial to gather detailed, in-depth data, which includes contextual information (Creswell, 2007). In this study, data was collected at three different phases, first using a story timeline scheme, then an interview and finally, their curriculum vitae (or CVs). The data collected from these sources were triangulated.

First, the respondents fill a timeline scheme which main purpose was to gain insights into the specific experiences they have considered to be crucial and with consequences in late years. *“The timeline method increases the possibilities of seeing events and perceptions of these events within contexts of wider life experiences. Often when people tell their story, it is nice and linear, rational and coherent”* (Adriansen, 2012, 43). In my personal experience, the timeline helped me see things from their own perspective. I could observe from the timelines what experiences really matter for them and how they reacted to some situations.

The interview was used to explore these experiences from the timeline scheme. In this case study, interviews were applied to collect qualitative data. Merriam (1998, 69) defines qualitative data as *“direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge obtained through interviews”* because interviews provide multiple realities (Stake, 1995). The data gathered from the interview give us a detailed look at the respondent’s childhood. It also provided



useful information about where our respondents come from (Cousin, 2009). The participants were also asked for CVs. The CVs were collected to find further evidence of the participants' personal/professional development. The CVs turned out to be useful in the sense that they illuminated their real development and interests. The CVs expanded the information that the participants expressed in their interviews, contributing significantly to the study.

### 3.5 Procedure to data collection

The procedure to gather the data was the following: first, possible candidates were called to contribute with their participation in the project. The participants' first act was to sign some documents where they accept to be participants of the study and then, they were sent a timeline scheme and they had to fill it with their personal experiences:

Figure 2: Participants' timeline scheme

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE				
<p>INSTRUCTION:            Fill in the timeline with those memorable moments (positive, negative, motivational, decisive, etc.) from your <i>school life years</i> (primary, high school and university) that have had an impact on your professional development. Also, please state when you learned a language and when you have been teaching a language. You can include as many moments as you wish for each period of time. Please, specify the years of each period (see the examples).</p>				
<p>I first attended a German course when I was in Kindergarten. <u>The class was offered to me by a teacher who noticed I had an enormous interest in languages</u> (the class was practically private because only me and another boy were taking the). To give you some context, I grew up in a small village in Czech Republic, which was during the Second War annexed to Germany and a lot of middle aged and older people could speak German, plus we had neighbors of German descent.</p>	<p>I started a regular elementary school; I spent there the first two grades, but in the second grade I decided to enter the experimental school for children gifted for languages. I decided to enroll the special language elementary school despite the fact that my parents planned to enroll me in another special school, which was for children gifted in mathematics. I did not even inform them and I took an exam to be admitted in the school of my choice when I was 8 years old. I took a language aptitude test.</p>	<p>In high school, I was not lucky to continue in the same kind of school program. This was my mistake, in fact. I did not do mu research beforehand. Also, I wanted to finish the elementary (and junior high, which was the same school for us) as soon as possible, so I exited the basic education after eight years of schooling. If I had waited one more year, I could have continued my education in a prep school with humanistic orientation, but as I did not wait, and also as I was a very good student (as in fact we all were very good students in our elementary school.</p>	<p>I studied three BA-MA programs related to language teaching. I called them BA-MA because at that time we did not have BA degree, it was MA or noting (now they have both degrees separate in my country, which is good, if you conclude 3-4 years of study, you can at least have a BA degree. In my times, you had to conclude 10-12 semesters of study to have a MA).            I studied Czech language, literature and theory of teaching (didactics) as the first degree in combination with English language, literature and theory of teaching.</p>	<p>During my BA-MA studies I always preferred literature to language (linguistics), but due to the strange twist of fate I ended studying the PhD in philology (literary criticism, history, and linguistics) not in literature.            When I was studying at the university, I had several job offers, but it was always clear I would continue studying my PhD and working at the same university. I was promised a job, but then the situation changed.</p>
<p>Kindergarten            YEARS: 1967-1970</p>	<p>PRIMARY SCHOOL            YEARS: 1971-1979</p>	<p>PREPARATORY SCHOOL            YEARS: 1980- 1984</p>	<p>UNIVERSITY            YEARS: in total 1985-1991</p>	<p>OTHER            YEARS: 1994-2003</p>

There were sent around 11 invitations, only 7 accepted to collaborate. This format consisted of filling a table designed in Microsoft word with participant's significant experiences.

A second step was to go more in-depth with participants' memories and to know more about their sociocultural and professional backgrounds. Thus, it was necessary to carry out an interview where aspects related to their development as professionals as well as key issues related to their decisions to become PhD were emphasized. An interview agenda was developed based on their timeline. This interview agenda is illustrated below:

Figure 3: Interview agenda

1. Who is \_\_\_\_\_?
  - What can you tell us about your social context?
  - Where are you from?
  - How is your family structured?
  - Did your (parents, siblings) attend university?
  - Do you live with them?
  - Did your parents attend university?
  - You said you have a brother?
  - And all of them have carriers?
2. How do you describe yourself as a student?
  - What kind of student were you?
  - Were you a good student in primary/high school/university?
  - Who were your friends from the school? How could you describe them?
  - Was it necessary that your parents were strict with you during your schooldays?
3. What can you tell us about your moments in school, since the beginning
  - Could you recall and share one of your best/bad experiences in school?
  - Have all of your teachers been good?
  - How about your relationships, influencers, decisions, other?
4. Who is the best teacher you have ever known?
  - So how can you describe the professional you are right now?
  - So, you don't know what kind of professional you want to be?
  - How did you decide to become the professional you are?
  - Do you have a mentor or someone who helped you?
  - Is your view about teaching and learning similar than before?
5. What are the main reasons you decided to become a doctor?
  - Do you think there is a connection between your primary secondary school and taking decision about the PhD?
  - How did you decide to become the professional you are?

Source: Personal research

The interview was relevant for this study because it illustrated the contexts in which these experiences took place, the teachers' backgrounds, and their emotions as well as the reasons why each teacher chose a PhD.

Participants' narratives from the timeline scheme and the interview revealed the knowledge, ideas, perspectives, understandings and experiences that guide their work. Their stories described the complexities of their practice, trace professional development over time, and reveal the ways in which they make sense of and reconfigure their work (Johnson and Golombek, 2011).

### **3.6 Data analysis: Categorizing and coding**

The information was analyzed and categorized. Concerning the establishment of categories, the data gathered was encoded based on concepts emerged from the timeline and interviews. Prior reading of the available literature also provided prior definition of a few categories.

CVs on the other hand were analyzed according to participant trajectories. In other words, their information was classified in years of experience, number of oral presentations, written books, chapter books and articles.

As it was previously mentioned, the timeline scheme, their interviews and participants' CVs provided valuable data, which allowed to gain insights into their personal/professional development processes during and after getting their PhDs. The data from the timeline and interviews were reviewed in the light of the research questions and categorize them in types of experiences. After the process of categorization, the data collected from all sources was triangulated as this type of study needs to rectify information from its sources in order to see different but complementary data (Creswell, 2007).

In general, the content analysis covers two broad types of exploration: the linguistic tradition, which treats text as an object of analysis itself, and the sociological tradition, which treats text as a window into human experience (Russell, 2015). Linguistic tradition covers patterns and structures in *“performance styles, and compared the production of narratives within and across cultures. For the sociological tradition, we review the methods of schema analysis, grounded theory, classical content analysis, semantic network analysis, cognitive mapping, and Boolean analysis”* (Russell, 2015, 595).

This study focused on the sociological tradition. Thus, as an explorative design under the frames of sociological tradition the new categories were formulated out of the data. This means that it was worked through many text passages in order to have a final categorization of the data (Mayring, 2014). The table 2 shows the final codes and categories gathered from the analysis of the timeline and interview.

Table 2: Interview and timeline codes and categories

Codes	Categories
1. Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context</li> </ul>
2. Significant moments and emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family issues</li> <li>• Classroom environment</li> <li>• Teacher-student difficult relationships</li> <li>• Enrolling new activities</li> <li>• Being recognized</li> </ul>
3. Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching-learning</li> <li>• Life philosophies</li> </ul>
4. Meditational tools and Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul>
5. Agency or visionary professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-agency</li> <li>• Critical moments and agency</li> <li>• Social-agency</li> </ul>

Source: Personal research

On the other hand, participants’ CVs were collected read it and analyzed to find further evidence of professional development. The CVs turned out to be very useful in the sense that they

contributed significantly to the study. The CVs provided professional documents that contained information about their schooling and publications among other relevant aspects and products of their academic lives.

All participants' information was classified in two tables. The first table is about participants' information about their degrees (masters and PhD degrees) and their collaboration with other teachers. The second table has to do with their production as writers and researchers (number of national and international articles; national and international book chapters; national and international written books). The following figures are the categories from the tables mentioned before.

Table 3: CVs categories and codes about degrees

Categories	Codes
National Master- Scholarship/No Scholarship	NM-S /NS
International Master- Scholarship/No Scholarship	IM-S/NS
National PhD- Scholarship/No Scholarship	NPhD-S/NS
International PhD: Scholarship/No Scholarship	IPhD-S/NS
Sistema Nacional de Investigadores	SNI
Perfil Deseable Prodep	PD
Collaborations with others	C

Source: Personal research

With regards to the SNI and the PD. The SNI (Sistema Nacional de Investigadores) is the National System of Researchers. This program provides to professors reliable and valid criteria to evaluate research activities carried out by academics and technologists. The benefits that come with membership in the National System of Researchers symbolizes the quality and prestige of the scientific contributions appointment parallel to provide economic stimulus.

On the other hand, the PRODEP (PD) (Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente, para el Tipo Superior) program for professional development in higher education. This program is a teaching credential that university professors must pursue according to the standards of the

Ministry of Education in Mexico. In addition, the PD gives support to full-time professors, to carry out studies in high-quality postgraduate programs, to write theses for masters and to support the implementation or development of special programs.

The second table of categories is about participant’s production as writers and researchers they were they were represented as:

Table 4: CVs categories and codes about production

Categories	Codes
National Article	NA
National Book	NB
International Book Chapter	IBC
International Article	IA
National Book Chapter	NBC
International Book	IB

Source: Personal research

For the analysis it was necessary to put both tables in to one single table in order to associate their productions with their professional development. The following figure 4 (next page) presents only one table about participants’ degrees and their academic production:

Figure 4: Final table

Years	PRODUCTION:												POSGRADUATE STUDIES:																	
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017												
Production	NA	NBC	NBC	NB	NA	NA	IBC	NA	IA	NA	NBC	NB	NA	IA	NBC	NB	NA	IA	NBC	NB	NA	IA	NBC	IB	NA	IB	NA	NB		
P1							C	C	C	C	NM-S	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
P2																														
P3																														
P4																														
P5																														
P6																														
P7																														

### **3.7 Potential Ethical Issues**

Evidence taken from participants' experiences will be provided in order to achieve the purposes of the study. For this step participants were given the details of the study and I requested participant's permission to use their information. For ethical considerations, real names were not reveal in their extracts; instead, they are referred to as follows: participant 1 (P1), participant 2 (P2), participant 3 (P3), participant 4 (P4), participant 5 (P5), participant 6 (P6) and participant 7 (P7). Finally and noteworthy to mention generalizations cannot be made from the results of the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR. DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the general interpretation of the data. So far, this study has focused on exploring whether early years experiences have an effect on professional development. The findings are organized as follows: first, a general description of participants is given; then, we start to get immersed in their narratives by seeing how emotions were represented and how some similar experiences influenced participants' decision making; after this, we explore their today's perspective about teaching, learning and life philosophies; finally, it is reviewed participants' agency and visionary professional development. The CVs were also analyzed in order to gather information about their professional progress; it was gathered information about schooling, publications and other products of their academic lives.

This chapter provides the findings of the data collected. The final major phase of the research process is the data analysis and interpretation that occurred at three distinct levels and phases:

1. Compiling each participant's narrative timeline and interview transcripts;
2. Analyzing each portrayal individually in detail using my research questions; and
3. Interpreting the meanings of experiences as a whole group.

What follows is an exploration of some of their answers as well as a critical interpretation of them. The excerpts are presented in a different format to highlight the content visually. It was selected a special font type that characterizes participant's response from the interviews and the timeline. In addition, it is bolded important phrases and sentences to draw attention to significant thoughts, feelings, qualities, and events. All the excerpts have subtitles to know where they were

they taken from (interviews or timeline). Having kept these guidelines in mind, the following sections present the account of the process with the analysis and interpretation of the data.

#### 4.1 Participant's information

Participants start the interview by introducing themselves and their background contexts. So far, now all of participants are university teachers working for public institutions. They have been language teachers for more than 10 years and all of them are working in public language faculties placed in different parts of the country (UQROO, UNACH, UABC and BUAP). One of the most important characteristics is that all of them have finished a Master and PhD in the area of language education and they are currently living in Mexico.

Going to more precise data, evidence reports that 5 participants come from rural areas and 2 of them from urban places. The five participants who lived in rural areas moved at some point in their lives to urban places to continue their academic development. We could start thinking that this early independence was a factor for later development since it is typically incorporate the assumption that independence and autonomy is essential for development (Dunn 1988).

In all the 7 cases their families belong to the “working class”. This is, they went through economic struggles more than once, maybe unemployment but never homelessness. Except for one who mentioned they were very poor:

Excerpt 1

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*Participant's socioeconomic status*

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“Éramos realmente **muy pobres muy muy pobres** entonces ellos [padres] lo veían como que el que estudia tiene mayores oportunidades de salir adelante.” [Line 34; #P4]

Translation in English: “We were **very poor, very very poor**, so they [parents] saw it [to study] as the opportunity someone has to get ahead.” [Line 34; #P4]

In the majority of the cases their parents' jobs were more physically taxing, and in some cases quite dangerous. The following excerpt arrives the socio-economical context, parents' education and our next point "participants as first generation":

Excerpt 2

*Participant's information*

**"My parents, they had elementary school level [...] My mother was a cook, she worked in a Spanish restaurant and my dad worked for PEMEX in exploration and production in platforms by the sea".** [Line 22; #P2].

Data also reported that the 7 participants are first PhD generation and in some cases the first in pursue university studies. According to Riggs, (2014) many first-generation students struggle socially when they arrive on a college campus only to find that they have trouble identifying with their wealthier peers, or they feel a distinct "otherness" that they didn't experience before. Others adjust socially but find themselves paying for their education for the first time in their lives. Fortunately participants' parents were supporters of education in general:

Excerpt 3

*First generation in getting a degree*

**"En mi familia yo soy la primer persona en tener, o sea en mi familia inmediata tener educación universitaria."** [Line 2; #P3]

Translation in English: **" In my family I am the first person to have, in my immediate family to have a university education."** [Line 2; #P3]

It is perhaps from the moment they moved to another place that they started gaining independence and started developing a sense of adult self-agency. As they gained parental independence they stopped doing what their parents wanted and started seeing for themselves. It is seen through the narratives that participants **became intrinsically moved by their own desire to achieve goals**. This sense according to Brown (2014) is when we feel in control of things that happen around us; when we feel that we can influence events. This is, so far, seeing these excerpts,

we can conclude this and this will varies as individuals and their social environment interact and permeates them.

## 4.2 Emotions in participants' narratives

The participants were asked about crucial moments in their school life and they provided different types of experiences, some of them were described in detail and some others were slightly mentioned. In order to summarize the data, it was opted for categorizing it in significant moments where participants experienced similar emotions. The findings indicate what Johnson & Worden stated in 2014, that emotional experiences associated with their schooling histories play a crucial role participants' live. However, these emotional experiences were not enough to make decisions for the PhD instead, their decisions were immediate reactions to those moments.

Struggling moments throughout narratives not only showed participant' traces of life but explained participant's poor performance at school. Thus, the struggling moments observed from the stories were: family issues, unhealthy classroom environment and teacher-student difficult relationships. The following excerpt represents **poor performance and dropping out of school** as consequences of difficult family situations.

### Excerpt 4

#### *Social environment and emotional experiences*

“Hubo una época en la secundaria donde [mis padres] tenían muchos problemas este.. pues conyugales digamos, se peleaban se estaban separando y **bajaron mis calificaciones** [...]era mucha la **tensión** de los problemas allá en casa y yo creo que hizo que eso bajaran mis calificaciones.” [Line 38; #P1]

Translation in English: “There was a time in high school when [my parents] had a lot of problems in their marriage, they were separating and my **grades went down** [...] there was a lot of **stress** from the problems back home and I think that made that my notes declined” [Line 38; #P1]

#### Excerpt 5

##### *Social environment and emotional experiences*

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“En secundaria y prepa **mi rendimiento bajó**, y en prepa también un poco, [...] **viví situaciones familiares muy difíciles en términos económicos y también en términos de violencia familiar, fueron épocas sumamente traumáticas**” [Line 15; #P5]

Translation in English: “In secondary and high school **my performance went down a little bit**, [...] **I experienced very difficult family situations, economical and also in terms family violence, those were extremely traumatic times.**” [Line 15; #P5]

Family issues were turning points in participants' lives and had negative repercussions in their performance at school. Some of these struggling moments were derived from the socio-economical status as the majority belonged to disadvantaged families. These emotions were socially and culturally derived and, along with cognition, they mediated learning (Swain, 2013). There is not evidence that low conditions influenced parents to be less involved in their children's schooling.

Concerning **unhealthy classroom environment and teacher-student difficult relationships**, participants pointed out frustration and sadness as emotions in common. The resulting frustrations can negatively affect the level and quality of the effort put into learning; Generally speaking, the absence of positive emotions like happiness, relief and satisfaction results in disappointment (Wegner, Strehlke & Weber, 2014). Nevertheless, in only one of the cases, far from discouraging this participant, those experiences strengthen his determination to continue studying.

#### Excerpt 6

##### *First generation in getting a degree*

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“Cuando yo estudié la universidad yo iba por estudiar inglés [...] **la experiencia fue muy traumática** [...] el maestro hablaba con ellos en inglés y a nosotros prácticamente no nos hacía caso [...] **no era la situación de aprendizaje más adecuada y yo me sentía muy mal.**” [línea 40; #P1]

Translation in English: When I studied at the university, I went to study English [...] and **the experience was very traumatic** [...] the teacher spoke with my classmates in English and he practically ignored us [...] **it was not the most appropriate learning environment and I felt very bad.**" [línea 40; #P1]

Research proved emotions have a definite effect on cognitive processes like taking in, selecting, processing and retrieving information, up to the point of completely changing and blocking ways of thinking (Edlinger & Hascher, 2008).

In what respects to the positive emotions, the common answer amongst interviewees were **enrolling new activities** and **being recognized**. After these types of experiences, participants seemed to receive a dose of motivation that makes them feel excited and happy. The more mentioned experiences for enrolling new activities was starting new academic programs. The participants were willing to learn new things and were enthusiastic about joining new courses like a PhD degree and learning a new language:

Excerpt 7

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*Enrolling new academic programs*

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“I applied to my PhD studies in the university whose linguistics department is yearly ranking among the first three in the UK. **I got accepted in the same very week of the application that made me quite happy**”. [Timeline; #P6]

Excerpt 8

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*Learning new languages*

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“When I started to learn English, **I was really thrilled**. I liked music, pop music and rock in particular; music was one of the **motivational** forces that drove me to learn English initially”. [Timeline; #P3]

Indeed, this has to do with self-agency as participant’s motivation is fed. According to Brown (2014, 104) “*agency and motivation are closely intertwined; it is difficult to conceive of the former without referring to the latter and from many points of view the two must co-exist*”. Interestingly, motivation has been identified as one of the key factors that determine learner success (Brown, 2014).

Participants were asked about crucial moments in their professional development. Curiously, being awarded and being recognized were considered relevant and supportive for the participants. From my personal viewpoint, this was an unexpected result and it appeared in many

of their stories. It is also important to mention that since a very early age some participants were gifted students who went through great success experiences.

Excerpt 9

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*Receiving recognition*

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“Cuando estaba en sexto de primaria hace este concurso nacional, bueno yo **saqué primer lugar en el estado, y viajé a conocer al presidente** Miguel de la Madrid.” [Line 13; #P5]

Translation in English: “When I was in the sixth grade of elementary school there was this national contest, well **I won the first place in the state, and I traveled to meet the president of Mexico** Miguel de la Madrid.” [Line 13; #P5]

Excerpt 10

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*Academic merit*

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“Yo tenía mi medalla **de mérito académico** [...] cuando yo llego acá yo me sentía muy este **contenta con mi licenciatura** y mi título por promedio.” [Line 67; #P1]

Translation in English: “I had **my academic merit medal** [...] when I arrived here I was very **happy with my degree and my degree**” [Line 67; # P1]

These rewards may provide the satisfaction that classroom tasks do not provide. “*The presence of intrinsic motivation in learning implies that an individual will work on a particular subject because he or she finds it inherently interesting or enjoyable, or because that individual enjoys the challenge that the learning process involves*” (Brown, 2014, 104). All these emotional experiences turn and transform learners and teachers not only as cognizant beings but affects them as entire human beings (Dubow, Huesmann, Boxer, Pulkkinen & Kokko, 2006). A positive emotional experience reward in and of itself and now as PhD professors they recall them as part of the process of becoming who they are.

### 4.3 Decision-making

In this section is quite remarkable participants' decision-making on their professional lives and how they decide to see life in general. The following excerpts show what has really caught my attention; this is the time constraint on decision-making (the excerpts below present a transition from university to PhD).

#### Excerpt 11

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##### *Decision-making before university*

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“I was going to study Physics, Chemistry Engineering or Maths, **hard decision, but last minute change for my favorite singer** was playing in the radio when I chose languages.” [Timeline; #P6]

#### Excerpt 12

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##### *Decision-making during university*

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“Entre las dos carreras y dije **“bueno de qué es mas posible que yo pueda vivir?” bueno pues de inglés entonces me fui sobre el inglés que era el idioma que no era el que más me gustaba [...] entonces, dejo la de francés.**” [Line 7; #P4]

Translation in English: “Between the two university careers I thought, **“which one suits me better?” Well I opted for English, which was not my favourite language [...] thus, I left French.**” [Line 7; #P4]

#### Excerpt 13

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##### *Decision-making after university*

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“El asunto es que yo decidí que debía tomar ese curso **para tener una certificación internacional y ser más competitivo laboralmente.**” [Line 29; #P5]

Translation in English: “The issue is that I decided that I should take that course **to have an international certification and be more competitive.**” [Line 29; #P5]

From these excerpts above it is remarkably visible a different level of cognition and reasoning from college to a doctoral degree. It is perhaps because as we develop we can raise more individual capacity for self-determination (Carson, 2012).

Another remarkable moment in decision-making was how they became teachers. According to the results, only one participant out of seven knew at an early age she wanted to study something related to languages. Some participants took decisions based on people around them and other few,



based on the circumstances. One of the issues that emerged from these findings is that for some of them becoming a teacher was not the first option:

Excerpt 14

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*Hard decisions*

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“No se abrió traducción entonces me quedé con docencia porque **la alternativa era darme de baja un año** y esperar a ver si el siguiente año se abría traducción pero **yo no tenía ganas de darme de baja por un año.**” [Line 29; #P5]

Translation in English: in the university, the translation career was not opened so I kept with the teaching career because **the only alternative was to quit a year and wait to see if the next year they would open the translation career but I did not want to lose a year.**” [Line 29; #P5]

Decision-making also has had to do with how they faced unfavorable circumstances. As described on previous pages decision-making could come from participants’ reaction to their emotions. It is seen from the data indicates that teachers took decisions for their own personal interest, though some of the resolutions were not easy to make and all of them required taking risks.

Excerpt 15

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*Embracing the idea*

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“No era el idioma que a mi me gustaba o sea no me encantaba, no me fascinaba pero **pues una vez que inicie mi carrera dije “lo tengo que aprender”** y lo aprendí. ” [line 29; #P4]

Translation in English: "It was not my favorite language but **once I started my career I said" I have to learn it" and I learned it.**” [line 29; #P4]

It seems that they are pleased and satisfied with their work and life now but for some participants it was not like this at the beginning. Some participants felt insecure about studying education but eventually they just decided to **embrace the idea.**

#### 4.4 Beliefs

This section addresses teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and life philosophies. Concerning beliefs about teaching and learning, the majority thinks the most important factor in learning are the **student-teacher relationship** and **how teachers teach**.

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##### Excerpt 16

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###### *Student-teacher relationship*

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“Yo creo que deben **importarles sus alumnos** eso es lo más importante porque a veces no es tanto lo que te puedan ayudar [...] pero **una palabra de aliento, que te digan tu puedes, o que te den algún libro o te den algún consejo.**” [Line 65; #P1]

Translation in English: I think they should **care about their students**, that is the most important thing because sometimes it is not that much that they can help [...] but **a word of encouragement, that they tell you “you can”, or that they give you a book or give you some advice.**” [Line 65; #P1]

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##### Excerpt 17

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###### *Student-teacher relationship*

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“Yo creo que si, **si te gusta el maestro hay posibilidad que te guste la materia o te guste más y aprendas más de ella.**” [Line 18; #P3]

Translation in English: “I think that **if you like the teacher there is a possibility that you like the subject or you learn more.**” [Line 18; #P3]

All these perspectives about teaching and learning make reference to their experiences and personal paths. The participants who felt a connection with past teachers tried to be that kind of teacher. Participants who went through difficult situations with their teachers talk about building a good environment for students. For example, in the first excerpt of this section the participant used to be an excellent student, nevertheless after having difficulties with his English teacher she quits his subject. She mentioned that his teacher had preferences with other students and this discouraged her and months later she quits the class.

Concerning life philosophies, at some point in the interviews participants addressed the issue of becoming professionals and they share some wisdom. Some of them revealed explicitly ideas and phrases about life and work. Participants made emphasis in **working on themselves first** “believe in yourself”, “be humble” and “take risks”.

Excerpt 18

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*Life philosophies*

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“If you **believe on yourself** and if you can do things you can reach it” [Line 19; #P2]

Excerpts 19

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*Life philosophies*

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“Yo creo que una de las cosas que te hace avanzar y que me hizo avanzar a mí en lo personal **es siempre tomar las oportunidades no pensarle mucho.**” [Line 7; #P4]

Translation in English: “I believe that one of the things that makes you to move forward is to **always take the opportunities and not to think it too much.**” [Line 7; #P4]

Richards (2000) mentioned that teachers have their personal philosophies or maxims these are composed of teachers’ belief systems, which involve the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning over time. Perhaps this keeps them focused, help them make decisions, inspire them or ground them.

#### **4.5 Meditational tools and influencers**

This point addresses participants’ most important influencers for achieving academic and professional goals. Is therefore essential not to lose sight of the socio-cultural understanding of learning and development that underpins this study. The most common influencer mentioned by participants was family. The possible explanation for this could be their families encouraged them all the time because as it was mentioned previously their parents belonged to the working class:

#### Excerpt 20

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##### *Extended family*

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“Había **esta tradición intelectual** en la mi familia por el hecho de que mis bisabuelos eran maestros por el hecho de que **mis tíos y tías la mayoría eran profesionistas.**” [Line 19; #P5]

Translation in English: There was **this intellectual tradition** in my family due to the fact that my great-grandparents were teachers and also **my uncles and aunts the majority were professionals.**” [Line 19; #P5]

#### Excerpt 21

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##### *Family influencer #1*

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“Una cosa importante que yo ubico en mi vida y en la vida de todas mis hermanas es que **mi papá le gustaba mucho la escuela pero por cuestiones de tipo económico no pudo seguir estudiando**, entonces como que él se quedó con esa frustración que después lo convirtió en algo positivo no? **nos inculcó mucho mucho lo de estudiar.**” [Line 28; #P1]

Translation in English: “**One important thing that I see in my life and my sisters’ lives is that my father liked school a lot but for economic reasons he could not continue studying**, so, he kept with that frustration that later turned it into something positive, right? **he encouraged us to study a lot.**” [Line 28; #P1]

The excerpt above is an undeniable proof that some attitudes are learned from home. The importance of attitudes toward learning cannot be underestimated and both teacher and pupils must examine their attitudes before learning can improve outcomes. It is well known that *“the child develops not in isolation but in the context of family, neighborhoods, community, society and public policies, thus children’s early learning and development, therefore, is a matter for the whole of society”* (French, 2007, 13). From the results, there is no clear evidence that having close family relationships ensures successful lives. Nevertheless, it seems that most of them felt some kind of familiar pressure for development.

Findings indicate that teachers were also a strong influence in participants’ development. It is important to bear in mind the possibility that teachers helped promoting a smooth or adaptive

transition during emerging adulthood. I know we have heard and experienced endless amount of stories that attest to the benefits of a strong relationship between an educator and pupil:

Excerpt 22

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*Teacher's influence*

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“Mi maestra de la prepa **me dijo si eres traductora simultánea** y vas a viajar y vas a conocer y yo “perfecto! **es lo que quiero.**” [Line 11; #P6]

Translation in English: “My teacher told me “**if you become an interpreter you will travel and know more**” and I said “**perfect! That’s what I want.**” [Line 11; #P6]

Excerpt 23

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*Teacher's influence 2*

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“Y un día apareció ese maestro era un señor ya grande yo digo que de unos 60 años y él estuvo con nosotros pues no sé tres semanas, un mes pero **él hablaba en inglés** este entonces la clase nos la daba completamente en inglés y a mí me maravillaba cómo hablaba. **Yo quiero hablar como ese señor** este y por eso decidí estudiar la carrera de lengua inglesa.” [Line 49; #P1]

Translation in English: “And one day, this teacher appeared, it was an old man about 60 years. He stayed with us three week, a month but **he spoke in English** and the whole class was in English, I loved it. I thought **I want to talk like him** and I decided from that moment to study the B.A. in English.” [Line 49; #P1]

The virtues mentioned by participants were about the teacher’s **personality** and teacher’s **knowledge**. Regarding teacher’s personality the participants pointed out that to establish a connection and to have a good relationship were important aspects these aspects seemed to be meaningful and memorable for them.

There are other virtues and characteristics that participants perhaps acquired from their teachers:

Excerpt 24

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*Teachers' qualities*

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She **taught me to be professional and well-organized language teacher**. She is always there when I need a piece of advice. So, **she is a good role model to follow as a teacher. I want to be like her.** [Timeline; #P2]

To sum up, most of the virtues mentioned were about personality. Having a good relationship with teachers and students seemed to be meaningful and memorable for them. Relationships generate mutual satisfaction and success by contributing to teachers' and students' experiences of relatedness to their social partners in the classroom, to their competence as teachers and learners, and to ownership of the goals of creating a caring learning community dedicated to important academic work (Richards & Singh, 2006). Social, cultural and historical factors influence psychological formation, so pedagogy is a social practice of great importance for the developing processes (Hargraves, 2011).

#### 4.6 Agency or visionary professional development

Concerning agency and visionary professional development, data reports that from very early age five participants were interested in being the outstanding students. This could be related with self-agency awakening:

Excerpt 25

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*Brilliant student*

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“Fui **siempre** una alumna **destacada** fui muy buena estudiante, **saqué muy buenas notas, gané concursos.**” [Timeline; #P1]

Translation in English: I was always a **worthy** student, **I was a very good student, I had got good grades, I won contests.**” [Timeline; #P1]

Excerpt 26

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Competitiveness

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“En la primaria **era muy competitiva** [...] **no sé si esto influyó a que yo fuera estricta esperando los resultados de mis hijas.**” [Line 14; #P3]

Translation in English: “In the primary **I was very competitive** [...] **I do not know if this influenced on how I was with my daughters and their academic results**”

The excerpts report high levels of competitiveness and determination. The competitive attitude is usually associated to individualistic ambitions, which in language teaching can appear at first sight as something negative. However, the competitive attitude in professional development it is more associated with self-agency whereas cooperative strategies could be more associated with social-agency where peers work together on a learning task, with the goal of all participants benefiting from the interaction (Singh & Richards, 2006).

As they developed they started to consolidate their social roles and through university participant's sense of agency was more conscious of doing things for themselves and for their own good (Carson, 2012). Some of these decisions to improve were: **taking courses, going abroad and working while studying.**

Excerpt 27

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*Investing for the future*

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**“I invested a lot of money attending workshops and seminars abroad.”**  
[Timeline; #P2]

Excerpt 28

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*Teacher's agency*

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**“Hoy día no me concibo sin investigar sin escribir, sin publicar no? Esa es mi vida ahora y me gusta muchísimo.”** [Line 67; #P1]

Translation in English: **“So far I don't see myself without doing research, without publishing, this is my life now and I like it a lot.”** [Line 67; #P1]

It is very interesting how as participants grew they became more able to explore their world independently (Brown, 2014). It is perceived from the excerpts what Carson (2012) mentioned in his works: as participants develop they raise more individual capacity for self-awareness and self-determination.

These seven PhD professors did not succeed all time. Now they remember their struggling moments as sad experiences that were hard at the moment but as natural part of life in which they learnt and changed. In this first part of it is addressed the participants' challenges at school.

Part of being humans is that we fail and we overcome. It is not the exception that hundreds of teachers have flunked once or twice and this does not mean a life full of misfortunes. One of our participants failed in learning a language until he got in a relationship with a native speaker and then he succeeded. Another participant could not enroll a master program in a very well recognized and prestigious university, but he could join another one in the end.

Excerpt 29

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*Participants' opportunities*

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“Well [...] if you want to be in the program you have to be supported by a professor, your research have to be supported by a professor, **my research advisor got sick and she got breast cancer** [...] she told me “**I will not be available for more than a year** [...]” **I was sort of disappointed.**” [Line 31; #P2]

To sum up, critical circumstances in agency seemed to have a significant impact on speeding up the process of teachers' self-growth (Bukor, 2011). Thus, at this point, and after many years of studying these PhD teachers are very conscious of what they want. Even though in some cases there is institutional pressure. As professionals, as their acts are now dedicated to improve their work environment and shape others experiences and life trajectories.

#### 4.7 CVs Analysis

Even at this point of the analysis this study has drawn on a qualitative methodology since its main concern was to interpret the participant's experience and professional development. Though in qualitative analysis there are no set rules (Russell, 2015). Hence, in this research study the information about academic production was transcribed into a table and sorted into color



categories (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006). This new way of classifying the qualitative data showed evidence indeed, of the different degrees of development experienced during and after the having a degree. All tables are arranged by years taking into account the very first production among all the participants. This was a national article (NA) published 2000 by the participant 6 (P6). Each of the participants was assigned a code (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7) and is presented on the left side of all the tables.

Throughout this section there is an important element to consider, and is how graduating from a master's and PhD program had affected the participants' professional development. The following segment starts by giving important information about participants. Then it is addressed and discussed two main issues: 1) the degrees obtained and 2) their academic productions.

#### **4.7.1 Participants**

Six out of seven PhD teachers have PRODEP (Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente, para el Tipo Superior), program for professional development in higher education. The PRODEP is program stated in 1996 and mainly seeks to professionalize the full time professors so they can reach the capacities of teach-research, technological development and innovation. Its purpose is to have a social responsibility, articulate and consolidate in academic bodies that thereby will generate new academic communities capable of transforming its environment. This indicator is important as it determines the desirable profile of teachers in higher education dependence.

Four of the professors belong to the SNI (Sistema Nacional de Investigadores) National system of researchers. The purpose of the SNI is to promote and strengthen, through evaluation the quality of scientific and technological research that occurs in Mexico.

The following table represents what was previously mentioned. Six out of seven have PRODEP (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7) highlighted in a red square. Four of them are SNI teachers (P3, P5, P6 and P7). Thus, only four belong to both programs (P3, P5, P6 and P7). One of the participants has not yet joined to any of those programs (P1). These are represented in the table like:

Figure 5: Participants' information

PARTICIPANTS:																						
Sistema Nacional de Investigadores:		[Yellow Box]																				
Perfil Deseable Prodep:		[Grey Box]																				
Collaboration with other authors		C																				
Years	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010											
Production	NA	NBC	NBC	NB	NA	NB	NA	NA	IBC	NA	IA	NBC	NA	IA	NA	NBC	NB	NA	IA	NBC	N	
P1																						
P2																						
P3																						
P4																						
P5																						
P6																						
P7																						

From figure 3, we can appreciate also with a “C” the years when participants did collaborations with other teachers. The collaborations that were taken into account were the ones in their CVs.

In this section, it was observed that participants start to collaborate after or few years after they finish the masters. Noteworthy to mention that there are years when they do not produce with someone else. Nevertheless they do not stop producing, in the next following years they retake this activity and continue with collaborative work. According to the OECD (2009), constant professional development opens new opportunities for teaching practices and also more opportunities to co-operate with other teachers.

#### 4.7.2 Degrees obtained

Concerning the participants' degrees and scholarships, only 6 participants studied a master supported with scholarships and only one without financial support:

Excerpt 30

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*Scholarship*

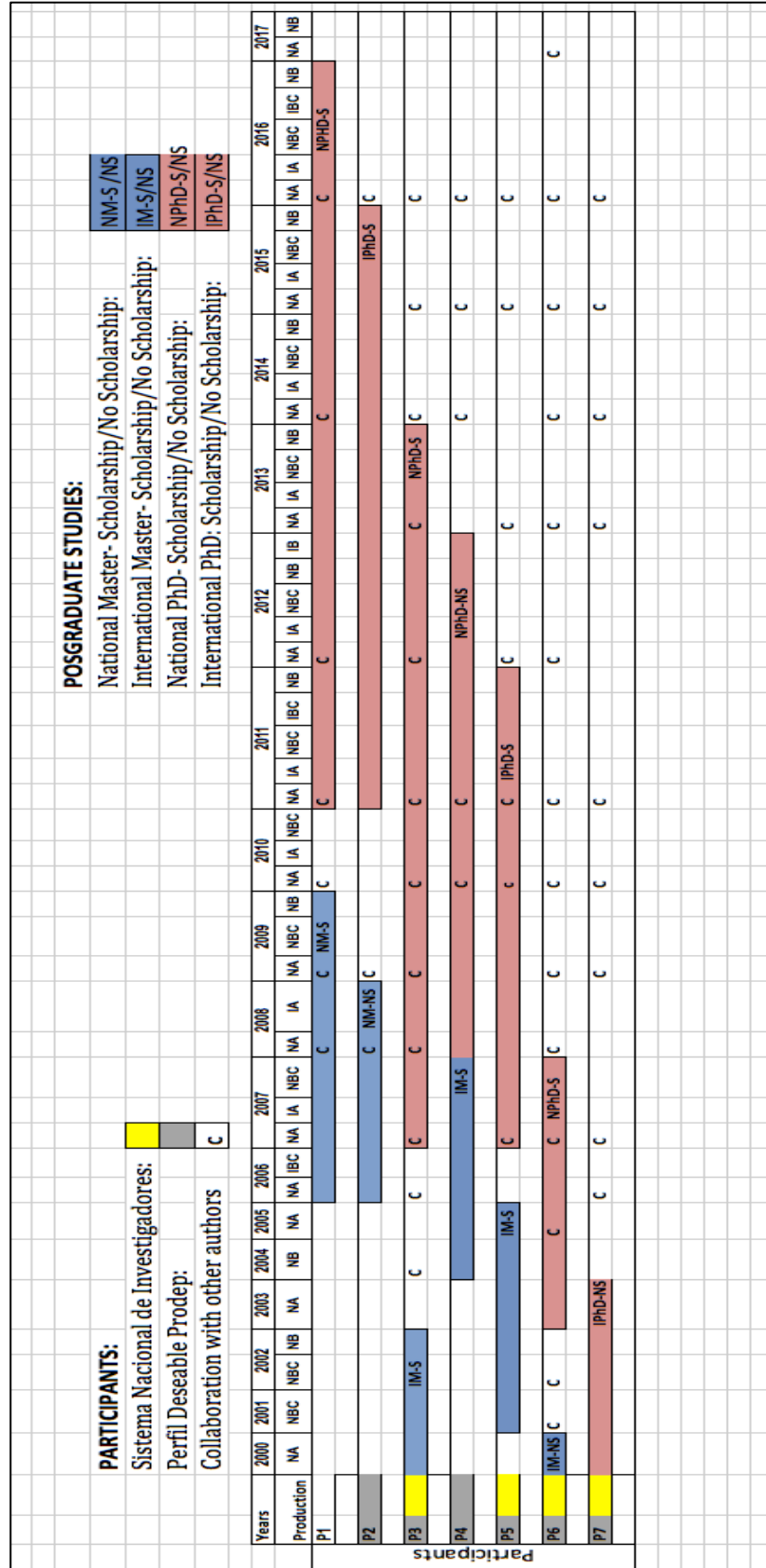
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**I got the scholarship** to study my **MA at the UDLAP**, it opened lots of opportunities of internationalization. [Timeline; #P6]

Four masters were international masters. Two national masters and another one that was considered international as it was studied abroad but in the participant's country of origin, Check Republic. This participant's M.A. and PhD, both studies were not financially supported. The following figure (next page) shows participants' information about their masters (blue bar) and their PhDs (red bar).

It can be understood from the data (in figure 6) that all participants did not wait more than 1 or 2 years to start a PhD. The first participant in finishing his PhD is participant 7 (P7) in 2003 and the last one (P1) in 2016. Four of these seven PhDs were done in Mexico and the other three abroad. From this 7 PhDs, five of them were supported by scholarships whereas the other remaining two were not.

Figure 6: participants' degrees and collaboration



Teachers decided to go for a PhD for many reasons, but not precisely because of their early school experiences or self-agency. Here, it observed the institutional pressure (social-agency) and their own desire to continue developing (self-agency). Some authors (Oliver, 1997; Garud et al., 2007) have addressed institutional regulations as agency too. To participate and to have an active role keep agency awake and avoids resistance to change.

Their answers were classified in two main truths: 1) Institutional pressure and 2) Self-pressure:

Excerpt 31

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1) *Institutional pressure*

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“El grado de habilitación máxima que es el doctorado pues es lo deseable, entonces primero logras tu maestría y pues ya **estando en el ámbito académico lo obvio hoy en día es tener el doctorado** [...] No era así mucho de que dijeras ay! es que necesito estudiar más, necesito ser investigadora, no! **es que la institución necesitaba que yo hiciera eso o sea más bien fue una presión institucional.**”  
[Line 35; #P4]

Translation in English: The degree of maximum qualification that is the PhD, **you first achieve your master and then the obvious thing nowadays is to have the PhD** then, it was not about the need to study more, or the need to be a researcher, no! **It's that the institution needed me to do that; it was more an institutional pressure.** "[Line 35; # P4]

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“Cuando yo llego aquí a la universidad yo tengo licenciatura pero licenciatura **ya no era nada la verdad** como voy a conservar mi trabajo y **como voy a hacer que la gente de la universidad piense que soy valiosa** pues haciendo lo que se necesita entonces **por eso hice la maestría por lo del perfil deseable.**” [Line 67; #P1]

Translation in English: When I came to university, I had a bachelor's degree but **it was nothing**, I thought how am I going to keep my job? and how I'm going to make **the people of the university think I'm a worthy teacher?** well doing what was needed then. **That's why I did my master, because of the desirable profile.** [Line 67; #P1]

Most teachers have to constantly adapt to their new conditions (Oliver, 1997). Becoming part with an institution represented for these participants reorganizing their schedules, designing

courses, to meet the institutional needs and engage in continuing education programs. According to their responses this represented also get a degree as the “desirable profile” required.

Excerpt 32

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2) *Self pressure*

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“No estaba seguro si quería continuar con el doctorado o no, **por un lado sentía como que la exigencia intelectual** y el esfuerzo que aplicaba era muy grande y no estaba seguro y por otro lado pues **me seguía llamando la atención aprender más.**” [Line 35; #P5]

Translation in English: “I was not sure if I wanted to continue with my PhD or not, on the one hand I felt like the intellectual demand and the effort was too much and I was not sure and on the other hand, I still wanted to learn more.” [Line 35; # P5]

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“Yo creo que es como que si **tuvieras algún motor interno que te empuja a lograr esas cosas** y yo siento que es más como satisfacción personal como una necesidad que hace que quieras saber más, quiero como ser como **mejor persona**, quiero aprender más cosas, de hecho en cada grado que he terminado sentía “ahora si! en serio tengo que empezar a estudiar porque **entre más hacía, más me daba cuenta de cuanto me hace falta.**” [Line 28; #P3]

Translation in English: “I think it's like if you had an internal engine that pushes you to achieve those things. I feel that it is more like personal satisfaction, like a need that makes you want to know more, I want to learn more things and I want to be like a better person. Every time I finish something feel like I really have to start studying now because the more I learnt, the more I become aware of how much I need. ”[Line 28; # P3]

In some cases it was participant’s self-agency pushing them to continue with their professional development. The sense of self-agency is essential for them to feel in control of their lives (Calvert, 2016). In most of these cases it was the institutional pressure that kept them more engaged to the professional development. The term institutional pressure was taken from the interviews as an in-vivo code. Participants referred to institutional pressure to those stated or implicit normatives and codes of conduct in universities that affect significantly in teacher decisions.

### **4.7.3 Participant's academic production**

Concerning their production, the data was arranged in a different table in order to give more specific information. In this study academic production are the activities in their profession, including teaching, researching, coordinating, publishing, presenting, developing curricula, designing materials and supervising thesis projects. Nevertheless there were not considered all of them in the table, the data showed in the table belongs to the information in their CVs (national article (NA), national book (NB), international book chapter IBC, international article IA, national book chapter NBC, international book IB).

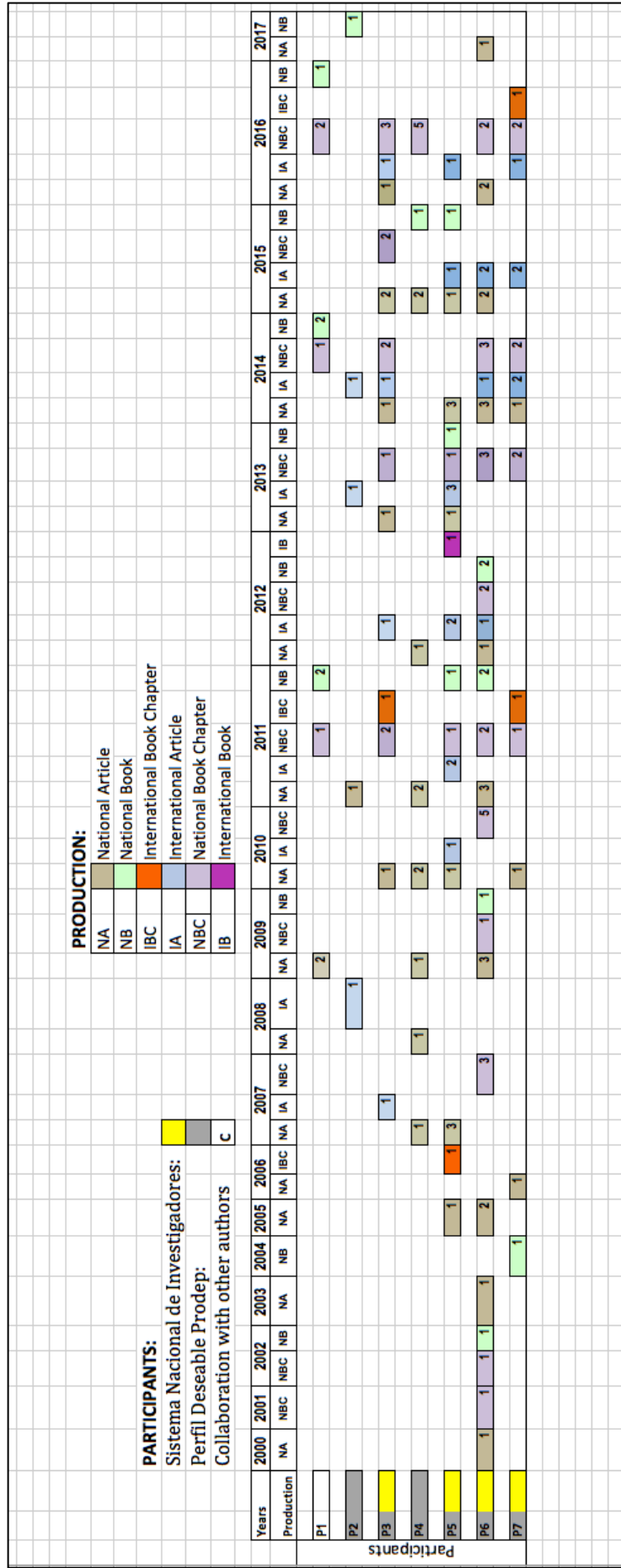
The findings in participants' CVs are the following: Some participants (two) started to write books after concluding a master degree and four of them when finishing a PhD. Only one participant has not written a book yet.

The years with more production were between 2009 and 2016, these were the years when the majority of them was studying or finishing their PhD degrees. An unexpected finding was to see that as time went by participants got involved and continue working in academic activities even if they finished their PhDs since long ago.

By far the greatest amount of academic production is on national articles, followed by national book chapters. There is a low academic production on international book chapters and international books; this is maybe due to the lack of collaborations with authors abroad.

From this section it can be concluded that academic production is clear evidence of participants' interest and participants' development. In the Mexican English language teaching community becoming an author has recently turned into an indicator of development in the profession (Ojeda, 2012). The purpose of the next figure (figure 7 below) is to show the years when participants were more active in writing and publishing:

Figure 7: Participants' production





## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

Results confirmed that teacher identity is deeply embedded in one's personal biography and generalizations cannot be made. The findings and analysis indicate that emotions seem to influence their decisions at every stage in their lives. The results obtained corroborate a connection between negative emotions due to difficult situations and students' struggle at school. Their beliefs about becoming "good/recognized/ professionals" in teaching were mostly evident at all stages.

Interestingly primary, secondary and preparatory stages influence university but not PhD decision making. It is from university and later years that participants become aware of what could be their next steps. The desire of getting a degree is mostly emphasized in university and later years.

The following part of the discussion will address the main findings and it will give answer to the three research questions posed before in chapter 1:

### **5.1 Summary of the findings**

In general, the findings from this investigation suggest that it is perhaps from the moment when participants move to another place that they start to gain independence and also they start to develop a conscious self-agency. This is the beginning of being intrinsically moved by their own desire to achieve professional goals.

Concerning participants' emotions, it was observed that early school emotional experiences were not enough to make decisions for the PhD instead, those decisions were immediate reactions to those moments. As time went by, a different level of cognition and reasoning is perceived in their processes to decide from university to the PhD. The struggling moments observed from the stories were: family issues, unhealthy classroom environment and teacher-student difficult relationships.

Concerning participants' beliefs about teaching and learning the majority thought that the most important factors in the learning process were: student-teacher relationships and how teachers teach the knowledge. In regards to their beliefs and life philosophies, when addressing the issue of becoming professionals, participants emphasized on working on themselves first and made statements like "believe in yourself", "be humble" and "take risks".

In regards to influencers, there was no clear evidence that having close family relationships ensure successful lives. Findings indicated that most of the attitudes towards schooling were learned at home but teachers had also a very strong influence on participants' development and in some cases decision-making. Surprisingly, for participants having a good relationship with teachers seemed to be meaningful and memorable for them.

It was a fact that the majority of participants felt some kind of familiar pressure for development. An example could be that their parents, grandparents, uncles and etc. encouraged them to go to school or that brothers and sisters went to the school and all these kinds of situations made participants feel the responsibility to finish university.

Concerning agency and visionary professional development, data reports that from very early ages participants were interested in being the outstanding students from their classrooms. Five of these seven participants showed strong levels of competitiveness and in matters of development, this competitive attitude could be associated with self-agency whereas cooperative strategies could be associated with social-agency. All participants started to collaborate with other professors in academic productions after or few years after they finish the masters. At the end, teachers decided to go for a PhD for many reasons, but not precisely because of their early school experiences but because of the institutional pressure and self-pressure.

## **5.2 Experiences in school years that were crucial to develop professionally and obtain a PhD degree**

There were crucial moments like family issues, classroom environment and teacher-student relationships that explained participants' early poor performance at school. Being awarded on the other hand turned into supportive for students to move on. Nevertheless none of these experiences were enough to make early decisions to study a PhD. Instead, it seemed to be that their decisions to get a PhD degree were triggered by the momentum and pushed by institutional pressure and self-pressure.

## **5.3 Experiences that shaped language teacher's beliefs, teaching practices and identities**

From the findings it was observed that it is possible that growing up in difficult conditions could raise in participants a sense of overcoming, or in other words it could raise in participants the desire to finish their studies and to stand solidly on their own feet. From a sociocultural perspective the relationship of the individual to her or his social environment and generally carries it into future practices (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, it is not merely what teachers saw and did as learners that influences their thinking about teaching and learning but the emotional experiences associated with their schooling histories that play a central role in understanding teaching activity (Johnson & Worden, 2014). Some experiences had more long lasting repercussions than others. As we develop we cannot avoid what we have been through as learners. These past experiences add meaning to our perspective of teaching (Singh & Richards, 2006, 17). In the first place, the experiences that permeated participants' beliefs about teaching and learning and teaching practices were their previous teachers. They influenced in their perceptions of teaching and learning and

their educational philosophies and pedagogical choices. Noteworthy to mention that the factors participants considered the most relevant were how teachers teach and the relationship student-teacher. The identities were influenced and changed all the time, it was observed from the narratives that family had stronger influence in participants' lives and it permeated in their commitment, determination and career choice. As mentioned by Burke (1987) there were positive and negative teaching models, as well as by other previous meaningful processes such as personal determining factors, family determining, factors institutional factors, contextual factors and social factors

#### **5.4 Pedagogical implications can be suggested for teachers education programs at postgraduate level**

During this study it was seen interesting amount of data on teachers' development and experiences was collected and analyzed. One of the purposes of this study was to contribute and encourage others on the study of professional development in Mexico. Peculiarly, this information opens space to reflect on some issues considered to be important in the design and development of teachers' programs.

In the first place, sharing this information could be useful for those authorities and teachers educators in charge of planning training courses for teachers. This study suggests content areas that address issues such as agency for professional development. Collaboration in postgraduate programs even in undergraduate should be at the core of the curriculum. Working in collaboration on classroom tasks offers many benefits. *“Teachers who undertake professional development undertake a wider array of teaching practices and are more likely to co-operate with other teachers”* (OECD, 2009, 88).

Secondly, the implications also had to do primarily with teachers and their development. There are number of reasons to pursue a PhD, not only “institutional pressure”. The term institutional pressure was taken from the interviews as an in-vivo code. In other words, this type of code means that words or terms used by the interviewees are so remarkable that they should be taken as codes. By institutional pressure they referred to the stated or implicit normatives and codes of conduct in universities that affect significantly in teacher decisions-making. In this study, it is suggested to consider other important reasons that could be the driving force to continue developing.

This research also wants to emphasize in participants’ responsibility to continue their own development after the PhD. In this case it was very interesting to see that after studying the PhD participants got involved in activities related with production of books and articles.

### **5.5 Limitations of the study**

This research presented some limitations with regards to the logistics of the study. There were few participants willing to collaborate. This study has three participants that belong to the same institution; the idea at the beginning was to have many professors from different institutions. Another aspect was having more females than males, it would have been even better if the number of females and males had been the same. At the beginning it was planned to have 10 participants but three of them did not answer. Finally, it was sometimes difficult to agree on a date with very busy teachers.

## **5.6 Directions for further research**

In light of the limitations and the pedagogical implications mentioned above, it might be beneficial to carry out a similar study having a bigger sample and involving the other areas of the professional development.

In order to enrich this study, the collection of more data is needed. Another area of possible research would be the transition of teachers from university to the real work world. Another seemingly fruitful area of research would be exploring on how teachers see themselves in the next years and what other activities would they like to achieve. Finally another line of research might be the analysis of detailed stories said in the classroom about teachers and teachers' reactions to those experiences.

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