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Bejarano Sánchez, Granada; Weise, Crista, dir. The power of teachers' identity towards the resolution of critical incidents. Primary and secondary educational backgrounds. 2017. 29 pag. (1140 Grau en Educació Primària)

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The power of teachers' identity towards the resolution of critical incidents

Primary and secondary educational backgrounds

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Grau Mestre Educació Primària. Treball Final de Grau. Juny, 2017

Abstract

Working on teacher identity is fundamental to solve critical incidents (CIs) and guarantee further developments. However, teachers do not dialogue with themselves as much as they should, and incidents are sometimes put on the back burner. As yet little attention has been given to the connections between teacher identity and CIs, this study aims to delve into this dialectical connection. Moreover, it also aims to look for differences between the ways in which primary and secondary teachers might face the different CIs they may encounter. Educators from the primary and secondary field showed their main educational identity traits through a questionnaire. A collection was also gathered from the different CIs undergone during this past course, as well as the two most significant ones throughout their teaching-life. Results indicated that teachers are not entirely conscious about the mental conversations implied when dealing with CIs. Hence, they do not take enough profit of their meta-representations. Furthermore, slight differences have been identified between primary and secondary fields, but these are not yet convincing evidences to establish a pattern. Therefore, this study invites the reader to reflect on the power of CIs towards to the construction and reconstruction of teachers' identity by providing an experience-based view.

Key words: *TI (Teacher identity), dialogical, CIs (Critical Incidents), meta-representations.*

Introduction

During the past decade, the study of the teacher's identity as well as the CI (Critical Incidents) developed within the school context, has become of increasing interest to researchers and specialists in the Education's pedagogy.

Teachers, who were yet to be labelled with a profile or facet, need to be much more flexible in terms of identity. According to Monereo and Monte (2011), teachers should construct a new version of oneself each time that a new or concrete context requires it; that is why teachers should be always in a "transitional state". There exist many articles and excerpts that have dealt with the need of adapting the materials and the environment, or scaffolding the students in order to meet their needs. Since firstly Montessori (1912) and later on Vygotsky (1978) launched their revolutionary theories which marked a before and an after in the history of education, many pedagogues, educators and psychologists among other experts have been publishing and reinforcing on that issues. Montessori's methodology, which "is based on the belief that children learn at their own pace through manipulation of objects" (Lopata, Wallace, & Finn, 2005 cited in Holfester, 2008, p.1), provided the worldwide educative system with an ineffaceable effect on the curriculum. On the other hand, Vygotsky's ideas about the shared construction of meaning, had also caused a great impact on the pedagogical approach, in which interactions are seen as fundamental within the learning process in order to learn and develop cognition.

However, despite having collected infinite articles, which have been demanding during a century and with complete reason the flexibility of resources, materials and practices, few have reflected about the need of training "flexibly-identified" teachers. As reported by Monereo and Monte (2011), teaching is not an innate capacity, but a talent that needs to be performed and developed during a lifelong process implying both cognitive and emotional aspects for self-regulation.

In order to foster the necessity of having strategic teachers who are compoundable by heteronyms (Monereo and Badia, 2011), a clear definition of what is understood by TI (teacher identity) must be set. According to Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000), *"the teaching identity refers to a set of teaching representations that a teacher has from himself or herself. These are steady over the time and have delimited contents"*. Yet, the teacher identity, or the auto-representations by which it is compound, comprise three dimensions:

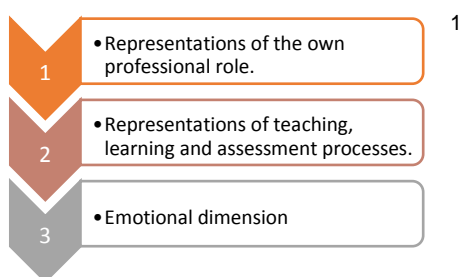


Figure 1 - Components of the Teaching Identity

According to Weise (2011), these representations are different ways of reconstructing the incidents or events in order to be able to manage them. However, all these ideas are very subjective to different variables from our cultural background in which the events arise. Considering the three dimensions suggested by Monereo and Badia (2011) and Monereo and Monte (2011), representations can be built in relation to the ways we act and teach, the way we name and describe or design objects, the ways we establish similarities and differences among others, the way in which we connect emotions to the different events undergone, etc.

All these variables should allow teachers to get the previously mentioned autorepresentations that compound their identity. Nevertheless, as stated by Weise (2011, p.34), "the more representations teachers have about a reality, the easier will be to establish relations between those representations." Moreover, some metarepresentations could be developed which will arise awareness of the self-regulation process and the selection of suitable strategies.

Before reaching the stage, let me mention Vygotsky's ideas again. He stated that language has both functions: firstly, to communicate, which appears evident to all of us, but then we should not forget its power to regulate our ideas and thought. As said by Monereo (2014), that internal language allows us to plan our actions, supervise our decisions and evaluate our ideas. This fact was developed by Bajtin and later on by Hermans, who specified that humans talked with different versions of themselves (referring back to the previously mentioned representations). What is more, humans also bring in other's voices to their internal dialogues, says Monereo (2014). This theory known as *Dialogical Self Theory* (Hermans, 2012), creates a simile between the human brain and a society, as in both take place discussions, conflicts and consensus. In other words, it bonds together self and dialogue. These two concepts have a different origination nucleus: the *self* deals reflexively about internal processes (implying only oneself) whereas the *dialogue* occurs externally implying the voices of others. Even so, their combination generates a connection so that "*the self does not*

¹ This figure has been designed following both Monereo and Badia (2011) and Monereo and Monte (2011).

have an existence separate from society but as part of the society; that is, the self becomes a 'mini-society' or, to borrow a term from Minsky (1985), a 'society of mind'" (Hermans and Gieser 2012, p. 2).

Moreover, the dialogical self can also be understood as a proactive miscellany of I-positions. These *I-positions* should be understood as conversations with oneself which occur due to the intrinsic social bounding and both variables of space and time. According to Hermans and Gieser (2012), these multiple positions allow the individual to process his or her position and be able to repose and/or counterpose if considered. However, the society that surrounds each individual yet has a power when constructing the I-positions, as these entail social relations. Following the premises of the DST (dialogical self-theory), if voice is given to these positions,

so that they can produce dialogical exchanges by negotiating, agreeing or not, questioning, etc., development in oneself identity can take place. “*As different voices, these characters exchange knowledge and information about the respective ME’s creating a complex, narratively structured self*” (Hermans and Gieser, 2012, p. 3). Those internal dialogues that take place in oneself, allow the human being to think and derive to further learning. Furthermore, Morenereo (2014), as member of the community of educational psychologists, stated that social interaction and educational dialogue between teachers and students or among students, is fundamental or key to promote a successful education and learning progress.

On the other hand, to succeed and achieve a proper dialogue between our multiple voices is contrary to an easy task. As reported by Lewis (2002), when situations decenter from common situations that children or adults have under control, a feeling of unsafety and insecurity pushes us back to mediocre self-positions in which we feel more shielded. By this, a neuroscientific model elaborated by Lewis (2002), endorses that internal dialogues are reduced when facing a destabilizing situation. Yet, individuals become “more conservative and monological than innovative and dialogical” (Hermans and Gieser, 2012, p. 11).

Therefore, these constrictions within the dialogue should arise special attention to the distinction between internal speeches and dialogue, as well as to their reciprocity. Although there has been controversy regarding the always presence of dialogue, most coincide on the idea that it truly happens when different individuals engage collective processes that trigger the creation of additional meanings (Bohm, 1998).

This study will follow DST philosophy, which “considers dialogue and monologue as two sides of the same coin” (Hermans and Gieser 2012, p. 13). We want to maintain a clear distinction between dialogue and communication, as the second term does not imply voices’ interactivity. Dialogue shall be conceived as vehicle that grants society with innovative inputs and allows cooperative problem resolution.

In order to facilitate its comprehension, we can set three levels of voices with which humans dialogue in their minds represented in the succeeding table¹:

1.	<i>Internal self-conversations.</i> Also known as <i>I-positions</i> which allow the generation of multiple dialogues by conserving their distinct developmental pathways. These situate individuals in different social spaces.
2.	<i>Internal conversations with others.</i> Voices from others are incorporated to a self, reproduced and interpreted even though being aware that these have a different belonging (e.g.: familiar people such as parents, friends, teachers, authors, fictional characters...)
3.	<i>External voices.</i> These are linked to the rules and institutional regulations of each social scenario in which we move (e.g.: home, school, work)

¹ Following both Monereo (2014) and Hermans and Gieser (2012).

Being considered a “good teacher”

As asserted by Monereo (2014), “a good teacher, when preparing his/her classes, calls upon the voices of his/her students and establishes a dialogue with them in order to decide what and how to present a specific content”.

In addition, a “good teacher” must be capable to self-reflect critically. Teachers need to evaluate their performance and may consider improving their skills, reformulating, or discarding strategies for an upcoming lesson. In agreement with Hermans and Gieser (2012), the teacher should not remain in such short-sighted level of self-reflection in which he or she only thinks about his or her position as a teacher. Thus, a higher level of self-reflection should be demanded in which the teaching position is considered within a contextualised broader diversity of positions. This will help the teacher to come ahead of time for future occurrence. Achieving a meta-position, also known as observing ego or meta-cognition, lets the teacher distance from those I-positions and provides him or her with the span’s vision between the different positions and their connections. In words of Damasio (2010), meta-positions allow “off-line thinking”, or what now would be also described as thinking outside the box.

Hence, as stated in Monereo (2014), the congruity of the voices and the level of the dialogue which is present in the teacher’s mind, will qualify his or her interventions. Then, it is key to activate the more appropriate voices in accordance to the adequacy of the context and to dialogue with them so as to learn and to provide the most possible accurate actions to the learning events.

From “good teacher” to an “CI mediator”

In order to modify and develop teachers’ beliefs and strategies, the appearance of conflicts or incidents is helpful so as to assist the teacher to reconsider and assess his or her own ways of doing.

On the other hand, according to Wise and Sánchez-Busqués (2013), establishing changes in the ways of teaching when those are not meaningful enough or not suitable enough for the context, stills one of the main issues discussed and unsolved by the educative experts. This happens mainly due to problems of decontextualisation and non-guaranteed integration between theory and practice neither its later application.

These would be explained by some scarcities in the teachers’ training in order to generate changes, as reported by Wise (2013). Therefore, studying critical incidents is both helpful to see what fails within the teaching process and to promote changes within the I-positions by bringing in new voices.

Before devolving into the topic, a definition must be given to clarify what is understood by a CI (Critical Incident). As stated in *Docentes en tránsito* by Monereo and Monte

(2012), a CI corresponds to a “problematic and destabilizing event that calls into crisis to whom is receiving it, promoting any type of reaction: protecting, defending or, in the best case, rethink owns action in order to improve it.” The CI propels the teacher to act in any sense, but to provide a response. Wise and Sànchez-Busqués (2013) add to this definition that the CI occurs in discordance with the teacher’s intentions and expectations.

CI must be interpreted in a contextualized way, as belonging to specific situations.

When analyzing CIs several aspects from the teachers’ identities arise as they are strictly linked to the decisions, strategies or emotions that teachers manifest in front of the incidents. That is what this study intends to demonstrate within its following sections and thanks to a guideline for analysis of the critical incidents, known as PANIC, which will be further exposed.

Furthermore, this study also pretends to be contributory to the idea that teachers need to be conscious of their educative actions in order to gain ability to reformulate them.

On top of that, CIs are needed to modify teachers’ identity if we really want a change within the educative practice to happen. Agreeing with Wise and Sànchez-Busqués

(2013, p.2), “the IC’s identity works as the general framework for interpretation and action”.

Following, in Figure 2, you can get to observe how CI have a fundamental role throughout the rocess of identity’s reconstruction in which the strategic selves take place (Monereo and Badia, 2011).

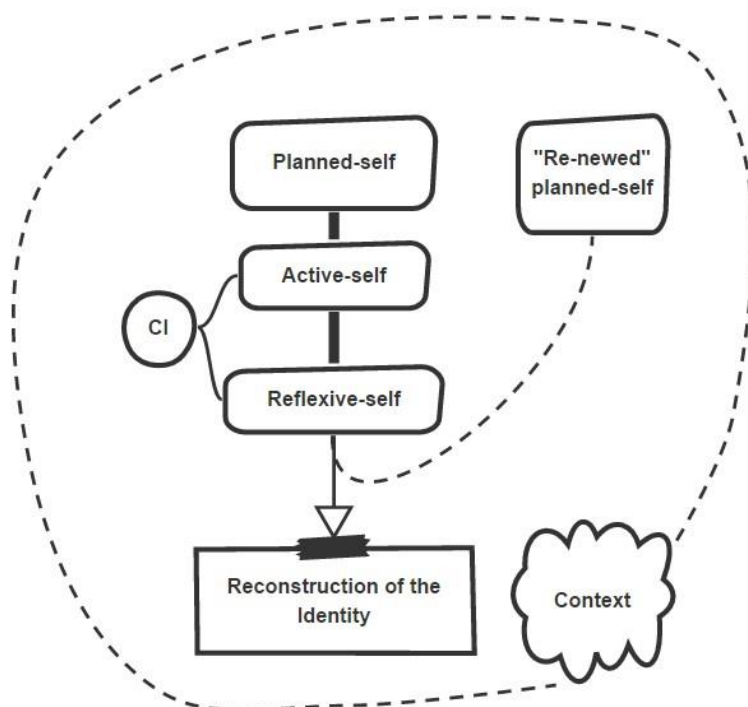


Figure 2. Strategic selves: construction and development

In consonance with the image, we should bear in mind that changing the identity of a teacher would imply reconsidering issues that he/she used to take for granted as well as active roles. This would allow a reinterpretation of the problem from other frameworks or more detached positions. Therefore, other solutions can turn up and be developed in order to stablish fruitful changes.

Additionally, Monereo and Monte (2011) stablished seven blocks as the most frequent conflict generating issues that capitalize CI occurrence. Even tough critical incidents are subjective to many variables, there exist, some “regularities” so say Monereo and Monte (2011). The following table presents the blocks so that we will use it back when analyzing the different origins from Critical Incidents.

1. Relative to the time, space and resources <u>organisation</u> .
2. Relative to <u>behavioural</u> rules.
3. Relative to the clarity and adequacy of the transmitted <u>contents</u> .
4. Relative to the teaching <u>methods</u> .
5. Relative to <u>motivation</u> .
6. Relative to <u>evaluation</u> processes.
7. Relative to <u>personal conflicts</u> that can be produced between students, parents and teachers.

On the account of the fact that CIs have different outbreaks, we must not forget that there exist different variables that shape and reshape CIs. Hence, some of these variables could be the course, the methodologies applied within classroom, the pedagogical framework of the school, the school context or the teaching experience...; just to name a few that have been considered as the most significant. However, despite some studies having gone in depth in the secondary or university field, such as Weise and Sánchez-Busqués (2013), del Mastro and Monereo (2014) or Contreras (2013) just to name a few, nor do these existing studies indicate whether the educational stage (primary or secondary) differ regarding the presence of CIs. Moreover, there are little evidences on how teachers respond differently at these incidents depending on the educative stage they belong to. Understanding how critical incidents are shaped during the different educational stages is important insofar as it may help teachers to improve assisting the learning processes of the students as well as to develop their educational identity.

In a nutshell, this study intends to demonstrate the existing significant differences between the way in which primary and secondary teachers face the different critical incidents which may occur in their classes. Furthermore, as teacher’s identity and the response or intervention

towards CIs are closely related (Contreras, 2013), the study also aims to analyse these connections. Even though presenting a non-quantifiable research, which nourishes from different expert-teaching experiences, it approaches to present the co—relations among teacher's identity as a shaper of CIs and therefore, CIs as a “consequent” shaper of teaching identity. As mentioned before, it is important to highlight the idea that it all happens in a dialectical way, which affects the learning processes of all the subjects implied in the educative context: both teachers and students.

Methods

Participants

This qualitative research has nourished from the knowledge and contributions of eight teachers, who have been the sample of this study. Four of them belong to the primary education field, whereas the other four are secondary education teachers. The subjects who participated in the investigation do not all belong to a same institution or community, but they all have been trained, experienced and developed their teaching skills within the province of Barcelona. They present different ideas and values towards teaching, which means they all have their own teaching identity which differs from the rest. Accordingly, they respond divergently to the CIs.

Moreover, they have different specializations and each one has his or her own track record. Despite most of them being experienced teachers, they have been teaching for a different amount of years and in different places, even though the public school predominates clearly.

There is to say that the research looked for a balanced number between primary and secondary teachers but, the selection of the expert subjects in each field has been considerably random; being subjective to the teachers' predisposition and willingness to participate in the study.

Added to that, a chart is provided below with the basic information from the eight subjects who participated, so as to have their main traits present throughout the study.

Each subject has been “classified” and they have been lettered up (A to D for primary; E to H for secondary) keeping the same code for the whole research so as to clarify it and facilitate the reader to stablish connections.

Primary Education teachers				Secondary Education teachers				
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Subject
Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Gender
3	35	33	11	20 primary 12 secondary	34	30	27	Years of experience
English Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-school education Public examination: Social Sciences 	English	Educational Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary specialization: maths and natural sciences. Additional training: social sciences and special education. Public examination: PE. 	Graduated in Geography & History	English philology	English philology	Specialization
Public	Public	Semi-private	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public/ Private School
Terrassa	Terrassa	Sant Cugat del Vallès	Barcelona	Sant Cugat del Vallès	Mollet del Vallès	Sant Cugat del Vallès	Sant Cugat del Vallès	School/High School's locality
	Psychology studies		Psychology studies	Primary education studies				Relevant data

Procedure

Despite the research having a confined sample, it does not limit to skim or breeze through some ideas from these teachers. On the contrary, it provides a conscientious scanning of the information with the aid of three different research tools. These tools have been created by the *SINTE-Identities*, a research group on identity and teaching strategies which pertains to the UAB (Autonomous University of Barcelona) and has Monereo, C. as the main investigator, among others. However, these have not been used literally but adapted and modified in order to meet the needs of the current study. Having said that, firstly, the participant teachers had to be subject to an interview related to their identity profile. This was divided into three dimensions or autorepresentations. The first dimension corresponds to the professional role, and teachers were asked about their functions within the school, their experiences and their paths undergone. Secondly, the next dimension contained questions about the learning and evaluation processes as well as the processes of instruction. And lastly, the interview contains a third dimension with questions that deal with the feelings that the teaching action triggers.

The interviews lasted between 20 and 50 minutes approximately, depending on each teacher and the information that he or she wanted to share. Nevertheless, before starting, the project was fully presented, with its aims and purposes. Moreover, the definition of Critical Incident that this study takes was clarified to the teachers, as well as some other key concepts. They were reinforced on the idea that it was a completely subjective interview in which all answers were valid, as there was not a right or a wrong option. All the interviews were audio-recorded and were later transcribed verbatim. The second tool used is named *Journey Plot*. It consisted of an evolutionary graph in which teachers had to indicate the CIs undergone during their last teaching period (from September 2015, including all last academic year, until April 2017, when interviews took place). Within it, teachers should mark the CIs according to the feeling that their resolutions unleashed (from -5 to 0, considering the event had a negative attribute, and from 0 to 5 considering the event entailed positive feelings). The graph came accompanied by several tables each one to be filled with each of the events pointed on the diagram. These were useful to collect the main information of the event and the feelings attached to it. Teachers could add or delete tables depending on the number of events counted. In case of not identifying any significant CI, teachers were encouraged to share their worries or problematics throughout the academic year.

³ Note that this four points were suggested by a teacher who had studied and worked as a primary teacher as well. His contributions will be marked in green in each section

Last but not least, the subjects of this study were also asked to select the two most striking CIs they could remember and to complete an exhaustive PANIC² (Guideline for the Analysis of Critical Incidents).

It should be mentioned that these two written tasks were explained and given to the teachers once the interview done. Then, a period was given for them to reflect upon the different CIs they had undergone and the ones they wanted to share (between 2 and 4 weeks). Once this done, the information was collected, organized and set ready to be deeply analysed.

Findings

As this research has dealt with different but well assorted instruments of study, the findings are multitudinous and varied.

Firstly, we got to see the different representations as teachers. Despite obtaining different answers, there is to say that mainly all of them point at compromised teachers worrying for the learning process of their students. Conceptions both from secondary and primary can be identified in the continuous chart. However, it needs to be outlined the fact that all primary teachers agreed on the point that motivation is key for the learning process to succeed. They stress on the idea that this is one of their main duties. For example, subject B states *“La motivación es fundamental para que aprendan y que participen mucho.”* Moreover, subject D also expresses it as one of her main worries: *“En la manera de fer-ho perquè ells ho entenguin i els motivi.”* On the other hand, despite secondary teachers also reflect on the importance of motivation, a couple of the subjects yet state that as a duty of the student: *“Bueno y claro todo eso depende de la motivación que tengan ellos. Si ellos tienen motivación y les gusta lo que les estas transmitiendo tendrán una actitud mucho más positiva y tal.”* (Subject F). Moreover, primary teachers also overlap the teaching of competences. For example subject B said *“Formarte como persona quiere decir: saber comportar-te, tener unos valores en la sociedad, tener ganas de aprender y de hacer las cosas bien... es fundamental.”* Subject C complements this answer by adding: *“...que aprenguin, que sàpiguen parlar amb els altres, a parlar en públic, que vagin agafant competències per sortir de allà i fer qualsevol cosa”*. By contrast, secondary teachers are a little more centred on the contents they teach. For example, Subject G, when asked about what she would like to do within her classes responds the following: *“Me gustaría enseñarles más fonética...”*; or subject H says: *“m’agradaria fer-los escriure més [...]. També m’agradaria treballar més les coses: si fem un llibre de lectura doncs treballar-lo més, buscar coses extremes...”*

² Pauta per l'Anàlisi d'Incidents Crítics

Features	Primary teachers	Secondary teachers
Good teacher qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivator • Teaching students to be people. • Generating interest among students. • Taking the best from each student. • Help the student to know him/herself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children as the center of education. • Lover of his/her profession. • A continuous learner with the intention to improve and innovate. • Empathic. • Guider. • Good relation with the students. • Know how to transmit, teach and motivate. • Without assuming you know more than them. • Provide tools so that they can learn autonomously.
Fundamental variables for the students' learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation • Good transition of the knowledge □ Reducing the amount of students. • Creating meaningful assessing tools • Strengthen the students' abilities • Work on the things the students like • Create opportunities to work on oral expression. • Work in groups. Cooperatively. • Working the habits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning actively. • Sharing knowledge. Learning between equals. • Learning through discovery. • Motivation. • Their motivation. • Being patient. • That they like the things you are explaining to them. • Teacher-student interactions. • Let them see the utility of the concepts learnt. • Combination of theory and practice. • Autonomous study.
Strategies used in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gamification • Subjective to students' predisposition • Audiovisual resources • Adapting from the book. Department meetings • End up the class in an engaging and motivating way. • Listen to the students. • Detect previous knowledge. • Working in groups through projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering what they were doing before. • Analysing their mood. • Working in groups. • Interactive method. • Having a previous planning. • Get them to be active: talk, expressing themselves. • Writing the lesson planning on the BB (black board). • Subjective to the mood of the students and the topic. • Follow the book.

Besides, as it can also be seen in the chart, different but meaningful teaching and learning strategies have been identified by both primary and secondary teachers. Despite having a wide variety, it does not exist a clear distinction between primary and secondary teachers. Nevertheless, the strategies each subject purposed let us get an idea of the different mindsets or ideologies. For example, Subject E might give the image of a more modernized teacher (*"siempre creo en lo nuevo porque me gusta innovar, siempre intento mirara cosas nuevas..."*), while Subject H might seem to have a more conservative mindset (*"...perquè les persones també necessitem una rutina i necessitem doncs fer servir el que ja sabem, no podem estar innovant tota l'estona, has d'amortitzar també el que tens."*).

³ Note that this four points were suggested by a teacher who had studied and worked as a primary teacher as well. His contributions will be marked in green in each section

Furthermore, all subjects agree that both the strategies and the planning used vary from a year or a class to another (Subject B: “*Varían porque depende de los alumnos que tengas. No todas las generaciones que te vienen son iguales*”. Subject F: “*Pero claro, estamos trabajando con personas y es inevitable. Sí que vas cambiando, cada año. [...]Esto de la enseñanza es una actividad que no puedes decir voy a hacerlo siempre igual*”). What is more, it is also a common belief that the teachers’ facet should not be unchanging but the opposite (Subject E: “*No entiendo que una persona no modifique a lo largo de su vida como docente las cosas que va haciendo.*”)

On the other hand, this research has also studied the feelings and emotions that critical incidents trigger. In order to these expose the findings, following you can find a very simplified chart containing the basic information from each of the main critical incidents analyzed with the PANIC.

Subject A

CI 1

Asperger student bites and scratches the teacher because he does not want to dance, as the teacher had ordered.

- Feeling associated: Unprepared. Surprise.
- Self-strategy: Protection.
- Failure: Because she did not know what to do.
- Strategies: Talk to the directive staff and to the family.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Facing the problem by herself.
- Precautions: Talking to the student, **anticipate** situations.
- Other agents involved: directive staff and students. Positive and supportive involvement.

CI 2

A student gets into a fight with another one and wants to through his table over the other. As the teacher invited the student to leave the classroom, he started to cry and run all the way down trying to leave the school. The teacher had to tackle the student to stop him.

- Feeling associated: Bad, impotent, unready. She wanted to cry.
- Self-strategy: Suppress the conflict.
- Failure: “Own fault” for letting the student go.
- Strategies: She is not happy at all with the ones applied.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Send the student to another class and punish both students.

- ☐ Precautions: Send a kid for another teacher. Punish both students.
- ☐ Other agents involved: Trainee teacher, another teacher and the students.
Positive and supportive involvement.

Subject B

CI 1

Student who has severe health problems (difficult diabetes and coeliac disease). She has been skipping school all over the years for that reason, as she was often in the hospital. In 6th grade she asks to join the school trip during some days but she needs to be injected four times per day (each of this times calling her parents to know the dose), besides other considerations.

- Feeling associated: Worried. Scared.
- Self-strategy: Inform myself about the illness, problems, ways of intervention.
- Failure: It did not fail.
- Strategies: Succeed. As all the steps were followed and the teacher had special caution.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): More personal resources.
- Other agents involved: The directive staff let the decision for the teacher.

CI 2

Aggressive gypsy student. He was in 5th grade but unable to write his name. His behavior was completely inappropriate (e.g.: leaving the classroom when wanted, threatening teachers).

- Feeling associated: Impotent. Lost.
- Failure: The situation improved, even though he still missing lessons.
- Strategies: Trying to integrate the student within the classroom and to teach him the basics.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): More support from the administration (personal) to solve this kind of problematic.
- Other agents involved: Non parental involvement.

Subject C

CI 1

Attitudes of students towards others.

- Feeling associated: Anger.
- Strategies: There is no only way of doing things. They can all be valid. When

	people want to act properly, then all of them are adequate.
□	<u>Precautions:</u> Each moment is unique, as well as each person. We all change and it will depend on my convictions and principles.

Subject D

CI 1

Student with less social abilities than the rest of the group. She is retaking the course. When working the feelings and affection in class, she explains that her biological father wanted to kill her when she was in her mother's belly. □ Feeling associated: Lost. Unprepared.

- Self-strategy: Support giver.
- Failure: It did not fail.
- Strategies: The global strategy worked great, as she was comfortable enough to share it.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Working on the issue more deeply.
- Precautions: Individualized meetings with the students.
- Other agents involved: The rest of the students, who felt sorry but demonstrated a supportive role.

CI 2

Student with learning difficulties. The tutor and the Special Needs teacher decide to meet his parents. The dad does not accept it and adopts a misogynous attitude towards the teachers.

- Feeling associated: Confusion. Anger.
- Self-strategy: Confront the situation being more restricted.
- Failure: Because the situation requires deep changes.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Act being more calm.
- Precautions: Support from the directive team.
- Other agents involved: Special needs teacher. She was completely blocked after listening the dad's reactions.

Subject E

CI 1

First time for the teacher substituting in a public school. The students do not respect the figure of the substitute. On the 4th day, on his way home, the students started to

criticize the teacher. It kept going on until the end of the substitution.

- Feeling associated: Failed. Down.
- Self-strategy: Avoidance.
- Failure: Due to the fact that the teacher did not look for any solution.
- Strategies: Were not appropriate as the teacher ignored the problem.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Asking help to the directive team. He did not do so as he knew the director and felt ashamed about sharing it.
- Precautions: Share it and look for support.

CI 2

Problematic student all over the year. Very bright student, especially in math. His parents had a difficult divorce. He has been bullying other students and he is always trying to show the teacher up. He is disrespectful and arrogant.

- Self-strategy: Facing the conflict and **dialoguing** with the student.
- Failure: Due to psychological problems of the student.
- Strategies: "Did not let him question my authority as a teacher". Show predisposition to help him providing extra materials and tasks for him not to get bored.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Satisfied with the ones applied

Subject F

CI 1

Student with a very complex familiar situation who has a judgement for attention to the diversity. He has a very disruptive attitude. One day a teacher comes to tell him that he is punished during the playtime. Then he starts to shout, throw furniture, hit things and cry. The other teacher leaves the room looking for the coordinator. The main teacher (our subject) tries to talk to him but is advised by the students not to do so. Finally, the coordinator takes the student and when he comes back to the class the main teacher tries to talk to him again even though he does not stop to blame another student about his punishment.

- Feeling associated: Impotent.
- Self-strategy: Try to avert the problem and diminish it. Talk to the student.
- Strategies: Send both students to mediation. In that way the problem was solved.
- Precautions: Maintaining the calmness and dialoguing later on.

CI 2

Lazy student. She does not do the homework and she does not pay attention to the class. Consequently, her marks are low but she does not agree.

The teacher is about to give the last exam and she goes to talk to him saying that she only did one of the options, she did not know that she had to complete both of them. All the students agreed that they were advised on that before the exam. She left the room angry and came back in an hour. The teacher did not say anything else but talked to her tutor.

- Feeling associated: Bad. Surprised.
- Self-strategy: Active listening to the student. Demonstrate her that she was wrong.
- Strategies: The teacher is happy with the strategies used: dialogue. Letting her reflect and clam down.

Subject G

CI 1

High complexity high school. The student was very disruptive and the teacher asked him to leave the room but he refused to do so. The teacher asks a student to look for another supportive teacher.

- Feeling associated: Bad. Angry. Tense.
- Self-strategy: Implicate this and other students to feel useful within the class.
- Failure: Doesn't say.
- Strategies: Doing concrete tasks within the classroom.

Subject H

CI 1

The teacher was on duty when she found a student full of anger in the bathroom. She had been expelled from the class. Even though the teacher tried with nice words, the student was getting even more aggressive.

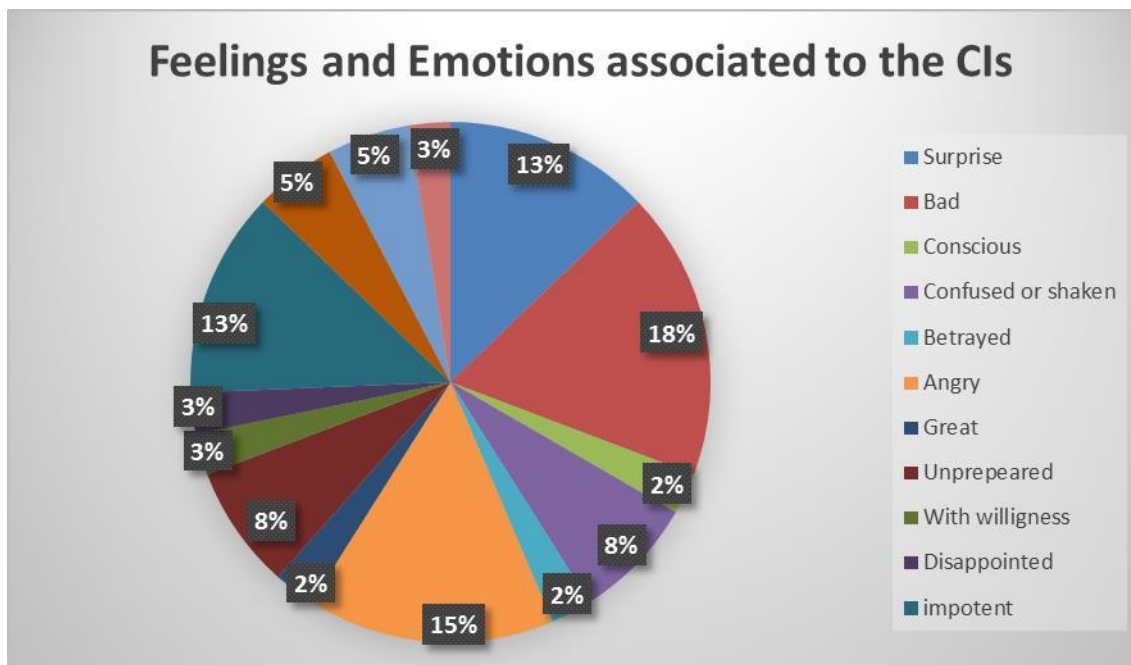
- Feeling associated: Surprised. Impotent.
- Strategies: Telling the student that she was going to call her parents.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Stablish more concrete limits.
- Precautions: Don't get the student angrier as some might bring dangerous tools.
- Other agents involved: The student. She is frustrated. She shows up violent.

CI 2

A group of students went to Ireland and stayed there with host families. Despite knowing the rules, a group of students lies to the teacher and the families and go out on their own at night time.

- Feeling associated: Anger.
- Strategies: They were punished and unable to do any other trip during the school year.
- Other possible (but not applied strategies): Expelling the leader student from the school.
- Precautions: Setting the rules in a clearer way. Being aware of the students' precedents.
- Other agents involved: ○ The students: they did not admit their faults. ○ The family who followed the protocol and acted rapidly. ○ Some families of the students did not consider it as serious.

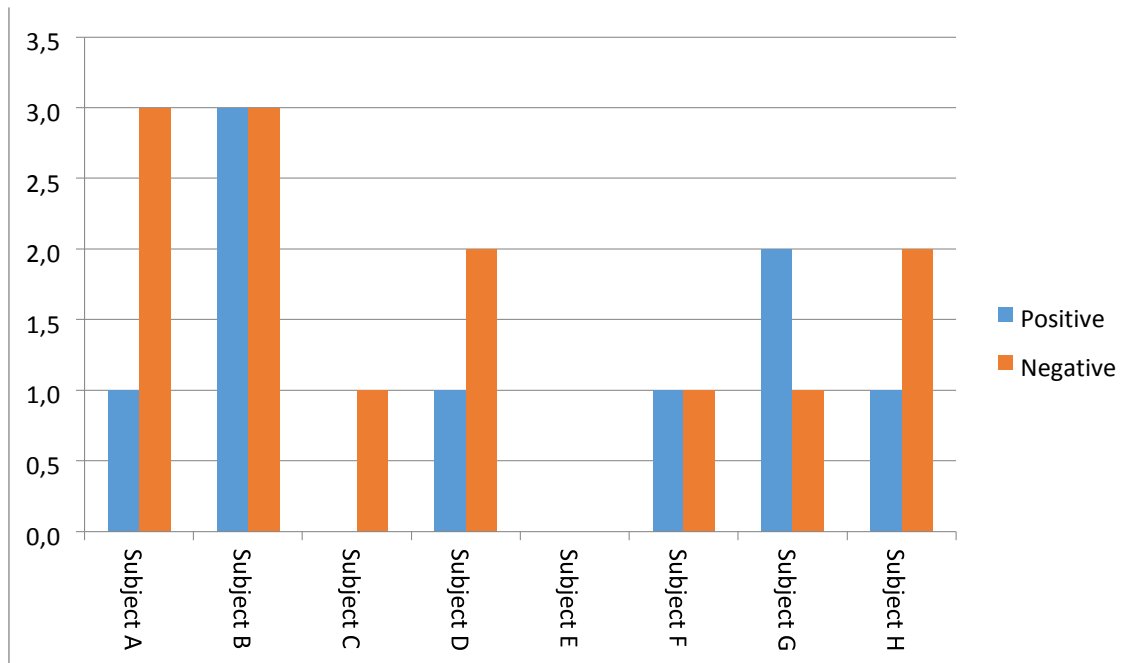
After reviewing all these incidents and the ones provided through the Journey Plot (critical incidents that took place during the last academic year), many emotions were revealed. Again, a distinction between primary and secondary was not possible as feelings were mostly dependent on other variables such as: characteristics of the event, context, other agents involved...



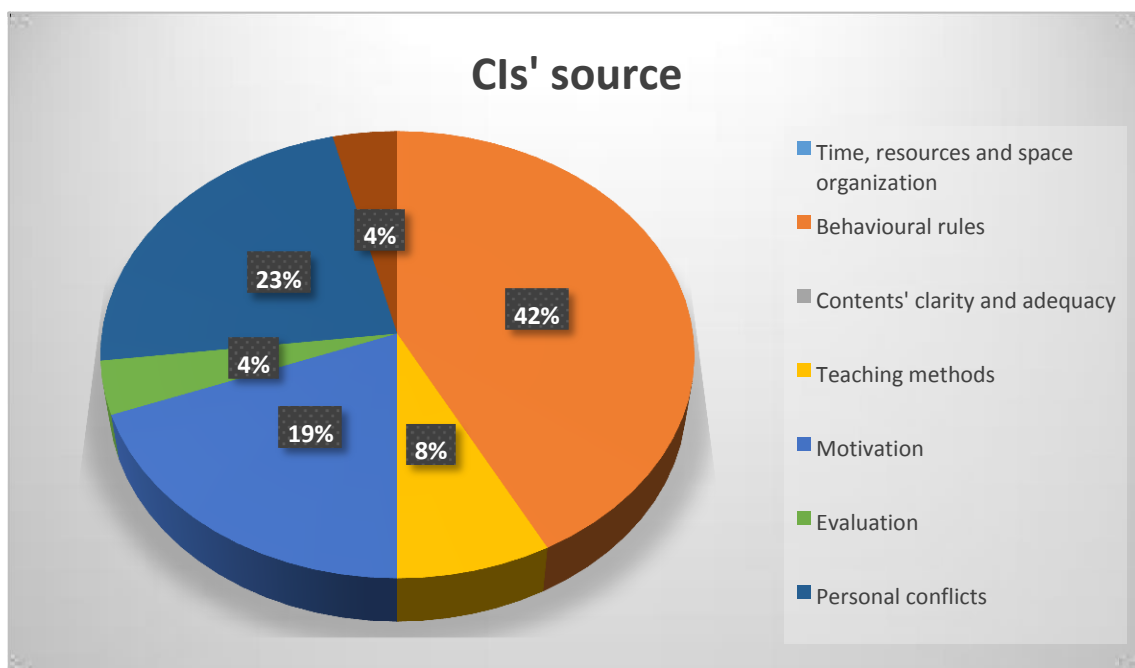
As show on the graph, the feelings and emotions that most predominate have a negative connotation: being bad, angry, surprised and impotent the most recurrent.

On the contrary, of the twenty critical incidents registered by the different subjects of the study since the academic year 2015-2016 started, not all of them were catalogued as negative. This means that besides having caused a negative feeling to the teacher, the appropriate use of the strategies and or its resolution leaded it to a positive labeling. For example, on the case of Subject B, who exposed three different incidents, she catalogued all of them as negative and positive, as she assumed there was an initial feeling once the incident produced (negative) and a second feeling once the incident is over or solved (positive in her situations). Another curious case was subject E, who shared one incident during this past academic year, but decided to catalogue it as neutral, as his experience maintained him in a feeling of indifference, while any other would have seen it as a negative incident.

³ Note that this four points were suggested by a teacher who had studied and worked as a primary teacher as well. His contributions will be marked in green in each section

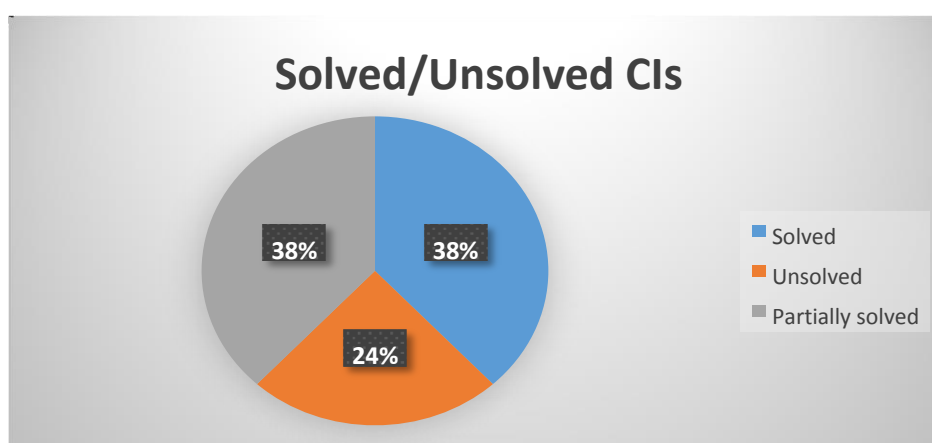


On the other hand, the study has also classified the different critical incidents following Monereo's seven blocks as the most frequent conflict generating issues that capitalize CI occurrence. Almost half of the CIs are linked to behavioural rules, especially in secondary. Furthermore, personal conflicts and incidents due to motivational aspects have also been popular within this research. Notice though, that none of them was related to contents' clarity and adequacy. However, be aware of the fact that several events have also been classified under two labels, as the origin might be dual, complex or just involve diverse variables.



A part from this, the study has also recorded the CIs according to the success of their resolution. Within this section, the CIs have been classified under the following titles: Solved, Unsolved or Partially Solved. Teachers considered that some incidents were not solvable in a short time and had to undergo a progress or an evolution (Subject C: “*Les actuacions no donen fruit de seguida. Crec que sempre són adequades quan es vol actuar bé*”); these correspond to the partially solved ones, or in other words, improved and developing incidents. (Subject A: “*Mica en mica respecten la meva posició i rol, però és complicat*”). Other teachers, however, try to avoid the answer and provide other information without clearly saying if the incident has been solved or not.

This is the case of Subject B (e.g.: “*El nen està molt més receptiu, no distorsiona i, de vegades, intervé encertadament*”).



Once the main characteristics of the CIs studied have been exposed, we can mention back to the teacher strategies. The subjects have shown eagerness to use admirable strategies (as commented at the beginning). However, when facing critical incidents these might not be the same ones. Following a chart is presented with some common actions undertaken during the CIs and some others thought as improvements by the same subjects.

Common actions undertaken	Actions for improvement
Talk to the leadership team.	Become stricter.
Talk to the student. Dialogue.	Look for help/ support: another teacher, directive team.
Mediation.	Share precedents in order to prevent.
Be strict.	Set limits.
Research for motivational strategies.	Work the topic or the problems more in depth.
Check mentally what he/she has done.	Act differently in the future thanks to new instructions gathered.
Follow advice of the psychologist.	Have a Plan B.
Talk to the parents (stablishing agreements).	Improve the planning.
Placing the student close to the teacher.	Individualized meetings with students.

³ Note that this four points were suggested by a teacher who had studied and worked as a primary teacher as well. His contributions will be marked in green in each section

Just as easy as rethinking about the situation and evaluating other possible actions, the subjects were connecting with their interior voices. The majority of the actions proposed above imply dialoguing with the self or with other voices. Furthermore, when asking to one of the subjects about her own definition as a teacher, she answered the following: *“Pienso que los que mejor te definen son tus alumnos”* (subject B); considering that way external voices to define her identity traits. Or another teacher (subject C), who reflects upon the idea of having to listen more to the students: *“... i escoltar, penso que s’hauria d’escoltar més de vegades no ho faig prou.”* We can also see how they consider their students’ voices when planning the class (Subject E:

“...cuando entro en la clase lo primero que intento palpar es el estado de ánimo del grupo, el condicionante de la hora que se imparte la clase, que ha podido pasar antes a estos alumnos.”).

Nevertheless, during the interviews the teachers did not realize about the presence of inner voices; though they were constantly asking or dialoguing with themselves or reflecting internally (e.g.: Subject D: *“Què em preocupa abans d’una classe...”*; Subject E: *“¿En qué pienso?”*, Subject H: *“Sóc molt estricta o no?”*). When being asked about the presence of voices within the process of decision-making they do not reply affirmatively. Just a couple comment on the voice of the conscience (e.g.: Subject A:

“No ho sé, jo es que tiro molt d’impuls.”, Subject B: *“Para tomar una decisión, voces interiores no. Bueno la voz interior es lo que piensas para llegar a hacerlo. Es el pensamiento que tengo para plantearme que voy a hacer [...] pero eso no son voces interiores.”*).

Finally yet importantly, there is a last characteristic which should be commented and which establishes a subtle difference between secondary and primary teachers. While subjects from the primary field tend to provide an internal attribution of the problem, positioning themselves as responsible agents (Subject A: *“quan es posen “rebeldes” i no puc fer per tornar-los a lloc. Perquè hi ha moments que no ser que fer”*), secondary teachers tend to provide a more external attribution of the problems (Subject H: *“I una cosa que tinc claríssima és que si un alumne no vol aprendre no aprèn [...] però si no els agrada, aquet progrés no l’acabes de veure mai”*) However, the sample is not representative to reach any conclusion but just a fact to point out.

Discussion

This study was conducted to determine the correlations between teacher identity and the Critical Incidents some subjects faced. Moreover, it also intended to demonstrate the existing significant differences between the way in which primary and secondary teachers face the different critical incidents that may occur in their classes.

First, it could be mention that all subjects agreed on the idea that having “flexibleidentified” teachers is essential. They matched Monereo and Monte’s ideas (2011) of teaching not being an innate capacity, but a talent that needs to be performed and developed during a lifelong process implying both cognitive and emotional aspects for self-regulation. This was seen as they all admitted that a great teacher should be variable and not fix-minded.

Secondly, it should be noted that the subjects of the study are not entirely conscious about their teaching identity; which is compound by three dimensions: representations of the own professional role, representations of teaching, learning and assessment process, and the emotional dimension (Monereo and Badia, 2011). They were able to describe characteristics of each dimension but they do not tend to value it as a whole, neither to rethink about it. Despite them admitting the changing role of the teacher, no evidence is devoted to the thinking of heteronyms that a strategic teacher must have (Monereo and Badia, 2011).

On the other hand, looking back at Weise (2011), the representations are different ways of reconstructing the incidents or events in order to be able to manage them. Nevertheless, teachers indicated not to think a lot when facing an incident (some of them described themselves as impulsive). Conversely, this study showed that when reviewing the events multiple emotions raised, as well as different conceptions. They were able to come up with different ways of action in front of the CIs, and most of them answered affirmatively to the ICs questioning conceptions, emotions and ways of acting, but not the way of confronting their teaching. According to that, it is observable how they built representations in relation the ways they act and teach and the way they connect emotions to the different events undergone, even if it is produced in a superficial state that lacks of awareness. Instead of only identifying feelings and alternatives, it would be even more beneficial if teachers could develop deeper on meta-representations, which would allow them to self-regulate better and select suitable strategies.

³ Note that this four points were suggested by a teacher who had studied and worked as a primary teacher as well. His contributions will be marked in green in each section

The study dealt with expert teachers who were able to face delicate incidents and succeed thanks to the voice of experience; they just need to be more conscious of the power of those voices, what Minsky (1985) defined as the *society of mind*, and stop to reflect often. The subjects thought they were not bringing others' voices, but actually in some occasions we were able to appreciate how some of these teachers put themselves in their students' shoes and listen to their voices to see what their pupils needed. These ideas lead us to the conclusion that teachers act less automatically than what they do actually believe.

Moreover, as they are not aware of the multiplicity of voices that bring them to act, the *I-positions*, conversations with oneself which occur due to the intrinsic social bounding and both variables of space and time Hermans and Gieser (2012), remain unnoticed. Although teachers admit to have evolved within the time, use different strategies, experiencing different CIs depending on the space, etc.

On the other hand, another issue that has been identified within the study in some cases, corresponds to Lewis' idea (2002): when situations decenter from common situations that children or adults have under control, a feeling of unsafety and insecurity pushes us back to mediocre self-positions in which we feel more shielded. Even though the sample is not significant enough to establish a pattern, it was observable that specially with the novice teacher or with an expert teacher during his firsts years, when facing a destabilizing situation individuals become "more conservative and monological than innovative and dialogical" (Hermans and Gieser, 2012, p. 11), or in other words, they "take the easy path".

If reconsidering the three levels of voices with which humans dialogue in their minds (Monereo, 2014; Hermans and Geiser 2012), it could be said that our subjects, subconsciously, resort to these, though less than should. It gives the impression that from recurrent to less used voices they considered internal self-conversations, internal conversations with others and external voices.

Considering the ideas commented until now, when reflecting on what defines a good teacher, none of the subjects shared Monereo's vision (2014), who stated that a good teacher was the one that when having to plan his/her classes recalled his/her students' voices in order to establish a dialogue with the students to take decisions upon his/her planning. However, they provided great qualities that allocate the student in the center of the learning process.

Moving on now to the objectives of the research, what we are mainly concerned with here is if there exist significant differences between the way in which primary and secondary

teachers face the different CIs. The findings clearly shown that CIs raise a multiplicity of emotions and feelings and these CIs can be catalogued either as positive or negative. This does not seem to depend on the field (primary or secondary), but on other characteristics such as context, experience, other agents involved... Furthermore, within the different CIs collected, six of the seven blocks generators of CIs proposed by Monereo and Monte (2011) have been identified. The only exception would be CIs relative to the clarity and adequacy of the transmitted contents. Maybe this could be explained because the research dealt mainly with very experienced teachers, but this would only be a mere hypothesis. However, the only distinction that could be established regarding that point would be that secondary gets a major number of critical incidents relative to behavioral rules, which might be quite unsurprising.

Additionally, it is also possible to observe the correlations between the teachers' identity and the CIs. This dialectical relation has been proved as the subjects of the study have purposed different actions for improvement according to their ideas and beliefs. As one of the subjects stated, after facing a new incident new strategies are learnt in order to act differently in the future thanks to the instructions gathered.

In the view of the different interventions undertaken by the different teachers when facing different CIs, it has not been identified an apparent pattern that determines these ways of actuation depending on the teachers' section: primary or secondary. Nevertheless, some subtleties have been distinguished. While primary teachers classify several aspects such as students' motivation, as an internal responsibility of the teacher, some secondary teachers see it as an external responsibility, which is students' duty. Again, generalizations of these issues can not be applied. It can be considered that this might happen as teachers believe that secondary students do not need as much reinforcements as primary students. Moreover, the study also considered that secondary teachers tend to focus more on contents. It might be beard in mind the fact that primary and secondary teachers received a different training. As Wise (2013) reported, these could be explained by some scarcities in the teachers' training in order to generate changes, referring with that idea to the secondary teachers; but we would be speculating once more.

Finally, it should be said that this study permitted us to corroborate the fact that an IC's identity works as the general framework for interpretation and action" (Wise and Sánchez-Busqués, 2013, p.2). This has allowed us to identify that teachers should work in depth the internal dialogues and the surrounding perceptions, or at least to activate the meta-representations that will allow them to assess their teaching actions.

³ Note that this four points were suggested by a teacher who had studied and worked as a primary teacher as well. His contributions will be marked in green in each section

Conclusions

In a nutshell, that is to say that this study has been beneficial as it has provided a space for reflection that teachers are normally not used to have. It seems that without the instruments of study used, some teachers would not have reflected that deep on some of the incidents undergone neither would they question some of the aspects of their identity that were brought up. This is definitely a field that allows teachers to better explore themselves and gain awareness of their limitations and strengths in front of incidents' resolutions.

This is a qualitative research which could only deal with few subjects; even though in a deep and conscientious way. However, despite being a qualitative research anyway, to extend the number of subjects would be totally enriching. Moreover, it could be complemented by other studies focusing on other variables; such as nationality of the teachers, school methodologies, novice or expert teachers... All different variables can be advantageous when studying CIs and looking for patterns or similarities and differences.

Added to that, though the study has some flaws, it leaves a door open to further research. That would do well in order to get to understand how critical incidents are shaped during the different educational stages, as it may help teachers to improve assisting the learning processes of the students as well as to develop their educational identity.

Finally, just to end up with a little reflection, this study would like to invite teachers to think further outside the box about issues that might not be plausible at a glance but are fundamental to the field of education. To ensure success in the teaching and learning processes, besides studying and valuing different strategies, methodologies and materials, teachers also need to consider studying themselves. Sometimes, the key of the educative success resides in such simple things as listening more; both to the inner and external voices.

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Annex 1 – Identity questionnaire

SINTE – INDENTITES. Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. UAB

Pauta de Entrevista sobre la Identidad docente

Dimensión 1: Representaciones en relación al rol profesional: ¿Cómo entiendes o interpretas el “ser profesor/ maestro”? (Factores: Formación y experiencias)

1. Años de docencia:
2. Centros de docencia (localidad y tipo de centro):
3. Área de profesión (especialidad):

¿Cuáles son las funciones que desarrollas en la escuela como docente?

¿Qué es para ti ser un buen profesor de secundaria/ maestro?

Dimensión 2: Representaciones sobre las estrategias de enseñanza, aprendizaje y evaluación: ¿Qué debo hacer para lograr que los alumnos aprendan y para comprobar que han aprendido?

(Factores: creencias, concepciones y teorías)

1. ¿Cómo crees que debe enseñarse para que tus alumnos aprendan? ¿De qué depende que aprendan? Es decir, ¿qué variables consideras fundamentales para el éxito de los procesos de aprendizaje de tus alumnos?
2. ¿Qué estrategias o métodos sueles utilizar en una clase estándar? ¿Por qué? ¿de qué depende cuáles usas?
3. Tu forma de enseñar, estas estrategias que usas en la planificación, aula y evaluación ¿Varían de un curso a otro? ¿En qué varían, de qué depende?
4. ¿Planeas el uso de estas estrategias y métodos antes? ¿Cambias sobre la marcha? ¿Qué puede hacerte cambiar?
5. ¿Estas estrategias o métodos responden a un modelo teórico particular? o ¿Te sientes influido por algún (s) modelo(s) teórico que te orienta al momento de enseñar?
6. ¿Cómo te definirías como docente?
7. ¿Consideras que tu faceta como docente debe ser invariable?

Dimensión 3: Emociones y sentimientos asociados a la docencia: ¿Qué sentimientos experimentas siendo docente?

1. ¿Qué te preocupa antes de una clase? ¿En qué piensas?
2. ¿Qué te preocupa durante de una clase? ¿En qué piensas?
3. ¿Dirías que hay algunas voces interiores que te ayudan a tomar decisiones? En caso afirmativo, ¿Cómo las definirías?
4. ¿Qué piensas que deberías o te gustaría hacer en tus clases y no haces? ¿Por qué no lo haces?
5. ¿Cómo te sientes en clase? ¿Es distinto cuando enseñas en un curso que en otro?
6. ¿En qué condiciones te sientes más cómodo/a y por qué?
7. ¿En qué condiciones te sientes incómodo y por qué?
8. ¿De qué manera te afectan las relaciones con el alumnado?