A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES ON FACE-TO-FACE HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES IN MEXICO CITY'S PRISONS

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I. Abstract

This dissertation is a phenomenological inquiry about the experiences of teachers who have worked for the Higher Education Programme for Re-adaptation Facilities in Mexico City (PESCER). Its rationale considers the face-to-face modality as a central aspect of education, especially within prisons. It aims to contribute to the knowledge of educational practices in penitentiary contexts and to provide useful tools to improve them. I suggest that higher education in prison is a research field quite unexplored in many ways and that exploratory research that accounts for how teachers act, think, and feel, is vital to designing effective and dignifying prison higher education programmes, particularly regarding face-to-face education. Therefore, the research questions inquired about the motivations, ideas, pedagogical practices, challenges, and alternatives undertaken to teach inside detention facilities. My theoretical framework for prison education stems from penal systems' sociology and education as a human right. The central premise is that Latin America suffers a trend of criminalisation of poverty that has caused the imprisonment of thousands of persons, who are revictimized while in prison due to the prevailing human rights crisis within most Latin American prisons, which usually follow a punishment logic and are underfunded. In this context, education should not be considered only as a tool for social re-adaptation, but as a right and a humanizing act with multiple possibilities. I adopt Daroqui's conceptualisation of prison education as a two-way 'crack' caused by the entry of the university into the prison, a helpful idea for understanding the interactions between the different stakeholders who take part in the educational processes. This research revealed that some prison dynamics hamper the educational processes by creating diverse types of tensions. It showed that students' life situations impact significantly how teachers approach their classes. Teachers' willingness to adapt their educational practices to the prison context revealed implicit and explicit notions of inclusive education. In a similar vein, teachers' ideas on the role of education as a right were central to their motivation and practices. The findings revealed the importance of acknowledging teachers' limitations in the face of a powerful violent context, and of having a clear leadership to look for guidance when issues that could affect their classes or their well-being arise. Although this is a qualitative study focused on a single programme, the data points to several issues concerning various stakeholders in prison

education, from academics to decision-makers and implementers interested in fostering inclusive prison education programmes.

Key words: prison education, inclusive education, education as a right.

II. Dedication

To my mom, infinite source of wisdom and motivation.

To the teachers who made this study possible.

To those who dedicate their lives to fighting injustice from hidden trenches behind prison walls.

III. Acknowledgments

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V. List of abbreviations

CLADE – Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education

DGPRS - Directorate of Prevention and Social Re-adaptation of Mexico City

GESEC - Study Group on Education in Prison

HE - Higher education

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

LA - Latin America

PAUC - University Accompaniment Programme in Prisons

PESCER - Higher Education Programme for Re-adaptation Facilities in Mexico City

UACM - Autonomous University of Mexico City

UBA – University of Buenos Aires

UIL - UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning

UNAM - National Autonomous University of Mexico

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNLP - University of La Plata

UoG – University of Glasgow

If reducing recidivism is the goal of prison education, what can be gained from teaching those who will be behind bars for life?

*(*Clint Smith, 2017*, '*The lifelong learning of lifelong inmates'*)*

Education is a human right that has little to do with a therapeutic treatment, nor with the saving tool that a subject needs to 're' integrate into a society that has never given him/her space or recognized him/her as such. By considering education as a human right, we are considering the subject of the educational action (the prisoner) as a subject of rights.

(Francisco Scarfó *et. al.,* 2016, 103)

1. Introduction

Prison education is a battlefield for inclusive education (UIL, 2021). However, at a discourse and policy implementation level, it has usually been considered a treatment for inmates' social re-adaptation, instead of a right (Smith, 2017). From a human rights perspective, prison education is paramount to counter the negative effects of prison settings, particularly in Latin America (LA), where diverse human rights violations are common within detention facilities (Rangel, 2019, 2018, 2013). Although during the last decades the interest in prison education as a right has grown worldwide (UIL, 2021), it is still a marginal research field and there are many gaps regarding its implementation (Rangel, 2019).

In LA, the absence of national policies has generated a disparity in the supply of prison education services and programmes (Rangel, 2008bis). Given the nature of prisons, trapped between security, technological and geographical constraints, many education programmes are distance-based, particularly higher education (HE) ones (Croso and Modé, 2012). Education is a human right, so prisoners should be able to access the same type of education as any other person. Accordingly, some HE institutions in LA have designed face-to-face programmes to provide inmates with an equivalent educational offer to the one students can access on regular university campuses (Cruz, 2018). This is the case of the Higher Education Program for Mexico City's Social Readaptation Centres (PESCER), created in 2004 as a collaboration agreement between Mexico City's Autonomous University (UACM) and Mexico City's Directorate of Prevention and Social Readaptation (DGPRS). Although it only operates in Mexico City's prisons, it meant a great step in the defence of prisoners' right to lifelong learning (Bidault, Valdivia and Díaz, 2009).

Fulfilling the right to education within prisons is not an easy task; literature suggests that the prison system will try to subordinate any educational programme within its walls to the prison logic, comprising punishment, rewards, and discrimination (Scarfó *et. al*. 2016; Daroqui, 2012). However, a growing *corpus* of literature points to the benefits of face-to-face prison education at a pedagogical and well-being level (Díaz and Mora, 2010; Nieto and Zapata, 2012; Behan, 2014; Fava and Parchuc, 2016; Smith, 2017bis; Cruz, 2018; Gutiérrez,

2020; Ponce de León *et. al.*, 2021). Despite the evidence on the key role of pedagogical relationships in education, (Giles *et. al.,* 2012), and particularly on the role of teachers in a dignifying prison social intervention (Behan, 2004; Hanna, 2009; Scarfó and Depallo, 2009; Herrera and Frejtman, 2010; Scarfó *et. al*., 2016; Castro, 2016), the trend in LA has been characterised by improvisation and neglect of human rights-based teacher training (Scarfó *et. al.* 2016bis). Besides, there is a gap in the literature regarding the educational processes triggered by each education modality, particularly how teachers act, think, and feel.

Studies on PESCER have focused mainly on the programme's general benefits and learnings (Cruz, 2018), students' experiences (Díaz and Mora, 2010; Cruz, 2018), students' identities (Mora, 2014; Díaz and Mora, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2020), and educational outcomes (Ponce de León *et. al*., 2021). Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the research gap regarding PESCER teachers' experiences to get a better understanding of educational practices in Mexico City prisons. The methodology, based on van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology, allowed me to approach in depth the ethical dimensions of teachers' daily experiences by emphasising their anecdotes, images, and emotions (Fuster, 2019). The research question that guided this dissertation is: *how do PESCER teachers experience the practice of teaching face-to-face classes within detention facilities in Mexico City?* I expect to shed some light on the motivations, ideas, pedagogical practices, challenges, and alternatives undertaken to teach inside detention centres. The theoretical framework drew on a critical understanding of prison institutions from penal systems' sociology, which highlights the fundamental tension of face-to-face prison education, stemming from the nature of prisons as institutions that follow a vigilance, control, and punishment logic, which strongly impacts the work of education institutions collaborating with them. Therefore, I proposed the idea of a 'crack' of the university into the prison (Daroqui, 2021) to frame teachers' experiences in a context of complex power dynamics and relationships.

Findings point to face-to-face education as a modality that allows the development of pedagogies, atmospheres, and relationships adapted to students' context, which could represent a truly inclusive project within prisons, and to the importance of promoting school spaces and educational programmes inside prisons that are not subject to prison logic, capable

to advance educational goals. Participants' experiences show that teaching inside prisons involves a great number of pedagogical, emotional, and ethical challenges, which implies a remarkable determination and willingness on their part and the PESCER administration. Their narratives reveal the importance of recognizing their teaching limitations, and of having a clear leadership to look for guidance when issues that affect their classes or their well-being arise. Some considerations of teachers' concerns regarding gender, differences among prisons, working conditions, and the COVID pandemic's impact were pointed out as relevant for further research.

2. Literature review

> *Hence the need to design and develop educational actions with persons deprived of liberty that are detached from any corrective or normalizing intention, where educators assume the task of reinstalling a right that has been violated, willing to exchange and circulate knowledge that will be appropriated differently in each one, each time.* (Herrera and Frejtman, 2010, 125) [1]

2.1 Prison education: a treatment or a right?

Prison education is a field in tension (Herrera and Frejtman, 2010), due to the different meanings that education can have in a prison setting, as well as to the diverse tasks and regulations assigned to prison and education institutions, both at international and national levels. There is a tension between prison education conceived as a right, and prison education conceived as a penitentiary treatment. Furthermore, the practice of education can be aligned with prison goals and dynamics, or against them. Therefore, it is relevant to look at how prison education is conceived in different contexts, to understand what we are dealing with.

The dominant policy discourses on prison education have usually conceptualised prisoners as persons who need to be fixed in their mental health or their ethical standards, and for whom education is, at its best, a useful tool for getting a job after prison (Muñoz, 2009; Acín, 2009; Costelloe, 2014). They revolve around what Zaffaroni (1991) called the 're' ideologies, a set of diffuse concepts such as social re-adaptation, social re-insertion, re-education, re-personalisation, and re-socialisation, "(…) all characterized by the 're' prefix, with which they suggest the idea that something had failed, and which justified a second intervention." (180). This 'treatment approach' to prison education is usually found in the regulations on the execution of custodial sentences worldwide (Acín, 2009).

[1] All quotations from works in Spanish were translated to English by the author of this dissertation.

Literature has mainly been interested in prison education as a penitentiary treatment, particularly with its outcomes for finding a job after imprisonment and lowering recidivism rates (Smith, 2017bis)[2]. There seems to be a widespread need to justify prison education beyond its legitimacy as a right, to prove that it has measurable positive outcomes in criminal terms (*e.g.*, UNESCO, 2020; 2020bis). However, education is a right –therefore an end itself– so the focus should not be on the outcomes; even if these are also important, they should not be the core of the argument for fostering inclusive prison education.

Furthermore, if education programmes are only measured and justified by the 'positive' outcomes they will have on prisoners' lives after their release, then what about those who will not be released? "One might assume, then, that implicit within the espoused logic of prison education is the notion that those serving life sentences do not deserve or should not have access to educational opportunities." (Smith, 2017bis, 86). Besides, this conceptualisation of prison education contradicts the punishment policies that many prisons in the world practice and ignores that "The profuse use of the prefix re- implies a 'second chance' for inmates, but often prisoners do not have a first one to begin with, since they grew up in poverty and lack adequate education." (Rangel, 2019, 794).

From a quite different perspective, the inclusive or 'human rights approach' to prison education (Acín, 2009) stresses education as a right to which every person is entitled regardless of any condition or factor, and not only as a pragmatic tool with a re-socialising goal. It is "(…) sustained, predominantly, within human rights organisations and educational settings. It is usually embodied in international and national regulations on human rights and educational laws and encourages the work of adult educators who carry out their work in prisons when they are not co-opted by prison discourse" (Acín, 2009, 68). It has evolved as a critique of the prison system and the harm it generates in the prisoners, and it emphasises prison education's role as both a right and humanizing act, which allows prisoners the "opportunity to belong to society, to participate authentically and become a citizen, who makes use of their rights and fulfils their duties in favour of the development of society"

[2] The 'treatment approach' to prison education reflects an understanding of education shaped by the Human Capital model, which focuses on the economic role of education, and conceives it as a mainly instrumental act, ignoring its social roles and its intrinsic (humanizing) importance (Robeyns, 2006).

(Scarfó, 2002, 291). Prison education is increasingly recognized as a fundamental battlefield for inclusive education and the right to lifelong learning. UNESCO's work has been central in advocating for prisoners' right to lifelong learning and quality education, and in systematising and shedding light on this opaque education field[3] (UIL, 2021).

Regardless of whether it is conceived as a treatment or a right, there are many gaps regarding the implementation of prison education programmes worldwide, and in the LA region in particular (UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO 2020bis). According to Costelloe, the focus on the objectives and outcomes of prison education has diverted attention from the educational processes and the people who experience them (Costelloe, 2014). Moreover, the most recent and comprehensive literature review on prison education undertaken by the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL), drew attention to the need to re-examine the penal policies, strategies, and pedagogical approaches in many jurisdictions, and identified this gap as a fundamental problem for turning 'education for all' into a reality. UIL singled out a series of contradictions "between principles and policy found across the world (…) partly due to the competing agendas advocated by penal policy-makers, on the one hand, and educationalists, on the other" (UIL, 2021, 17).

In sum, even if prison education can have different goals and justifications, attention should be paid to *how* prison education is undertaken and by *whom*. This task is even more complex, given that the closed nature of prisons hampers getting to know the realities of the dynamics behind their walls, due to their 'total institutions' nature (Scarfó and Castro, 2016)[4]. Hence, this gap in the literature invites us to shed some light on how education programmes

[3] In 2011, UNESCO created the UNESCO Chair in Applied Research for Education in Prison with the mission '(…) to promote, stimulate and encourage applied research on various aspects of correctional education and to monitor the situation at the international level.' (Rangel and De Maeyer, 2019, 672). Currently, UNESCO's Chair and the UIL lead an in-depth research project about prison education '(…) to improve existing prison education policies and practices that are designed to support inmates' rehabilitation and reintegration into society and thus contribute to making the right to education a reality for all' (UIL, 2022).

[4] Scarfó (2016), Blazich (2007), and Daroqui (2012), among others, use the concept of 'total institution' to refer to prisons. It was coined by Erwin Goffman to refer to those institutions, '(…) whose purpose is the control of the subjects, which is achieved through the deconstruction of the signs of identity of people through homogenisation, massification, classification, and dispossession of all rights, including education' (Blazich, 56). There are other examples of total institutions, such as orphanages and mental hospitals. A total institution '(…) tries to repel all strangers to it, perhaps to hide its ways of acting and treating people' (Scarfó, 2016).

are developed, what kind of challenges they face, who participates, and what kind of education is being promoted within the world's prisons.

2.2 The right to education in Latin-American and Mexican prisons

In LA, some efforts to systematize data on prison education undertaken by regional and international actors such as UNESCO (2005; 2008bis; 2009; 2020bis), EUROsocial (Rangel 2008, 2009, 2013), and CLADE (Croso and Modé 2011, 2012), point out that there has been a positive trend regarding the recognition of education as a right for prison populations in national normative and political frameworks, and in some legislations (Croso and Modé, 2012, 13), especially at the turn of the XXI century. Nevertheless, prisons in LA are still far from being law-abiding settings. Data on detention facilities account for serious issues of overcrowding, violence, service underprovision, underfunding, health, and hygiene (Rangel, 2019; Rangel 2013). A comparative study by EUROsociAL revealed that, during the last three decades, prison populations have grown at ever-increasing rates in almost every country in the region due to a trend of massive and pre-trial incarceration, even if incarceration policies have had no effect in guaranteeing better security conditions to society and despite the fact "(...) that overcrowding is a negative factor for societal well-being" (Rangel, 2019, 789). There is evidence to believe that, worldwide, this criminal policy has advanced the isolation and confinement models inside the detention facilities and their pavilions, following the reinforcement of the maximal security model, thus posing bigger threats to human rights (Daroqui, 2021). Mexico is the ninth country with the largest absolute prison population in the world, with around 226,916 prisoners, 40.8% of which are pre-trial detainees (Mexico | World Prison Brief, 2022; Fair and Walmsley, 2021). According to data from the World Prison Brief, there is an occupancy level of 104.5%, which means more than 10,000 prisoners without a proper place within Mexican prisons.

Prison populations usually have a low educational level, directly linked to their socioeconomic background (Rangel, 2019). The trend of massive incarceration of persons belonging to poor strata of society has been referred to as a "process of criminalisation of

poverty and social insecurity" (Pastore, 2018; Cruz 2018; Daroqui, 2014), which implies that the fast growth in prison populations in LA does not answer precisely to a rise in the committing of crimes, but to selective penal prosecution (Croso and Modé, 2012; Daroqui, 2021; Rangel, 2019). Consequently, the prison population's access to education is a very pressing issue. In the LA region, there have been relevant normative transformations for recognising the right to education for the prison population and conceptualising it as a right instead of a treatment (Rangel, 2019). In Mexico, the 2008 constitutional reform to the Criminal Justice System meant a new understanding of the penitentiary system's objective, by defining its objectives in terms of the social reintegration of the 'offender', and stressing the role of job opportunities, the right to education, health, and sport. Thus, it inverted the logic that saw the prisoner as a "(…) 'misfit' who had to be re-educated or reformed" (Franco, 2018, 3).

However, access to prison education in Mexico is far from being a reality. In 2016, only 3 of every 10 inmates were enrolled in a prison education programme, being this number 4 out of every 10 for Mexico City (Franco, 2019). This is considerably low compared to other countries like Argentina where, in 2013, 6 out of every 10 inmates were enrolled in educational activities (Rangel, 2019). In line with global trends, Mexico's prison population has a low level of education; only around 20% holds a high school diploma (Franco, 2018), a considerably lower rate than 36% of the population over 20 years at a national level (SITEAL – UNESCO IIEP, 2021). According to a comprehensive recent study on the prison population in Mexico (Franco, 2018), 63.7% of prisoners dropped out of school due to economic problems. The study found that 88.6% of prisoners had a job before their imprisonment, and for 97% of them that job was their main source of income: "This result seems to contradict the hypothesis of a close correlation between unemployment and criminal activity (…)" (Franco, 2018, 17). These numbers are meaningful when reflecting on the purposes of prison education, for there is robust evidence that accounts for a series of exclusion factors in prisoners' lives before their imprisonment that seems to go beyond unemployment, and which are closely related to poverty and precariousness contexts. Therefore, if penitentiary systems fail to provide prisoners with quality educational

alternatives, they revictimize populations previously excluded from education and prevent them from fulfilling their right to lifelong learning.

Beyond legislation, research accounts for several widespread problems in the region regarding prison education policies' design and implementation. Rangel (2019) identified the *lack of coordination between ministries and institutions*, and the *lack of continuity* as two main obstacles (p. 794). The former relates to the fact that education programmes usually rely on more than one government entity (*e.g.,* education and justice ministries), while the latter is linked to the political dynamics of the ruling parties and governing authorities, which frequently result in the interruption or transformation of education and rehabilitation programmes. For its part, the *GEM Report 2020 – LAC* identified some of the main weaknesses in the regional policy agenda on prison education, "particularly regarding special learning needs (cultural, ethnic, or cognitive), learning environments (classroom space, library provision), certification of education and training activities, and training for future employment." (p. 32). Therefore, prison education programmes face diverse challenges related to funding, inclusiveness, adequateness, institutional coordination, and political will, which interfere with prisoners' right to education.

2.3 Face-to-face education and the teachers' role

Distance education is the most popular prison education modality in the region (Croso and Modé, 2012) and worldwide. According to UIL (2021) and Rangel (2008bis), some of the reasons for the proliferation of distance prison education programmes have been the structural barriers to education, as well as low budgets and a lack of interest and political will. Another justification for undertaking these programmes is the non-interruption of studies once students are released. According to Ponce de León *et. al.* (2021) "(…) experience shows that many students regain their freedom and change their city of residence, so they can continue studying wherever they are, thus reducing the dropout rate" (p. 496). In this sense, distance education was proposed to solve these situations, as well as the difficulty to enter prisons, the lack of adequate spaces to take classes, and the lack of materials.

Although scarce, literature points to certain issues regarding the teaching of face-to-face education in LA prisons. As Rangel (2008bis) identified for diverse prison education experiences, teachers find a lot of difficulties within the penitentiary entourage, among them, the harshness of working in overcrowded environments; a gap between legal and procedural issues; a lack of knowledge of the legal aspects; a lack of cooperation and coordination with the professionals working inside the detention facilities; a lack of motivation linked to the dangerous nature and difficulties of the prison environment; and a lack and insufficiency of material and human resources to carry out educational activities. "There are continuous complaints from teachers regarding the lack of institutional support and the precariousness of working conditions. It is also pointed out that special training is needed to work in the prison environment." (Rangel, 2008bis, 176).

Regarding the Mexican landscape, there is scarce literature on the role of teachers and face-to-face classes in prison settings. In Mexico, education programmes within prisons usually only get to the secondary level, and they have traditionally been provided by inmates themselves, guided by the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) and by the 'Open High-School' (distance public education) (Bidault, Valdivia and Díaz, 2009). Therefore, most prison education programmes have relied on distance education and peer-to-peer support, which suggests that pedagogical aspects of education as the student-teacher relationship and the learning environments have not been considered central elements of education provision (Gil, 2010). However, some prison education efforts in the region account for the importance of the pedagogical relationship, in particular the role of teachers, for a human rights-based education (Hanna, 2009). Local and international face-to-face prison education experiences have shed light on teachers' role in fostering respect for diversity, allowing students' voices to be heard, and promoting respectful learning environments (Scarfó and Depallo, 2009; Behan, 2004), as well as offering learning tools and awakening students' interests (Herrera and Frejtman, 2010). Despite the evidence on the key role of pedagogical relationship with teachers in education (*vid*. Giles *et. al*., 2012)., a trend of educational de-professionalisation has prevailed during the last decades, where prison objectives have been imposed on human rights-based educational action (Gil, 2010).

Furthermore, qualitative research on the experiences of students who engage in face-to-face educational programmes inside prisons has shown that they can experience diverse collective and individual processes related to community building and agency (Smith, 2017bis; Behan, 2014), as well as a sense of belonging, and the building of significant relationships with their teachers and other students, which impact positively on their well-being, their learning, and their motivations (*vid*. Díaz and Mora, 2010; Nieto and Zapata, 2012; Fava and Parchuc, 2016; Cruz, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2020; Ponce de León *et. al.*, 2021). Consequently, there is a tension between educational trends in prison contexts and literature that points to the benefits of face-to-face education on a pedagogical and well-being level. The latter raises the question of the educational processes triggered by each education modality.

2.4 Higher education in Mexican prisons: the Higher Education Programme for Readaptation Facilities in Mexico City (PESCER)

The context in which the first HE programme for prisons in Mexico emerged represents an anomalous event in the region and at the same time one in line with advances in international and national regulations regarding the right to education[5]. Nowadays, basic and secondary education are recognized as rights for the prison population in most Latin-American countries' legislations. However, the picture is very different concerning HE. Given that it is not mandatory, and that there is a big problem concerning its access and provision in the region compared to other education levels (Olivier, 2012; Safaicada and Baichman, 2020), there is a low provision of HE within prisons. (Croso and Modé, 2012, 21)

According to a systematisation of prison education in the region undertaken by CLADE, by 2012 only Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Nicaragua

[5] More than three decades ago, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in their Resolution 1990/20 (1990), '(…) established that all persons in prison should have access to education, including literacy programmes, basic education, vocational training, creative, religious and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education, higher education, and libraries, etc.' (Croso and Modé, 2012, 19). The duty of all countries to provide prisoners with access to every level of education, beyond literacy, basic education, or vocational training, has also been stressed by UNESCO (Rangel, 2009).

had HE alternatives for prison populations (Croso and Modé, 2012). The process of institutionalisation of prison education in national laws and policies at the turn of the XXI century coincides with the expansion of both private and public HE institutions[6] (Olivier, 2012). Some of these new universities –mainly private ones– have targeted persons traditionally excluded from HE, such as older groups of the population[7]. They have designed programmes for the student-workers, offering flexible class schedules, more accessible degree programmes, faster graduation processes, and shorter study cycles. Literature shows that this new educational offer also extended to the prison population (*vid*. Toro, 2005 and Ponce de León *et. al.*, 2021)[8].

While private HE actors are taking a significant role in the provision of education opportunities to prison populations, in countries like Argentina and Mexico public universities have taken the lead (Croso and Modé, 2012). Argentina is indisputably the country with more diversity and experience in the provision of public HE for prisoners in the whole region (Zapata, 2019; Cruz, 2018; Herrera and Frejtman, 2010). The UBA XXII programme, implemented by the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), and the University Accompaniment Programme in Prisons (PAUC), implemented by the National University of La Plata (UNLP), are obliged points of reference for public HE programmes for prisoners in LA[9]. For a long time, Mexico did not have any HE programmes for prisoners; the first initiatives came from local public universities (Cruz, 2018). The PESCER was created in

[6] According to Olivier (2012), the massification of tertiary education that began in the 1990 decade, developed at the same time as the emergence of private higher education institutions. The demographic reconfiguration of the Latin-American population was a key factor in the demand for higher education opportunities, for the population group from 18 to 23 years old almost doubled between 1994 and 2003. By 2012, 52% of the students enrolled in higher education programmes belonged to private institutions (3).

[7] The proliferation of private institutions of higher education in Mexico was facilitated by reforms to the national education law in the first decades of the 21st century, as a consequence of the phenomenon that Cruz (2018) has called neoliberal governmentality, a process of marketisation in education where the notions of market competitivity and individual responsibility replaced the democratic principles of education (57).

[8] A study undertaken by UNESCO-IESALC (Toro, 2005) showed that by 2005 in Colombia, eight universities provided distance higher education to prison populations, three of which were private. Similarly, in Ecuador, several private universities have diverse collaboration agreements with the penitentiary system, in parallel to public institutions, and provide online, face-to-face, and blended modalities (Ponce de León *et. al.*, 2021).

[9] The UBA XXII programme, created in 1985 by the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), was the first higher education programme in the world to bring the university into the prison, offering face-to-face classes to the prison population of Buenos Aires in school facilities built inside the prisons. In the early 2000s, the National University of La Plata (UNLP) also got involved in different educational activities that turned into the University Accompaniment Programme in Prisons (PAUC), which currently offers different educational programmes in face-to-face and distance modalities (Zapata, 2019).

2004 as a collaboration agreement between the UACM and the DGPRS. It was the first programme to offer HE opportunities to prison populations in the country (Bidault, Valdivia, and Díaz, 2009). To this day, it is the only prison HE programme in Mexico to provide face-to-face classes[10], although during the last decade there have been relevant efforts for creating distance-based HE programmes in prisons at a the federal, state, and local level (*vid*. El Informador/Editorial, 2018; DGAE-UNAM, 2019; Editorial/Regeneración, 2019).

Considering the areas, tasks, and actors of the educational process is of great relevance for the prison education field (Rangel, 2008bis, 182). Although PESCER studies have focused mainly on students' experiences and identities (Díaz and Mora, 2010, 2018; Mora, 2014; Gutiérrez, 2020), there is some research regarding other PESCER stakeholders (Cruz, 2018; Ponce de León *et. al*., 2021). Basing his research on an *education-as-resistance* and an *education-as-a-right* framework, Cruz (2018) accounts for the tensions PESCER teachers, students, and staff face regarding the penitentiary space ecosystem. For Cruz, PESCER teachers are trapped between the different forces of the penitentiary system and their teaching practice. Although this is a valuable insight into PESCER functioning, this work's scope was not about teachers and it only used one teacher's testimony, which means a relevant educational domain to explore.

More recently, the work of Ponce de León *et. al.* (2021) discussed some of the strengths and challenges of PESCER; it identified problems related to the insufficient infrastructure, "(…) the lack of personnel in all schools and for research, physical and emotional risk of work, and the fluctuation of teachers hired for each subject" (p. 499). Likewise, a comprehensive study by Díaz and Mora (2010, 2018) about the university identity in contexts of confinement stressed that the educational processes undertaken by PESCER have impacted certain dynamics within the detention facilities, concerning the prisoner-students' notions of themselves, the "affiliation to certain values, and the construction of new practices and relationships as a university community" (p. 40). They understand the presence of the UACM inside detention facilities through PESCER as

[10] The national panorama of higher education supply for prisoners coincides with what Rangel identified in 2008 as a disparity in the supply of services and programmes that varies by province and region as a consequence of the absence of national policies regarding prison education (Rangel, 2008bis).

something that "(…) 'bursts' into the prison space and time, in the dynamics of some inmates, and (…) that this is the most important contribution of university training within prisons under the PESCER model" (Díaz and Mora, 2018, 48). This literature accounts for a nodal element in the design and functioning of the PESCER, which is the face-to-face modality. Along these lines, Cruz (2018) argues that

> Teaching practices are key to understanding the exchanges and ties that take place within PESCER. This part of the teaching-learning process is interwoven with the visions, objectives, and purposes of the institutions that make possible the existence of the programme; at the same time, PESCER is sustained by the actions, discourses, and exchanges of the teachers who are introduced into the prison environment as visitors, higher education professionals, university workers. (p. 138)

Although the literature on PESCER points to the role of teachers as paramount for understanding its main challenges, I was not able to find not much evidence to account for how they face their job on a day-to-day basis, and how they think and feel about it[11]. My standpoint, as I will explain in the next section, is that teachers have a significant role in the educational process, for they can adopt a penitentiary discourse or a human rights one; they can open a space for building new relationships, or allow for certain dynamics of the penitentiary system to prevail, for they are accountable to the various institutions within which their work is framed. Therefore, my study aims to contribute to the research gap regarding HE teachers' experiences in Mexico city's prisons, to get a better understanding of the educational processes, and shed some light on *how* education is taking place within prison settings.

[11] Except for Cruz's research (2018), which is a valuable piece of work but has a bigger scope than teachers' experiences, and it is based on one teacher's testimony only.

3. Theoretical framework

> *The proposal to follow this path supposes, then, to redefine the political meaning of the university's entry into the prison - it is clear - not in terms of hegemony but in terms of the systematic and continuous advance in the production of a crack, a rupture within the prison walls that is sustained by the recognition of prisoners and inmates as subjects of rights, with the right to health care, to work, to reconnect with their affections and to study.* (Daroqui, 2012, 35-36)[12]

In the previous chapter, I addressed the problem of how understanding prison education as a treatment is opposed to a human rights approach. I also described the environment of violence and human rights violations in LA prisons, which, together with other factors such as underfunding and a lack of institutional coordination, hinder the right to education for prisoners. Finally, I explained that evidence supports the role of face-to-face education as a condition for inclusive prison education, as well as teachers' role in creating adequate learning environments. In this chapter, I intend to generate a theoretical basis capable of accounting for the types of interactions generated in educational contexts marked by penitentiary logic, particularly in Mexico City prisons. My approach to the phenomenon of HE in prisons is based on two main tenets: a conceptualisation of prison as a violent institution whose nature opposes to a human rights logic, and an approach to the phenomenon of face-to-face education as a 'crack' in the prison system. I suggest that the apparent opposite nature of the prison as a punishment institution and of education thought from a humanistic perspective –as the one claimed by the UACM–, creates a tension that constitutes a core part of teachers' experiences.

[12] All the quotations from Daroqui (2012, 2014, and 2021) and Castro's (2016) literature in this chapter were translated to English from the original Spanish by the author of this dissertation.

3.1 What do we mean by prison?

In this section, I will discuss certain issues closely related to the historical and present nature of prisons in LA to frame the mechanisms that shape prison functioning and, therefore, prison education to a certain extent. For this, I found guidance in the conceptual tenets provided by the Criminal System and Human Rights Study Group (GESPyDH) of the Gino Germani Institute of the School of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires and the Commission for the Memory of the Province of Buenos Aires (CCT-CPM) (*vid*. Daroqui, 2014). According to Daroqui (2021), any attempt to problematize the relationship between education and prison requires linking oneself to the intervention institutional setting that the prison is. Drawing on Foucault's analysis of prisons, she thinks of the prison as an institution shaped by the idea of 'punishment', which has never fulfilled its manifest objectives of positively and functionally transforming the prisoners (reforming, reinserting, or reintegrating them[13]). Furthermore, the abuse of violence is possible thanks to the invisibility of whatever happens within the prison walls (Daroqui, 2012).

To understand the prison, we must consider the other parts of the complex penal system, such as the judges, the police, and, more importantly, the criminal lawmakers, who "design the political sense of the illegal" (Daroqui, 2012, 2). These relationships point to the existence of an "(…) undisputed and indispensable link between the penal system as such and the 'needs' of the dominant social order in terms of the design of strategies for social control over those who may constitute a 'threat' to that order" (Daroqui, 2012, 2), or what Foucault called the *microphysics of the judicial power.* These thoughts suggest that one cannot understand the prison system without considering how the penal system bases its action on the selectivity and "directionality of repressive actions in a univocal way towards the most unprotected sectors (…)" (Daroqui, 2012, 2). Therefore, Daroqui explains that not only do traditional prisons not aim at transforming positively their inmates but are more likely to harm them given their repressive nature and their role within a broader dominant order.

Thinking of the origin and functioning of the prison as a punishment institution that serves a greater penal and social order intending to maintain social control through

[13] Zaffaroni refers to all this set of functions as the 're' ideologies. *Vid*. Zaffaroni, 1991.

repression, violence, and selective illegality provides a conceptual construction applicable to the concrete LA context in the XX and XXI centuries. The GESPyDH and the CCT-CPM propose a conceptual matrix that links the mechanisms of the penal system to the historical context of neoliberal policies at the turn of the XXth century (Daroqui, 2021), namely, 'neoliberal criminality': a process of growth of the criminal State within the framework of the neoliberal stage of capitalism. According to this matrix, since the 1970s a punitive penal web began taking shape, defining a transnational penal policy related to the *War against drugs* –criticized as being a war against the poor (Daroqui, 2021). They suggest that this webbing also meant, for the first time in criminal history, the broader incarceration of women. Besides, the 'neoliberal criminality'[14] mechanisms did not aim at prosecuting every crime, but a group of crimes that were intricately linked to survival strategies within the informal and illegal economies. These policies caused a huge increase in the prison population worldwide, and concretely in LA.

So far, I have explained the nature and structure of the prisons and the penal system according to Daroqui and the GESPyDH. I have also linked these characteristics to what they call the 'neoliberal stage of capitalism' in LA and the 'War against drugs'. Next, I will follow these authors in the disentanglement of some of the consequences of these policies for prison systems, for these are paramount to analysing the possibilities of teaching a human rights-based education within prison walls. Daroqui (2012) claims that, in the neoliberal criminal logic, we attest to what is defined as the 're-habilitation fiction', a discursive mechanism that affirms that prisons are there to build a new subject through penitentiary treatment while denying the fact that prisons have never achieved their discursive purposes, and that their true mission is to lock up (poor) people and punish them to manage the social conflict. This raises the question of what the real possibilities are for humanistic teaching within a

[14] Neoliberalism appears as a key historical concept to think about the transnational criminal policies of the XXI century 'neoliberalism'. Daroqui (2021) defines it as '(…) the stage of capitalism that produces an accumulation by dispossession of rights –of acquired rights: to work, to health, to housing– and that, for the first time in history, throws an immeasurable number of people out of the formal market and builds them into a model of precariousness'. In sum, current prisons in LA do not only attend to a violence and punishment nature embedded in their origins, but have also adopted certain characteristics (mass incarceration, isolation, confinement, and women incarceration), that relate to the expansion of a series of criminal policies compatible with neoliberal capitalism, understood as a new social and penal order that pins down people to work in the illegal or informal market, while fixating poverty conditions in a cycle of precariat reproduction. The final consequence of this socioeconomic and criminal web is the criminalisation of poverty. *Vid*. Daroqui, 2021.

punishment-based context. That is, how feasible is it for PESCER teachers to provide equivalent education inside and outside prison? In the next section, I will explain Daroqui's notions of 'crack', and of the 'prison inside the university/the university inside the prison' to frame the tensions that arise from teaching in a prison setting.

3.2 Beyond a treatment or a right: prison education as a two-ways 'crack'

A study that seeks to approach the educational experiences of teachers from a human rights perspective must consider education as something more than a treatment. However, what education is in practice and how it operates, also goes beyond the fulfilment of a right. For example, in distance education programmes the right to education is being fulfilled, but the various educational processes that can only take place in a classroom and among colleagues are lost. Literature accounts for the centrality of the student-teacher relationship in the educational endeavour, particularly regarding meaningful and lasting learning (Giles *et. al*., 2012). In her study on distance HE in prisons, Watts highlighted the role of tutorial support as paramount for compensating for the barriers to adequate learning in prison settings, which suggests that the tutor-student relationship is vital for "facilitating learning in less than optimum teaching conditions" (Watts, 2012, 1). In a similar vein, research on e-learning in prisons suggests that it is not enough to provide students with ICT (Information and Communication Technology) or didactic materials, "e-learning prison education cannot take the place of an educator but rather complement it" (Adeyeye, 2019). These studies, though suggestive rather than determinative, invite us to consider education in its relational function rather than as a producer of knowledge, where the educator/teacher/tutor has a vital role.

According to Daroqui (2021) and Scarfó *et. al.* (2016), any programme intending to reproduce the university experience of the 'outside' in the 'inside', will have to deal with the subordination to the penitentiary system and with the dominant relationships that shape the prison entourage; even if the school inside the prison aims at reducing the prevailing prison relationships, these will exist and permeate it all, if a bit milder. Even within the school classrooms inside the prisons, several aspects of the prison dominant relationships come into play, such as the noises, the schedules, the deprivations, and the spaces, among others. Under this approach, the prison system will try to integrate any educational programme within its

walls into its prison logic, comprising the logic of punishment, rewards, and discrimination, as well as its pedagogic violence practices.

Tracing back to Daroqui and Foucault's reflections on the role of prisons as punishment institutions that aim at managing social conflict by maintaining a 're-socialisation fiction' that hides the true nature of prison systems, education understood as liberation and humanizing would seem to have an opposite mission. As a result, this reality generates a fundamental tension in the prison education phenomenon. Education, too, can act as a 'crack' that infiltrates a bit of humanity into the walls of the prison (Daroqui, 2012). This 'crack' can enable the forging of new relationships within a more dignifying framework; it would allow for a 'space of freedom' to emerge. Therefore, the entrance of the university into the prison, and of the prison into the university, opens a *crack* in the isolation: the prison transcends to the outside; "A multiplicity of voices can finally be heard", and the prison can be known beyond the school classrooms" (Daroqui, 2012, 35).

The UBA XXII and PESCER programmes intend to build university spaces inside the prisons from a human rights perspective (*vid*. Laferriere, 2008 and Díaz and Mora, 2010). Their projects aim at providing face-to-face classes inside the detention facilities, with similar class loads and educational quality to those of outside campus, enacting pedagogic strategies that compensate for the limitations of the prison setting. To achieve these goals, the university institutions and all the actors involved, particularly teachers, should be aware of the prison co-optation strategies; consequently,

> (…) within this perspective, promoting: equal opportunities, the circulation of knowledge, the production of an exchange within the framework of respectful and reciprocal relations, and becoming a link with the outside world, will provide a frame of reference for the construction of suitable tools that will make it possible to differentiate the practices and discourses of the university from those sustained by prison technology. (Daroqui, 2012, 36)

This awareness is fundamental because the entry of the university into the prison system also implies the entry of the prison system into the university.

The normative models of education cannot account for these tensions and 'cracks', for they are not shown in the policy designs. Thereby, the contributions of social pedagogy are relevant for understanding the relationships that can be built through prison education, as

an encounter of the outside with the inside that opens possibilities for the construction of new subjects –including students and teachers. Castro (2016) suggests that educational action within prisons should aim at enabling the deconstruction of the subjects in confinement as 'enemies' or 'criminals', and to re-signify them in their condition as 'human beings'. This deconstruction implies seeing the prisoners as the sum of all the other possibilities that they can be: "As opposed to disciplining, rehabilitation, and reification, it is necessary to conceive the educational work (…) in the key of an ideological debate as an educational action" (Castro, 104). The 'crack' implies raising awareness of the hostility of these institutions and reducing them "to a minimum expression, making room for 'rites' of hospitality that give meaning to this environment. Suspicion as a guiding principle of action must be banished, to find new forms of relationship with the other in the framework of a daily life that should operate as an educational scenario" (Castro, 105).

Therefore, the relevance of studying PESCER teachers' lived-experiences arises from the need to untangle the educational processes that take place behind Mexico City prison walls, and to observe how the 'crack' created by the entry of a humanistic institution such as the UACM into a punishment one manifests in teachers' day-to-day practice. The latter relates to locating the educators at the centre of the educational processes, for it depends on them whether they will see their roles as social rehabilitators or as teachers, which mean quite different things, for they depart from a radically different conceptualisation of education in the prison context: education as a right, or education as a treatment. Prison educators are one of the few actors to enter fully into the prison facilities and leave, together with the prison staff. They are directly confronted with the prison institution, with its power mechanisms and the subordination of education. In this research, the conceptualisation of education will not focus on its normative aspects, but on education as an interaction that requires teachers to go inside and out of the detention facilities, face the tensions of these realities, and find ways for balancing them. In the following chapter, I will explain the methodology I used for this research, based on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach which makes it possible to account for the experiences of the PESCER programme's teachers in a detailed and in-depth manner.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research question and methodological approach

The research question that guided this dissertation is: ***how do PESCER teachers experience the practice of teaching face-to-face classes within detention facilities in Mexico City?*** My motivation for undertaking this research is to shed some light on *how education is lived* by teachers working inside detention facilities, which are usually inaccessible places where some of the most marginalized populations live. This question relates to what was explained in the previous chapters, about the complexity of taking a face-to-face education program into the prison setting, given that it would be expected to find different tensions, challenges, and adaptations related to the encounter of institutions of diverse nature within this 'crack' dynamic. To answer the central question of this thesis, I relied on the following set of specific questions to clarify in detail these aspects,

- What are the main motivations, goals, and ideas about education according to PESCER teachers' experiences?
- What challenges, critiques, and areas of improvement do teachers identify based on their experiences of teaching in prisons?
- What solutions and alternatives have the teachers found for facing these challenges? (In terms of pedagogies, teaching tools, institutional support, psychological support, professional training, and collaboration, among others)
- What similarities and differences can be identified:
    - in the way the various PESCER teachers have experienced the teaching practice in detention facilities?
    - regarding the ideas PESCER teachers hold about education in the prison context?
- What lessons can be drawn from these experiences which are helpful:
    - for improving the teachers' practice within PESCER?
    - for designing better higher education programs in confinement contexts?

These questions highlighted some aspects of the lived experience of PESCER teachers, framed by the interaction between educational and institutional actors, norms, and goals.

I chose a qualitative approach for my research that could provide in-depth insights into teachers' experiences. This focus relates to the context of scarce research on this matter, and to a personal positionality based on the value of teachers' narratives to get a proper understanding of the needs and possibilities of prison education. I decided to use a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, mainly based on van Manen's notion of *phenomenology of practice*, concerned with the concept of 'pathic knowledge', a knowledge that emphasizes the role of empathy and sympathy in the understanding of our surroundings: "the terms empathy and sympathy suggest that this understanding is not primarily gnostic, cognitive, intellectual, technical — but rather that it is, indeed, pathic: relational, situational, corporeal, temporal, actional" (van Manen, 2007, p. 20). According to this perspective, phenomenology acts as a language "oriented to the experiential or lived sensibility of the lifeworld', where anecdotal portrayals and images are fundamental for understanding the experiences that escape the 'conceptual and intellectual thought" (van Manen, 2007, p. 25).

My methodology is based on a *hermeneutic* or *interpretive* phenomenological framework –and not on a transcendental one. Hence, my research paid attention to the role of intersubjectivity in the social construction of meaning; epistemologically, I assume that I am working with the interpretation of an interpretation, meaning, that the narratives I am considering as my data set are interpretations that I, as a researcher, will also interpret during my research process (*vid*. Atkinson, 2017). These considerations were fundamental for establishing my research question and interview guide (see Annex 1. D).

4.2 Data collection and storing

Considerations about my fieldwork

When designing my research project, I had to reflect on the nature of prisons, for they are sensitive entourages and there might be delicate information shared about what happens inside. Besides, the small size of the sample could indeed lead to participant identification in the final report. It was important to assess whether the participants involved in the research

belonged to any of the vulnerable or risk groups considered by the ethical standards of the University of Glasgow (UoG). However, my to-be interviewees were adult teachers competent to give consent. Along these lines, the informative and consent documents that I designed for the participants, provided a framework with clear pathways and limits; to protect the participants' security, any sensitive data was carefully considered during the storage, analysis, and dissemination phases, hand in hand with their opinion and approval (see Annex 1A, B and C). Moreover, any information that could represent a sensitive topic was de-identified, and I did not use the actual names of the participants in my dissertation, only pseudonyms.

Data collection method and process

My main data collection method consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions (see Annex 1D). I decided to conduct online interviews on the Zoom platform, through my UoG account, for two main reasons; the first one, given the context of the pandemics and the multiple difficulties to travel and issuing visas on time, I was not sure I would succeed in arriving in Mexico at a proper date; the second reason was that, even if I succeeded in traveling to Mexico, the risks on contagion could interfere with the face-to-face interviews taking place. Hence, online interviews seemed safer and more feasible. The recruitment of the participants followed a snowball sampling technique. In this case, this technique was the most appropriate, for the methodology required participants to be motivated and committed to getting involved in the process; hence, any attempt to do it randomly would not have been adequate. The teachers were free to participate in this research project on an individual basis and did not require the permission of their university, PESCER, or the penitentiary system.

To begin with, the director of the program was contacted in early October 2021 and asked for collaboration with the help of a UoG official letter; I asked for her support to send an open invitation to PESCER teachers, providing enough information about the research methodology and goals. The phenomenological nature of the research implied that it had to be open and transparent in every aspect from the beginning. PESCER's director and the acting project manager were approachable and helped me right away; they sent an email to

all the professors, with a carbon copy (CC) to me, so I began getting answers from the interested teachers early November. In a second stage, I asked these teachers about their availability for participating in the project and I made a calendar for each interview, most of which took place between end-November 2021 and early January 2022.

Initially, I aimed at gathering around ten teachers, to have several experiences that could be analysed in-depth and were sufficiently comprehensive. One possible obstacle to be considered was that, at that moment, a smaller number of teachers was working, given the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic context. However, I got more answers than expected, with a total of 11 participants plus one interview with PESCER's acting project manager (for informative purposes). I appreciated the diversity of the teachers in terms of age, years of teaching in the program, gender, professional background, and subjects taught. A list of participants' characteristics can be found in Annex 2A. Seven of the participants were female, while four were men. They have taught in PESCER for different periods since its creation in 2005 until 2021 (even during the pandemic). Their professional background was varied, including Law, Political Sciences, Sociology, Philology, Mathematics, Environmental Sciences, Linguistics, and Pedagogy. I did not ask them about their age, but they were all teachers with more than ten years of experience. Two of them were not Mexican. While most of them are full-time teachers in the UACM with open-ended contracts, two were part-time teachers who always worked with short-term contracts in PESCER. All the interviews were in Spanish, the mother tongue of the majority.

This research intends to build hand-in-hand a narrative of their experiences, so it was particularly important to make the participants feel free and comfortable when sharing their stories. While doing my fieldwork, I always emphasized to the participants that they were not required to speak about anything they did not feel comfortable with and that they could ask me to delete or modify any information previously provided if, at any phase, that felt at risk or doubtful. I also assured them that, when analysing the data, I would reach out to them, had I had any doubts about using some of the information provided. The main obstacle when conducting the interviews was the Internet signal instability. However, it was never as serious and we managed to communicate appropriately. The interviews lasted all more than one hour,

ranging from one hour the shortest to two hours and a half the longest, being the average one hour and a half.

Data storing

After careful consideration, I decided to store the data in a secure cloud provided by the UoG, namely OneDrive for Business, which offers 1TB+ of storage, more than enough for my audio files and transcripts. The only personal data I collected were the names of the participants, their emails, and some telephones, for communication purposes. I committed to immediately delete all their personal data once the definitive version of the dissertation had been admitted and shared with them, around September 2022. After recording the interviews through the Zoom platform, I kept only the audio files, which I then transcribed in *.doc* documents that I uploaded to the same OneDrive for Business folder. I created a de-identified folder for each participant and uploaded their audio files, their interview transcripts, and their consent forms.

4.3 Data analysis

My data analysis relied on an iterative process of searching for units of meaning within the transcripts. I followed a series of steps like those recommended by van Manen (1997), Gill (2020), and Creswell (2013). According to Creswell (2013), data analysis in hermeneutic phenomenological research is based on identifying significant statements and meaning units, to define clusters of meaning and themes. Then, descriptions are written based on the selected statements, together with structural descriptions: "description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, 61). My analysis process was based on, first, determining the main themes in the interview transcripts which are essential to the experiences. Then, I summarized each interview. Afterward, each of the participants' experiences was compared as an ensemble, to grasp the general characteristics as well as the particularities. The parts and the whole were analysed within the broader context of the research, to finally proceed with the 'textual expression' of the research (Gill, 2020), that is, the dissertation. However, as I mentioned before, the writing

process was a constant during the analysis, even if only at the end it took a more structured shape as a dissertation draft.

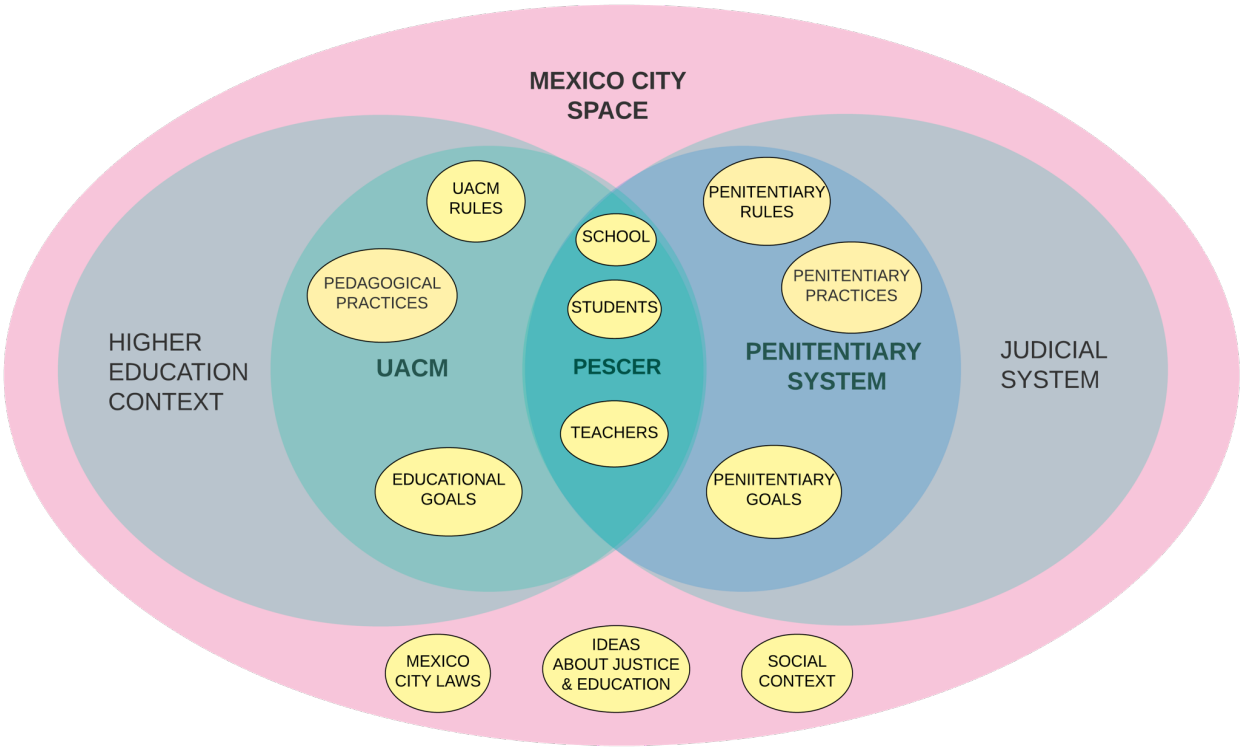
For the first part of the analysis (determining the clusters of meaning and main themes), I used 'Thematic analysis' (TA), a technique that allows for the articulation of different texts to fix their meaning. According to Joffe (2012) TA "… is a method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in a data set (…). It illustrates which themes are important in the description of the phenomenon under study (…). The end result of a TA should highlight the most salient constellations of meanings present in the data set" (209). Although there can be different interpretations of how to apply TA, I followed Braun and Clarke's 'six phases' guidelines, for they provide a flexible and clear route. These are the following: familiarizing yourself with your data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 87). For this part of the analysis, I relied upon the software NVivo to organize the coding process.

I am following Joffe in her definition of a theme as "(…) a specific pattern of meaning found in the data" that may contain "(…) manifest content – that is, something directly observable" or "(…) latent content" hence "Themes are thus patterns of explicit and implicit content" (Joffe, 2012, 209). In phenomenological research, the *meaning* or *sense* of the lived experience is of utmost interest, for "We live out that context by constantly actualizing and realizing our understandings that already inhere in our practices and that cannot necessarily be explicated" (van Manen, 2007, 17). From this standpoint, every experience one reflects upon already has an embedded meaning, for that is the way we, as humans, exist in the world. Nothing is meaningless. Accordingly, my analysis paid special attention to the context in which the themes were identified, for context and meaning are inextricably related from a phenomenological perspective "(…) the source of intelligibility is more mundanely the context of meaning in which our practices are embedded" (van Manen, 2007, 17).

5. Findings

My analysis of teachers' experiences is framed by a particular conceptualisation of the interactions between the PESCER, its main actors and institutions involved, and their respective rules, practices, and ideas, as well as other items at play, such as the spaces where education takes place. For this purpose, I used an Euler diagram to depict the hierarchies and elements of the relationship between the UACM and Mexico City penitentiary system within the 'crack' dynamic generated by the PESCER. It was conceived prior to data analysis to guide the establishment of themes and sub-themes (*vid.* Annex 3 c).

Diagram 2. PESCER teachers' experiences



My approach to thematic analysis was inductive (Swain, 2019). The main method for coding the transcripts was *a posteriori*, hence the codes were defined when reading the interviews. First, the whole interviews' set was codified. Afterwards, the codes were grouped in eleven clusters or 'family codes' (Swain, 2019); some of the initial codes became family codes, while some new family codes were created to group the rest (*vid*. Annex 3b*).* At a second

moment, I undertook a depuration and renaming of some codes, and I selected the family codes that I considered more relevant to my research questions (*vid*. Annex 3c). Finally, I reviewed the coded excerpts within these groups to establish relationships between them and defined the following themes:

- *The meaning of the school space*
- *The student-teacher relationship as a key element of the educational process*
- *The impact of the prison context on pedagogic strategies and resources*
- *The impact of penitentiary violence on teachers' well-being*
- *The value of education as a drive for teacher's motivation*

5.1 The meaning of the school space

The school as a space in tension

In one way or another, all interviewees perceived tension within detention facilities, regarding *education goals* and *students' realities*. The issue of how students' situations impact their ways of being in the classroom, their performance, and classroom dynamics was recurrent when talking about challenges, differences with other teaching experiences, and course planning. Kin mentioned that students' motivation and performance in such a particular context could have less to do with his efforts as a teacher, and more to do with the harsh situations they face

> So how do capture their interest in the class? Since they are very distracted by their family situation or the situation they are going through. (…) And sometimes I was wrong, I tried to give them math readings, I tried to give them more problems, more fun, with colours and figures, etc. But then it became clear to me that I was not going to be able to overcome that, right? And maybe PESCER lacks a little bit in that part. To guide us a little bit to what point we can do, what things we can worry about, and what things we cannot worry about. (Kin)

A similar perspective was shared by Galatea when she mentioned the differences between the students in confinement and her other university students

> Students in prison have to worry about their survival, about staying away from an environment of degradation, an environment of violence, about resisting all the time and trying to focus on a goal, right? For them, it is not easy at all

> and, of course, you see it and live it together with them, yes. It is difficult. (Galatea)

As for her part, Citlalli mentioned that students' attendance usually decreases significantly as the semester goes by. For her, the teaching model of the UACM provides a framework for dealing with the progressive decrease in students' attendance.

> [When] the students in PESCER enter the class, [they are] initially twenty, twenty-five. And then they decrease, they decrease much faster than those on the campus. (…) Although I always look at attendances, I do it as an incentive (…) I know it is their duty to go to classes, but I also know it is an effort they are making because at the Autonomous University of Mexico City it is foreseen in its teaching-learning model, in which you know that, in front of you, there is a student who lives in the peripheries or who is in specific conditions of violence, oppression, marginality, exclusion… (Citlalli)

On a different note, teachers highlighted the existence of power dynamics among the students as another source of tension. For Inti, these dynamics are important to understand what one can talk about and how in the classroom

> An important difference is that you can't talk about everything, I mean, it's not very open to talking about everything. Why? Because you understand -and because they tell you- that inside, there are mafias. (Inti)

Some teachers mentioned that the support or hindrance to the completion of studies varies depending on each penitentiary centre, so it is a problem that relates to the very organisational structure of Mexico City's prison system. For Nut, the prison itself interfered with the university activities of the female students, who were in an even more difficult situation because of the neglect they faced

> What I realised about the women's prison is that they were super-exploited (...). I remember I had a student who complained because she said "Miss, it can't be that I have to miss classes at the university to go to *macramé*[15] classes, because they are demanding these activities from me". In other words, they didn't free up enough time and they also had to work. (…) So, one of them told me, "This is like a boarding school for girls. They keep us busy all day long". They had to start at 5 a.m. and finish at 10 p.m., due to all the activities they had to cover during the day. (Nut)

[15] Textile crafting technique

In sum, teachers' testimonies revealed, on the one hand, that many tensions between educational and penitentiary goals are directly related to the internal dynamics of the detention centres, such as the compulsory routines and the existence of mafias. On the other hand, some tensions are linked to students' emotional processes due to their condition of confinement, which generate non-attendance and lack of motivation and concentration. Although for all the interviewees, the PESCER administration plays a central role in balancing these tensions and supporting them promptly, according to some this mediation is not always enough to guarantee students' right to education, ultimately subordinated to the purposes and dynamics of the judicial-criminal system.

The school as a safe space

Teachers noticed a marked difference between the 'outside' of the school space, dominated by hierarchical and violent' dynamics, and the 'inside' of the school where other kinds of relationships and feelings, related to safety and freedom, could arise. Coyllur explained that, as a teacher, she tried to foster more horizontal and peaceful relationships among students

> It was in that space of the school where they had a different bond again, at least within that space and during class hours. (…) I feel that they left inmates' condition, which is how they are designated, and became students and that this was a relief, (…) a break from all the oppressive situation of the penitentiary institution, its rules, its hierarchies, for the different forms of corruption that exist inside... So, it seems to me that the classroom recovered another type of sociability. (Coyllur)

Galatea highlighted that students try to spend time in the school for as long as possible, as a way to escape the diverse threats of the penitentiary context

> What I came to perceive is that, despite the mood, which is not usually the best, when they are working in the classroom it is completely different. (…) They stay on school grounds not only during school hours but even beyond. (…) Because it is precisely the place where they feel safe, where they feel comfortable, and, above all, away from other risks such as... not only their physical safety but also away from the drugs that circulate in jail, away from verbal and physical aggression. So, the centre becomes a space where they can be comfortable and safe. (Galatea)

In sum, teachers perceived the school as a safe space for students compared to the rest of the prison. These perspectives are of great relevance for reflecting on the meaning of prison

education. Teachers' perspective not only reaffirms that prisons are extremely violent environments, but that the creation of safe spaces, managed by other actors and based on other principles, serves not only educational purposes but turns the prison environment more humane: a 'crack' in the punishment dynamics, albeit in a limited way.

5.2 The student-teacher relationship as a key element of the educational process

Deconstructing prejudices

According to each teacher's trajectory and familiarity with the penitentiary system, they held different ideas about the PESCER students. Some mentioned that they had certain prejudices when they began working in PESCER, usually related to fear or shame, but most of them quickly faded. For others, prejudices revolved around students' motivations for studying. In some cases, teachers' encounters with the students catalysed reflections about the workings of justice and the legitimacy of the sentences. Although, at first, Kin was ashamed to say that he worked in PESCER, over time this turned into pride and a desire to raise awareness about prison realities

> I was always told when I was a child that that's where the bad people go, right? So I think that's where all this comes from, and then the fear of telling people about it, because you think that everyone else still thinks the same, that you're going to the worst place in the world (...) That's when I started to talk about all this and I realized that there was nothing wrong with it, that it was very good to communicate it, that everyone should know about it, about all these situations, right? (Kin)

In Tara's case, the prejudice was related to students' reasons for studying and the benefits they can get for reducing their sentences

> There is a dynamic that, if you study, it reduces the time of your sentence. I said, "They are not going to pay attention to me. I am going to be there trying to talk and they with their masculinity, with their sexism… besides I am a foreigner" (…) I had this idea that maybe they were there just to reduce their sentence. But it turned out absolutely the opposite. They were, I told you, the best students I had. They read the texts, they commented, and they did all the dynamics that were proposed to them. They were also very respectful, and very attentive. (Tara)

Tara's testimony shows that, in her case, sentence reduction incentives did not interfere with the quality of her classes, her bond with students, and a satisfying teaching experience. An

has taught for sixteen years in PESCER and looking back at his experience as a teacher, he reflected on how much he has deconstructed his prejudices throughout the time

> The students there make you change. I did arrive with prejudices (…). That's hard to avoid, but it does change our ways inside (…). And I think that is a good thing because now I see things more humanely. (…) sometimes I think they are there because they made a silly mistake, right? If they had made another decision, they would not be there, and their life would not be almost destroyed. I see things differently. (An)

Teachers' deconstruction of prejudices reveals that entering the prison impacted their ways of understanding many aspects of justice and the penitentiary system, among them: who the students are, why there were there, the value of education, and the realities underlying the Mexican penitentiary system. In this sense, the 'crack' operates from the inside to the outside, being the prison entourage who impacts teachers' ideas about students.

The role of empathy and respect

For all the interviewees, having empathy for students' situations plays an important part in the pedagogical processes, particularly course planning, assessments, class dynamics, and content. For Citlalli, the teacher can indeed help the students in her role as a pedagogue

> They are in a more complex psychological state and one must try as a teacher, as a pedagogue, to also help, to work, (…) in terms of their studies. You are not going to solve his [*sic*.] personal problem, it is not my function. But if I can help him... For example, one of my measures is, "Let's see, don't hand in the assignments when I ask for them. Give them to me later (…)". Because if you're emotionally broken, you can't do an assignment, and you can't concentrate. (Citlalli)

Accordingly, Citlalli practices flexibility in terms of deadlines to help the students to finish their semesters. As for her part, Galatea mentioned that students appreciated that she showed interest in how they felt, and so she integrated a space at the beginning of her classes where students could share a bit about their lives and situations

> Normally, when I arrived at the classroom, the first thing I did was to ask them how they had been the weekend or the days before the class, about their safety, how they felt, who from their family came to see them... We would give each other some space. The classes in prison are 3 hours long, so we gave ourselves a space of approximately 20 minutes to listen to them, and to share their own experience. This is also very important for them. They say, "I am very grateful

> to the university and the teachers because they treat me as a person". So, it is very harsh. (Galatea)

For Galatea, allowing this kind of interaction with the students was key to making them feel like subjects of rights. For Sirio, empathy is also determinant of the type of class activities and for the PESCER curriculum as a whole

> I was responsible for evaluating workshop projects for PESCER. I remember two very particular ones I had to evaluate, and I rejected them. One of them proposed to have the students read books that talked about confinement so that they could make images of what freedom looked like according to the books. Back then, I came from seeing a student who entered at the age of 18 and was 57 years old, what image of freedom is he going to have? My personal pedagogical idea is that you can't give that to someone who doesn't really know more shades of freedom and remembers it very distantly. You will cause him a deep depression. (…). So, you have to be very careful with how you awaken the motivation to learn. (Sirio)

Sirio's narration shed light on a sensitive aspect of teaching in prisons, namely, the ability to be aware of students' vulnerabilities and life experiences as paramount for fostering their motivations. In this sense, entering the prison and getting to know their stories made him more aware of the kind of content and activities that could be damaging for students.

Boundaries

Teachers emphasised the setting of boundaries in the classroom as a key issue for creating an environment conducive to learning. For Law teachers, setting boundaries was even more determinant given that students might ask them for legal advice, even if it is forbidden and even though most of the Law teachers do not have a criminal Law background. Isis explained that it is paramount to communicate clearly to students what her role was and how boundaries allow her to set a class dynamic based on equality and respect

> A first challenge was to clearly define the type of relationship one has with the students. They want to tell you why they are there, they want to move you, I imagine, on some occasions, to get better results, or empathy (…). So, the last thing you can feel is a kind of pity that is useless, just like guilt. If you really want to do your job, to fulfil your objective, if you really care about people, you have to provide elements for the exercise of freedom, for decision making and to assume the consequences of your decisions (…). Therefore,

> knowing why they are inside, how many years, was it fair, was it unfair, *etcetera*? I am not interested. And I am always clear about that. (Isis)

For all the interviewees, the induction talk they got when they began working in PESCER provided a clear path to walk on and face ethical dilemmas. Sirio referred to this introductory talk as meaningful for his relationship with students

> Well, they always give us an introductory talk. Alejandra is very open to all doubts and comments. And above all, the rules of operation, that is, what we can and cannot do with people in confinement. And well, in the programme they try to be very careful that we do not violate the prison rules, and they give us all the guidelines to enter. They also make us very sensitive to the situation of people in prison, but we also have to be very careful about how we handle ourselves in our teaching profile with them, right? (…) So, it is a matter of ethics, a whole discussion on how to channel this will to teach without breaking the rules of the institution. And a talk about how to work with the students..., how not to break schemes or universes, *etc*. It is very profound. (Sirio)

In sum, teachers' accounts of how they conceive their students and how they set boundaries reveal that they move on a delicate ground stuck between prison rules, students' universes, and teaching ethics, which requires them to be very aware of what is at stake when establishing their class dynamics.

5.3 The impact of the prison context on pedagogic strategies & resources

Given the infrastructure and security constraints within a detention facility, teachers must adapt certain pedagogical practices to students' realities. This requires a good knowledge of the rules and students' context and resources, plus a certain amount of creativity and wit. Teachers' accounts reveal that not only do they need a lot more planning and effort to undertake the courses because of the prison constraints, but that this could also mean a disadvantage in students' learning, for they depend so much on what the teacher chooses to bring them. They seem to feel responsible for acting as a link with the outside world, for they know that they are one of the few communicating vessels in an isolating context. For Citlalli, the technological and security constraints of the prison represent a bigger effort for course planning and a more theoretical approach to classes

> The fundamental difference is that on the regular university campus we can go out, make practical stuff, send them [the students] to do practical stuff regarding Human Rights, in entities, or even to solve practical problems that they look for and solve, etc. And the inmate cannot. You have to provide everything to him [*sic*], so everything is more like "Do a reading report about those topics". Well, it becomes a bit more theoretical, and if it's practical it is complicated (…) Since you have to look for all of the materials it requires a lot more work. But what I used to do regularly was to send them essay and analysis assignments and so on. (Citlalli)

Another aspect to consider in classroom activities is the prevailing social dynamics of the students, namely the power relationships and animosities among them. According to Inti, this situation requires some sensitivity on the teachers' part

> Organising debate teams and that kind of stuff, won't work there because, as I told you before, they have a particular organisation at the prison level and from time to time they have strong conflicts among them. So, you can't put them together just because you are the teacher and so. I believe that one has to be very careful, or otherwise, that could become a problem, right? So, what I found as the most adequate technique was to undertake a more traditional teaching style. Namely, the teacher presents, they ask questions, we discuss, etc. (Inti)

Instead, to avoid any animosity among students, Tara let them organize the working groups

> I never chose the groups, because I didn't know them, right? So, I would say "well, groups of three". And while I was looking for something, "you can divide yourselves as you want". Like "I don't want to know what's going on with you guys", right? But I never said: "you, you, and you". I would let them [do it]. Because I liked to do team dynamics, in groups, so that the dialogue would be more fluid, but I never picked them. (Tara)

Nut mentioned that PESCER classes require more effort and planning than on-campus ones because of the technological and infrastructure constraints, particularly regarding ICTs and libraries

> I had to use tools that take you back to the basics of education. Because you don't have technological tools. You can't, for example, sit each one of them at a computer (…). They practically don't have a library. So, it's really complicated. (…) I would have them read aloud and then we would all do the reading together and start to discuss. (…) All the resources they have are from the photocopies you bring them. So, I base my courses on a kind of seminar. (…) But this is also a different challenge because you have to always foresee your work. (…) Here at PESCER, you can never improvise. (Nut)

According to An, the technological constraints students face are a big disadvantage for their learning processes

> An assignment is very different if you leave it on campus, where they have unlimited Internet. (…) [In PESCER] You cannot give them all the information, all the historical references, all the background information, and all the videos that they could freely watch on YouTube to nourish their work. There is only a lot of reflection left, within the detention centres. (An)

Hence, teachers' narrations account for an explicit learning disadvantage due to the prison context that they have to navigate and try to compensate for as much as possible. On a different note, they also mentioned the ethical dimension of acting as referents of the outer world. Some said that they tried to bring meaningful elements to their classes, explicitly related to the outside world. Tanit used to bring them booklets from her job as a human rights advocate

> I think that one advantage I had was that I worked in an organisation (…), so in the organisations we generate a lot of materials. (…) When we talked about the subject, I brought the booklets to them, right? I would fill their library with things (...) Whatever topic we were talking about, I would give them very specific examples (...). And so yes, I tried to bring them many of these tangible things. (Tanit)

Coyllur adapted the discussions and class materials to the specificity of the prison context

> I always thought of my class with regards to the situation they were living in. For the same reason, since it was political theory there were many points of contact and I always tried to make sure that our readings were useful, and that they gave them clues to understanding what they were living inside. But I do remember, now that I am talking to you, that I paid special attention to bringing things from outside -that was always something I took care of: images, stuff from outside... (Coyllur)

Teachers' accounts reveal that the prison context impacts their pedagogical strategies in terms of content, activities, teaching tools, course planning, assignment design, and students' assessment, among other aspects. The latter suggests that the neglect of infrastructure that is conducive to learning, such as inmate access to computers and adequate libraries, not only affects students' learning but also generates an increased workload for teachers. It also indicates that there is a contradiction in, on the one hand, seeking to guarantee the right to

education and, on the other, maintaining security regulations that affect students' access to comprehensive learning.

5.4 The impact of penitentiary violence on teachers' well-being

The emotional impact of the prison context on teachers' well-being varied notably. For all, teaching in prison implied a process of adaptation. They mentioned the relevance of having semester breaks from PESCER, to avoid burnout, which they considered a wise move of the administration. In the case of part-time teachers, their major demotivating factors were the low wages and the fatigue of getting to the detention facilities. Although full-time teachers felt somewhat affected by the prison atmosphere, they were more satisfied with their working conditions. Participants emphasized the importance of letting know the PESCER administration about difficult situations, and about always feeling supported by it.

A recurrent topic was the difficulty of witnessing inmates living conditions, related to mental health disorders, abuses within the detention facilities, and even human rights violations. Tanit mentioned feeling powerless when she witnessed penitentiary authorities abusing a student and explained how this posed an ethical dilemma for her

> An experience that I do remember that I had a hard time with was at the North Prison (...) There was a student there who was doing his thesis (...) and he was a very good student. One day I arrived (...) and his computer was gone (...) And then they told me that he had been transferred as a reprisal, right? (…) So, they had transferred him, I understand, because they had caught him litigating. Many of them became human rights defenders inside the centres (...). And in retaliation they moved him, they took his computer. Everything itself entails human rights violations. (...) They should be transferred with judicial control (...) And so yes, for me it was very scandalous, and I kept thinking 'and what does the PESCER do?'. I know it is beyond their control, but we are also responsible. After all, we are responsible, because we are teaching them. (Tanit)

For An, it took years of experience and emotional maturity to learn to cope with the burden of teaching in detention centres. He highlighted emotional stability as a key aspect of achieving this

> Even though the PESCER coordinators advise you about what to do and what not to do, well, you are human and at some point, the pressure that they have in there, constantly, all the time, absorbs you. (…) With time you learn how

> to deal with this kind of stuff, but perhaps inexperience during our first years led us to make mistakes, things we would never do nowadays, right? (…) Of course, it does affect me. But let's say that you have a broader maturity to handle it. (…) And well, you think that things could be different (...) I do think that those who teach there should have a certain emotional stability, but not only that. (An)

For Galatea, teaching in prisons meant a serious emotional challenge and she preferred to stop

> The impact of teaching at PESCER was very significant for me and since then I have not returned to teaching in prison. (...) Back then, I was teaching in Mexico City's Penitentiary. It is a strong and heavy environment. (…) Especially because the students begin to approach you and, without you asking them anything, they begin to tell a little of their life stories and why they got to prison. And, sometimes, you realize the injustices in the application of the law, and it becomes very painful. I lost about 10 pounds at that time. I began to be emotionally affected. There was a time - I think during the second semester I was teaching - when I had dreams, I dreamed that I was imprisoned. And it was something terrible, very painful. These were recurrent dreams… I think it was an emotional way of adapting to the conditions of teaching in prison. (Galatea)

Coyllur mentioned that to safeguard the PESCER and avoid problems with the penitentiary authorities, she had to be discrete about eye witnessing abuses within the facilities

> In the East Prison, I saw how some guards, one morning, very early, when it was cold, practiced something they call "crocodile", which is to force some prisoners -I think there were two of them- to lie down on the floor and dry it with their own clothes (...). It is an illegal punishment, obviously. I tell you this because one of the difficulties when you are inside the prison, is that you can witness abuse that sometimes you do not understand, and you end up being a passive witness of it. And, for example, I did not report this. And why didn't I? Because I thought that if I reported it, it was likely that they would limit teachers' access, that they would limit us in the school. I was convinced that this was not going to stop because of a teacher's complaint, but that they would most likely make it difficult or limit the functioning of the school. (Coyllur)

The teachers who were already familiar with vulnerable contexts mentioned that it was easier for them to not feel burned out. For example, Sirio considered that his previous teaching experience at the UACM campuses gave him resilience for working in PESCER

> I have seen terrible things, but I can tell you that the UACM contexts, as I am sure you know, are socially, politically, and economically depressed

> environments. So, I think that we teachers are used to having students and seeing very aggressive environments. (Sirio)

Teachers' anecdotes suggest that working in PESCER demands skills to teach in vulnerable contexts and draw boundaries to take care of their mental health. Ethical dilemmas and a sense of violence are constant in their work, revealing that the teaching profile within prisons requires more than subject knowledge and institutional induction.

5.5 The value of education as a drive for teacher motivation

All teachers expressed pride in their job and highlighted that PESCER students are usually very respectful and dedicated and that they saw that as encouraging. Besides, they all held a strong idea about education's impact on the future of PESCER students. While some related this value to freedom, critical thought, and personal growth, others related it to job opportunities and practical skills for life. For Citlalli, education value lies in fostering critical thought to generate a personal and social change

> It's interesting because I put the motivation as a balance to keep going, right? And it was the social work I did or do. What I contribute to a group of people, both personally and collectively. (...) On the one hand, critical thinking, right? And then the social contribution, too. Because once they understand this, they are also people who are going to leave the prison and, socially speaking, perhaps you can give them some tools so that they can become something else in life, if it's true that they made mistakes or something like that. (Citlalli)

For Isis, education is a path to human growth. Relevantly, she understands education as an act that happens in a classroom

> My dream about education is that it transforms human beings, makes us better people, we have more tools, and we need less violence or imposition to achieve our goals and meet our needs (...). Therefore, being in a classroom space is what I need to move forward in life (...). That is why I see myself in a classroom space wherever it is, and even better if it is in the PESCER. Because it is worth supporting those who have dreams. Even more so in a space where it is not allowed to dream. (Isis)

For Inti, education in detention facilities is relevant for social change and social re-inclusion

> I think that the programme is very important for the university and society. (...) the programme is undoubtedly transcendent, it is very important (...) because I consider that training can also be a lever for social reintegration, for family improvement. Because I have heard stories from two or three students

> -a few stories -, regarding a certain influence of their education in the family. (Inti)

For Tara, education is a right that can provide the students-inmates with purpose and mitigate penitentiary violence

> I think the programme is incredible. I think that whoever had this idea was very right about the need for education inside prisons. Because it is a space where there is a lot of violence, so I think it is amazing that they have this right, the right to education inside. I always told Alejandra that they should hire me full-time, that I am an enthusiast of PESCER, and that I would like to continue teaching there. (Tara)

In sum, all the interviewees conceive education as a valuable tool for life and transformation on a personal and social level. Some of their views are based on a more critical conception of the prison environment, while others see it in terms of re-socialisation. It is interesting to note that all the teachers were satisfied with prison students' performance and with their interest in their classes, which indicates that, in their viewpoint, they have managed to generate dynamics conducive to learning in the classroom. In this sense, there seems to be a relevant connection between their motivation to teach and the pedagogical atmospheres they can create.

6. Discussion

The findings highlighted five main themes about PESCER teachers' experiences: the meaning of the school space; the student-teacher relationship as a key element of the educational process; the impact of the prison context on pedagogic strategies and resources; the impact of penitentiary violence on teachers' well-being; and the value of education as a drive for teacher's motivation. The definition of the themes related to Daroqui's (2021) theory of prison education as a two-way 'crack'. Within this framework space, educational and penal actors, and lived experiences play a decisive role.

The data analysis revealed that students' psycho-emotional state can significantly impact the development of the classes, their motivations, and their performance. Teachers' narratives about the students' mental health coincide with what Díaz and Mora (2010) stated more than ten years ago about this same context in terms of mortification, insecurity, instability, humiliation, and dispossession (p.22). These issues, in turn, impact teachers' practices, who must consider these aspects when planning their courses, designing their assessments, and evaluating. Assertive communication, openness, and empathy constitute important tools to relate with the students and reach agreements that benefit their educational processes.

In a similar vein, all teachers stressed that Mexico City prisons are violent places to teach, and even more so to live in. For some, this violence was decisive to pause their work or stop once and for all. This data supports the critique of the judicial and penitentiary systems discussed by Daroqui (2015), pointing to the need to recognize the shortcomings of the penitentiary systems themselves when proposing prison education programmes, rather than only focusing their design on students' social reintegration. As we discussed, the dominant discourse of prison education, centred on education as a treatment (Scarfó et. al., 2016), ignores that LA prisons are not conducive environments for teaching and studying.

On the other hand, teachers' narratives suggest that, though prisons are harsh environments, the PESCER school centres are managed in a way that appeases some prison hierarchies and dynamics, acting as a safe place for students. The latter adds to the reflections on the importance of creating educational spaces within prisons that foster community

building, like Irwin's *educational wings* (2008). This idea aligns with Costelloe's (2014) statement that prison education should provide a counterbalance to the brutal nature of the prison culture, by creating school spaces that "become democratic forums that encourage dialogue, equalise power relations, and provide conditions where prisoners learn about democracy by practising democracy" (p. 32). The latter supports Smith's (2017) observations implying that prison school spaces "serve as intellectual communities that restore human dignity within an institution built on the premise of taking that dignity away". Accordingly, PESCER teachers' accounts about their ways of establishing more horizontal relationships and respectful environments in the classroom, and fostering participative dynamics that students value, suggest that educational spaces within prisons play a socialisation role, where new dynamics and relationships can be built to resist the students' day-to-day context –a 'crack' into prison dynamics.

On the other hand, teachers' accounts of other factors that hamper PESCER's educational practices and goals related mainly to prison rules (schedules, other activities, the lack of Internet), and penitentiary dynamics (power relationships, the transfer of students to other penitentiary centres, punishments). It is worth noting that Gutiérrez (2020) identified the same problem in Santa Marta Acatitla's female prison. These anecdotes imply that there are improvement areas in terms of coordination between PESCER and the penitentiary institutions to ensure that students do not have to juggle their studies to meet other penitentiary requirements. All the above talks about a hindrance of strictly educational goals by prison dynamics and regulations, which adds to the evidence provided by Rangel (2019) about the lack of coordination between the different actors intervening in prison education programmes in the LA region. In this sense, PESCER teachers' experiences invite us to reflect on what Scarfó *et. al.* (2016) have noted as the subordination of school programmes to the penitentiary logic, which demands "to review its school culture and the culture of prisons" (p. 104).

The teacher-student relationship was a central theme of the findings. For teachers, their ability to read the school context, set boundaries, question their preconceived ideas about the inmates, and adapt certain practices and discourses, has been important to create conducive atmospheres for learning and good relations among and with the students. The relevance of using sensitive language in class, regarding anecdotes, or examples that were

not hurtful or damaging to students, was a relevant topic, as well as the teachers' role as a link to the outer world. O'Donnell's (2013) work on prison education and the pedagogical encounter supports these findings, particularly her idea of the role of the educator in creating welcoming and enriched atmospheres that constitute central aspects of the pedagogical relation (p. 278). Thus, there is relevant evidence pointing to the centrality of atmospheres, attitudes, and empathy for fostering meaningful learning experiences in prison contexts. On the other hand, teachers' testimonies on the deconstruction of prejudices also point to the fact that the entry of external actors into Mexico City penitentiary institutions, framed in an educational logic of rights, enables what Castro (2016) refers to as the "deconstruction of the other as an enemy and its resignification as an equal" (103). In other words, the educational encounter makes it possible to see other dimensions of the students beyond their being inmates and generates a dignifying educational practice that considers the student as a human above all.

Regarding the pedagogical practices, the seminar dynamic and text commentary proved to be successful and helpful tools for most teachers, for they catch students' attention while leaving room for participation and interaction, both aspects pointed out as important for students. Teachers' narratives about their adequation of pedagogical activities, assessments, deadlines (if exceptionally), and even contents, reveal an implicit notion of inclusive education principles (*vid*. Mitchell, 2015). Furthermore, PESCER teachers' flexible and inclusive approach to the teaching practice might relate partially to the foundational ideas of the UACM as project concerned with education as a right above any other goal (Cruz, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2020), as well as to their trajectories working in vulnerable contexts.

With regard to teachers' motivation, it became clear that for part-time teachers, the exhaustion of teaching in prisons was considerable and a reason for not continuing, even if they sympathized with the programme's vision. Some participants believe that the programme works, to a big extent, due to an institutional will to keep the programme alive. They also warned about its vulnerability as a programme that requires a lot of planning and energy, which has also been stressed by Cruz (2018). Furthermore, Ponce de León *et. al.* (2021) identified one of PESCER's main challenges "(…) that PESCER has its own teaching staff, given that it belongs to the UACM, with different types of contracts, and that the academies that participate in the different degree programmes do so in an equitable manner"

(499). The latter supports Rangel's evidence (2019), pointing to the lack of economic resources and institutional coordination as some of the main impediments to consolidating the right to education in LA prison contexts.

All the participants found transcendent meaning in their work because of the way they can positively impact on students' lives; they all shared a vision of its transformative power, human growth, freedom, critical thought, social development, and a tool for job finding, among others. In this sense, findings coincide with the strengths of PESCER pointed out by Ponce de León *et. al.* (2021) that "(...) the teachers who participate in the programme are recognised for their high degree of commitment, their responsibility to comply with the rules for accessing prisons when teaching, and their professionalism" (499). Teachers' statements suggest that the high degree of commitment has to do with a sense of social work that gives them resilience to enter a demanding and complex context.

Implications

The findings point to two main issues; on the one hand, face-to-face HE as a modality that allows the development of pedagogies, atmospheres, and relationships adapted to inmate-students' context, which points to a truly inclusive project within prisons. On the other hand, to the importance of promoting school spaces and educational programmes inside prisons that are not subject to prison logic, to promote actual educational goals. Teachers' experiences show that teaching inside prisons involves a great number of pedagogical, emotional, and ethical challenges, which implies a remarkable determination and willingness on their part. Being a tiring job, both because of the transfers and the dynamics, teachers without good working conditions are likely to wear out quickly. Therefore, creating decent working conditions for these workers is fundamental for education's adequate development. PESCER's inductive talks to new teachers seem to play an important role in their adaptation to the prison context, which points to the relevance of promoting good teacher training programmes in prison contexts (Scarfó *et. al.,* 2016). Similarly, the data suggests that psychological, ethical, and pedagogical support can be key to avoiding teacher fatigue.

It is relevant to note that PESCER workers showed a very similar profile in terms of their commitment to education as a human right, which seems to function as resistance to

assimilating penitentiary ideologies to the UACM's educational mission in prisons. This speaks to the importance of linking education in prisons with broader educational contexts that conceive of education as a right, as in this way 'crack' can operate positively by bringing inclusive education principles into the prison. On the other hand, limitations in Internet access pose a disadvantage for students that judicial authorities should rethink, to avoid reproducing the cycle of inequality and its impacts on education. Besides, data suggests that information technologies can act 'as a hook for educational involvement' within prison contexts (Irwin, 2008, 516).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the irruption of the pandemic in the last school cycles of PESCER, generated great uncertainty about the future of the programme, as it had to be suspended in 2020, and moved to a distance modality in 2021. It was not the objective of this research to delve into the effects of the pandemic on PESCER, but due to its face-to-face modality, it is worth mentioning it as a topic to be studied in depth, particularly due to the problem of technological limitations preventing prisoners from accessing alternative educational modalities, and that left them stranded in their educational processes or highly limited, due to the lack of resources to learn.

Limitations

This is a qualitative study based on eleven interviews with PESCER teachers. Given that it was a phenomenological study that required the trust of the participants on very personal issues, there might be a bias in terms of the teachers who responded. Most of the teachers who participated are full-time teachers committed to the UACM project and satisfied with their working conditions; however, they cannot be considered representative of the programme, which has dozens of other teachers, of whom an important part are part-time teachers. On the other hand, the asynchronicity of teachers' work periods gives us a broad view of their experiences at various times, but we cannot make systematic comparisons in the same period. For the same reason, it is possible that some aspects narrated may have changed and teachers may not have taken this into account when talking about their experiences. Besides, due to the objectives of this study, it was not possible to delve into issues that were important to teachers, such as their working conditions and resource

limitations in PESCER, or the pandemic effects on their working conditions. Further studies could reveal important impacts of the pandemic on teachers' experiences and the learning processes of PESCER students, given that the programme had to quickly adjust to a distance modality that is problematic for the prison context for many reasons. Finally, more research could clarify to what extent teachers' experiences change according to the specific prison setting in which they work.

7. Final considerations

This dissertation analysed through an interpretative phenomenological methodology the experiences of teachers who have worked in PESCER, considering face-to-face modality of education as a central aspect of a human rights-based prison education. The research questions inquired about the motivations, ideas, pedagogical practices, challenges, and alternatives undertaken to teach inside detention centres. The study draws on a theoretical framework stemming from penal systems' sociology, which states that, due to their punishment origins and underlying violent logic, prisons will impact any educational programme that enters their walls. However, it also posits that the university's entry into the prison acts as a 'crack' that can impact the prison environment, even if this happens within a power framework dominated by penitentiary logic. This research revealed that some prison dynamics hamper the educational processes by creating diverse types of tensions and that PESCER teachers must be prepared beyond the pedagogical to teach in Mexico City's prisons, for their experience is completely marked by their knowledge -or lack thereof- of the prison context. Teachers' willingness to adapt their educational practices to the prison context revealed implicit and explicit notions of inclusive education, fostered by the UACM and their life stories. In a similar vein, teachers' ideas on the role of education are central to their motivation and practices, in such a way that they appease or re-signify judicial violence impacts. These narratives showed that the life situations of imprisoned students impact significantly how classes are conducted and that teachers' ability to generate empathetic, clear, and respectful relationships with students is paramount. The findings also revealed the importance of recognizing their teaching limitations in the face of a powerful and violent context, and of having a clear leadership to look for guidance when issues that could affect their classes or their well-being arise. Finally, I suggest that it is important to study in more depth particular issues regarding gender, different prison environments, teachers' working conditions, and the COVID pandemic's impact on PESCER, to get a deeper understanding of some of the main teachers' concerns. This work aims to contribute to the knowledge of educational practices in penitentiary contexts, to get a better understanding of their functioning, and to provide useful tools to improve them.

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9. Annex

Annex 1. Ethical Committee documents

A. Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Project: A phenomenological study of teachers' experiences on face-to-face Higher Education courses in detention facilities of Mexico City

Name of Researcher: Marisol Tarriba Martínez López

Name of Supervisor: Michele Schweisfurth

Consent clauses

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Confidentiality clauses

- I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym unless they explicitly wish to be identified by their actual name. The participants will be free to

change their minds regarding this matter at any stage of the research process previous to the final version of the dissertation.

- I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

Data usage and storage clauses

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
- I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

Consent on method clause

- I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being video and audio-recorded.

- I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.

Consent clause

- I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant …… Signature ……

Date ……

Name of Researcher …Marisol Tarriba Martínez López… Signature ……

Date ……

B. Plain Language Statement

University of Glasgow | School of Education

Plain Language Statement

Title of project and researcher details

A phenomenological study of teachers' experiences on face-to-face Higher Education courses in detention facilities of Mexico City

Researcher: Marisol Tarriba Martinez Lopez

Supervisor: Michele Schweisfurth

Course: Dissertation / Education Policies for Global Development

You are being invited to take part in a research project into ***higher education within detention facilities.***

Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

I hope that this sheet will answer any questions you have about the study.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to find out how teachers experience the provision of face-to-face classes within detention facilities in Mexico City from a phenomenological lens.

2. Why have I been chosen?

You are being asked to take part because you are currently teaching in PESCER or have taught in PESCER until recently. Your profile is considered relevant for this research because of your broad experience as a PESCER teacher.

3. Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. Participation is fully voluntary and requires that you feel motivated and committed to taking part in it. However, in the case that you do decide to take part, and if after you have started to take part, you change your mind, just let me know and I will not use any information you have given me in my writing.

4. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you take part, I will ask you some questions and to share detailed stories and narrations about your experience as a PESCER teacher. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. The anecdotes and information you want to share with me will be up to you. This will take about one or two interview sessions of approximately 1 or 2 hours each; the duration of the interviews is flexible and can be adapted to the participant's needs and availability. The interviews will be through an online platform such as Zoom. I will record the answers on a video and then create an audio file from it so that afterward I can listen carefully to what was said. Then I will create a transcript of the interview which you will be asked to read carefully to analyze if important information went missing, or was not mentioned and if you think that new information could be added. Depending on the case, we could either add whatever you feel to the transcript or have an extra interview to talk more in-depth about it.

I will be finished gathering data by end of November 2021.

5. Will the information that I give you in this study be kept confidential?

I will keep all the data I collect about your experience as a PESCER teacher in a locked file on my university OneDrive for Business account, hence, on a digital platform protected by the standards of GDPR. When I write about what I have found, your name will not be mentioned if you do not want it to be mentioned. In this case, you may choose a pseudonym which I will use when writing up the final assignment. You can decide on whether you want your name to be or not to be mentioned after the interviews stage and the fact-checking of the transcripts and I will respect your decision. If you feel that information that could lead to identification was shared during the interview and do not want it to be integrated in the dissertation, you can let me know at any stage of the research and I will delete it or omit it. As for my part, I will be constantly confirming with you about whether you agree that I write about certain stories, details, and quotes in my dissertation. It is important that no information that could represent a risk for you or others is published without further consideration.

However, if during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that you might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

6. What will happen to the results of this study

I will analyze the data I collect from participants and present this in the dissertation which I am writing for my qualification, a Master's degree in Education Policies for Global Development. All participants will receive a written summary of the findings and I will also present the information to colleagues. I will destroy the data at the end of the project.

7. Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and agreed by the School of Education Ethics Forum, University of Glasgow

8. Who can I contact for further Information?

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Marisol Tarriba Martinez Lopez (2610098t@student.gla.ac.uk)

or my supervisor, Michele Schweisfurth (Michele.Schweisfurth@glasgow.ac.uk)

or the Ethics officer for the School of Education, education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

C. Privacy Notice

PRIVACY NOTICE

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project: A phenomenological study of teachers' experiences on face-to-face Higher Education courses in detention facilities of Mexico City

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be what's known as the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in the research project *A phenomenological study of teachers' experiences on face-to-face Higher Education courses in detention facilities of Mexico City*. This privacy notice will explain how The University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why we need it

We are collecting basic personal data such as your name and contact details in order to conduct our research. We need your name and contact details to arrange interviews, follow up on the data you have provided, and share with you the results of this project.

We only collect data that we need for the research project and will de-identify your personal data from the research data, more concretely your answers given during the interview, through pseudonymisation, unless you would explicitly state that you wish us to use your real name.

Please see the accompanying **Plain Language Statement**, for any further questions that arise.

Legal basis for processing your data

We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research we will be relying upon **Task in the Public Interest** in order to process the basic personal data that you provide. For any special categories data collected we will be processing this on the basis that it is **necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes**

Alongside this, in order to fulfil our ethical obligations, we will ask for your **Consent** to take part in the study Please see accompanying **Consent Form**.

What we do with it and who we share it with

All the personal data you submit is processed by the main researcher of this study, with the help of part of the staff at the University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe: pseudonymisation, secure storage, and,

encryption of files. Please consult the **Consent form** and **Plain Language Statement** which accompanies this notice.

We will provide you with a digital copy of the study findings and details of any subsequent publications or outputs on request, as well as a summary in Spanish of the main findings.

What are your rights?*

GDPR provides that individuals have certain rights including: to request access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and to object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the processing of the personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.

If at any point you believe that the information we process relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.

Please note that as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see UofG Research with personal and special categories of data.

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the webform or contact dp@gla.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter.
Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) https://ico.org.uk/

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or relevant School Ethics Forum in the College.

How long do we keep it for?

Your **personal** data will be retained by the University only for as long as is necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval 01 September 2022. After this time, personal data will be securely deleted.

Your **research** data will be retained for a period of ten years in line with the University of Glasgow Guidelines. Specific details in relation to research data storage are provided on the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form which accompany this notice.

End of Privacy Notice _____

D. Interview guide

University of Glasgow | School of Education

Interview guide for research project

Student ID: 2610098T

Name of Applicant: Marisol Tarriba Martinez Lopez

School/Subject: School of Education

Degree/Programme Title: Education Policies for Global Development

I. Participants personal and introductory information

Name:
Professional background:
Time working in PESCER:
In what UACM bachelor do you teach?
What are the names of the classes you teach?
Do you have other jobs besides teaching in PESCER?

II. Interview topics and example questions

Summary of professional life story

- How did you come to work in PESCER?

The value of education

- What is the purpose of education for you?
- How do you connect this value to prison education?
- What does prison education mean to you?

Reasons to teach in PESCER

- What do you think about your job?
- What do you like, and what do you dislike, about it?

PESCER daily life: attitudes, pedagogies, didactics, interactions, environment

- How do you act when you are teaching in PESCER? Is there any difference with your teaching outside of prison?
- Tell me about your teaching methods and techniques? Are there any particularities when teaching in PESCER?
- How do you relate to your students?
- How do you relate to other teachers and PESCER staff?
- How do you relate to prison staff?

Particularities about teaching in PESCER

- What are the main differences between teaching in PESCER and the standard UACM or other universities' courses?
- What feelings does being in a PESCER class generate in you?

Motivations

- What do you like the most about teaching in PESCER?
- Could you share one or more anecdotes about your best experiences while teaching in PESCER?

Challenges

- What are the most difficult aspects of teaching in PESCER?
- Have you ever felt that you cannot continue teaching in PESCER? If so, how come?
- Please share some anecdotes that reflect some real-life situations where you faced some of these challenges
- Is there something that frustrates you about the job?

Facing challenges

- How have you overcome these challenges?
- Is there a peer support network?
- Do teachers support each other to overcome these challenges?
- Do you feel supported by the PESCER administration/Prisons' staff/students?

Lessons from teaching in PESCER

- What are the most valuable lessons you have learned while teaching in PESCER, in a professional, human aspect, etc.?

Personal life vs professional life

- Do you think that teaching in PESCER affects or has affected your personal or professional life? If so, in what way? If not, why not?
- Is it hard to keep a balance between your personal life and PESCER? Please explain.

PESCER in a wider context

- Do you consider PESCER a valuable and scaleable program? Why?
- Are you familiar with any other higher prison education programmes? If so, what do you think about them with regards to PESCER?
- Do you think higher education for prisons should be a priority? Why?

Future perspectives

- Would you like to keep teaching in PESCER? Why or why not?
- What would you change about PESCER?
- Do you feel that the programme considers your suggestions and thoughts about it? Why?
- According to your experiences, what is the prospect for prison education, and more concretely for higher education, in Mexico? and the world?
- How do you see yourself in the future?

Final remarkable anecdotes

- Could you please tell me an anecdote that you remember as paradigmatic of your teaching in PESCER? (that you have not yet mentioned)

Annex 2. Data collection

A. Table 1. Participants

Teacher	Gender	Professional background	Work periods in PESCER	Type of contract	Detention facilities they have taught in	Nationality
An	Male	Law	2005-2020	Full-time teacher	Mexico City's Penitentiary (Men), North Prison (Men), East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), Tepepa Prison (Women), First-time/Youth offenders Center (CEVARESO/CERESOVA)	Mexican
Citlalli	Female	Law	2008-2012/2015-2020	Full-time teacher	Mexico City's Penitentiary (Men), North Prison (Men), East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), Tepepa Prison (Women)	Foreigner
Coyllur	Female	Political Sciences	2006-2010	Full-time teacher	Mexico City's Penitentiary (Men), East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), Tepepa Prison (Women), First-time/Youth offenders Center (CEVARESO/CERESOVA)	Foreigner
Galatea	Female	Law	2008-2013	Full-time teacher	Mexico City's Penitentiary (Men), North Prison (Men), East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), Tepepa Prison (Women), First-time/Youth offenders Center (CEVARESO/CERESOVA)	Mexican
Inti	Male	Pedagogy, Linguistics, Law	2015-2019	Full-time teacher	East Prison (Men)	Mexican
Isis	Female	Law	2008-2020	Full-time teacher	Mexico City's Penitentiary (Men), North Prison (Men), East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), Tepepa Prison (Women)	Mexican
Kin	Male	Mathematics	2005-2020	Full-time teacher	East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), Tepepa Prison (Women), First-time/Youth offenders Center (CEVARESO/CERESOVA)	Mexican
Nut	Female	Environmental Sciences	2015-2020	Full-time teacher	East Prison (Men), East Prison (Women), South Prison (Men), First-time/Youth offenders Center (CEVARESO/CERESOVA)	Mexican
Sirio	Male	Linguistics	2011/2015-2019	Full-time teacher	North Prison (Men)	Mexican
Tanit	Female	Sociology	2015-2019	Part-time teacher	North Prison (Men), East Prison (Men), South Prison (Men)	Mexican
Tara	Female	Law	2017-2018/2020	Part-time teacher	North Prison (Men)	Foreigner

B. Example 1. Fragment of an interview

R – Can you tell me a little bit about your current job? Like how long you have been working in PESCER, if you teach elsewhere, and what your professional background is.

I - I start with my education. I have a law degree and a master's degree in Law from UNAM. I worked for 13 years at UNAM as a lecturer. I started teaching at PESCER, which is the Higher Studies Programme for Prison Centres in 2008, I started teaching. The line of academia that I follow in my law classes has always been civil law, both at UNAM and at the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México, which is where the PESCER programme is located. I resigned from UNAM in December 2017. I finish in 2018 my semester and I dedicate myself only to teaching at the Autonomous University of Mexico City where I am currently a full-time professor-researcher. At PESCER I taught from 2008 to 2013. Since 2013 I have only taught on campus, before that, we did not have a Law degree on campus, only in prisons (...). The impact of teaching at PESCER was very significant for me and since then I have not returned to teaching in prison (...).

R - So, I have a doubt, when you entered PESCER in 2008, was that your first teaching experience?

I - No, no, my first teaching experience was at UNAM, and I started teaching at UNAM in 2004 if I remember correctly.

R - And what was it like for you ... how did you experience the difference in the context in which you were teaching, going from UNAM to prison centres?

I - Well, it was very hard because, finally, I was facing an absolutely different context, unknown to me. Something happened to me that surely happens to all of us, very strong, when you enter the schools in prison, and at that time the level, the subjects I was teaching were in the Mexico City penitentiary, it is a strong environment, it is a heavy environment, It becomes a painful environment and especially because the students begin to approach you and, without you asking them anything, they begin to tell a little of their life story and why they got to prison and, sometimes, you realize the injustices in the application of the law and it becomes very painful. I lost weight, I lost about 5 kilos, at that time. There was a time - I think it was during the second semester I was teaching - when I had dreams, I dreamed that I would be put in jail, right? And it was something terrible, very painful and they were, they were recurrent dreams, I think it was an emotional way of adapting to the conditions of teaching in prison.

I went twice a week, sometimes even three times a week, to different prisons. So no, it was not easy, it was not pleasant. However, when I arrived at the classroom, the mood was already different. Being in the classroom was already doing what I liked to do and, to be honest, I forgot everything, the context in which I was, and it became a working classroom. The differences with the students specifically are many, they are abysmal. First, because of my own life experience, right? Students in prison have to worry about their survival, about staying away from an environment of degradation, an environment of violence, about resisting all the time and trying to focus on a goal, right? For them, it is not easy at all, and of course, you see it and live it together with them, yes, it is difficult.

R - Of course, and I suppose that for those who teach law in particular, it must be different than if you teach other careers.

I - Yes, it is different in the sense that all the professors they have in front of them want to turn them or want to see them as legal advisors. It is ethically impossible to do so; to begin with, it is ethically impossible. Second, finally, I have never dedicated myself to criminal law, I do not like criminal law. My line of work, my area of work in law has always been civil law and then it was much easier to tell them "I don't know, I don't know criminal law. I am a specialist in civil law". And then I could distance myself, right? from their concerns about their own process. So yes, of course, it becomes different because they are also very insistent, aren't they? very, very insistent in asking about their own issues.

R - Did it seem to you something recurrent in all the generations you had?

I - In all the generations and all the schools, because regardless of the school... that is, when we talk about the school we are talking about the prisons, whether male or female, so in all of them. I think that those who did not do it were not the women, but the men. It is the men who are continually trying to have more elements or more opinions or to add other criteria different from their teachers. Women don't, they don't really do it that much. They come to talk but not really to consult.

R - Curious, why is that?

I - Who knows, who knows. There is probably more sorority in these women's groups and maybe the women are more mature about it, right?

R - And then, how many prisons did you go to, or rather, which ones?

I - In all the ones in Mexico City: in the south, there is the men's prison and there is Tepepan which is the women's prison; in the penitentiary of Mexico City -for men and women- called Santa Martha Acatitla; there is another one called CERESOVA (back in the days), which is a detention centre for first offenders, I also went to the northern prison and the eastern prison. In all of them.

R - Was it the same for you to teach in each penitentiary centre? or did you notice differences while of teaching and regarding how you felt?

I - The first generation I taught, which was also the first generation to come out of PESCER, in Santa Martha Acatitla, the men's prison. It was a generation with a high level. The students were very committed, the students were concerned about learning, very dedicated, and very disciplined. And it was also a group where, despite their personal differences, they were very supportive of each other, very supportive. It was a very satisfying group. I don't know if the satisfaction lies in the fact that it was my first group, or in the overall outcome of the group, right? Or maybe it's both, it's probably both, isn't it? The satisfaction.

As time goes by, most of the generations that have enrolled in the university no longer look to the university as a learning space, or as a space to change a life project, but many, especially the men, look to enroll in the university to somehow comply with the law? The law establishes that for each day of work or study, one day of their sentence is reduced, so many students -not all of them-, but now more students are interested in enrolling in university as a way to reduce their sentence. So, of course, this is also modifying and affecting the work of the teacher, because many of them leave, and many only come to take roll call. Many of them are not in the classroom and when the colleagues from the prison, who are in charge of the roll call, who are in charge of corroborating that the inmates are in the place where they should be -they call the roll three times a day to all the inmates to make sure that they are there-, those who should be in the classroom are not there. Then those who should be in the classroom, some of them are not in the classroom, but their fellow inmates put them on roll

call because there is corruption involved. That is terrible, and besides, you don't experience it there, do you? It is sad and unpleasant.

(...)

R - And how did you teach your classes? Were they different from the way you taught at UNAM, for example? Within the classroom.

I - A lot because to begin with, the students in prison at that time didn't even have libraries, right? So, you had to bring, you had to create anthologies of all the material you were going to work on, photocopy them at the university, and on the first day of class give an anthology to each of the students. That was the first and biggest difference because at UNAM I did not arrive with a cart, a little devil with a box full of copies to give to my students. So that is a significant difference. Another is that, finally, the students were at that time more limited concerning information, because they only had access to the information that we as teachers gave them, based on the readings that we selected, and that is limited. It may be very comfortable for the professor because I know what they are going to read and I can't get out of it, but it is a limit in the students' training. Unlike the students at UNAM, who have all the open spaces, who can go to any library, or who can even use the Internet, something that does not exist in prison, it is forbidden, and they cannot have access to the Internet. I mean, some of them do. We go back to corruption, some will have access, but it is not legal, it is not due, so the vast majority does not have it.

There is, of course, a big difference. Because even the dynamics, the teaching techniques are reduced only to discuss what we as teachers provided them. After more or less two years, libraries began to be created in all the detention centres and it was a very interesting task because, at last, we as professors contributed with a series of bibliographies that the university was in charge of getting for all the centres. It was not immediate, but we acquired at least 1 or 2 books per semester for each of the detention centres. So, this even allowed us to change our anthologies and at one point, in the last year that I taught at PESCER, before taking the anthology I would review the bibliography they had, and I would go down to the library with one or two books, and I would tell them "Let's see, you have this one, this one...". We would write down the bibliography they had, I would review the indexes and the topics, and I would tell them "These books are going to be useful for units 1, 2, or 3". I would tell them which books they were going to need, and I would add readings in another anthology so they would have variety. So that gave us the possibility of generating discussions that could be more enriching.

R - And did you see their interest in using these libraries? do they use them?

I - Yes, the vast majority, namely those who are studying Law by conviction, do use them. They do use them.

R - And, in this matter of materials, was there ever any competition to monopolize them? did you feel that everyone could have equal access to...?

I - No, they do not have equal access. There is indeed competition among them, they complain that "teacher, they took out the books, they haven't given them out, they don't want to lend them to me". So even this type of talk is different from the UNAM kids. It is very difficult for them to get a book, for their family to buy them a book, and they are not affordable Law books. And for their families to be able to pay for them, it is also an economic expense because they are charged a certain amount for

the things they are getting. So, yes, it does become complicated. The university also provided them with computers. The computers that were no longer in use at the university underwent maintenance and were given on loan to the prisons so that the students could also begin to work on computers. And that also sometimes provoked arguments among them, didn't it? The older students -I am not speaking of age but of time enrolled in the university-, were the ones who, especially in the North Prison, were organizing roles and days for groups of students so that they could have access to the use of computers and books, so they were organizing themselves.

A very interesting phenomenon happened in the northern prison, and I don't know if it happened in other prisons -I understand that something similar happened in the south-, but in the north is where it is much clearer to me. Adult education, the National Institute of Adult Education, enters prisons to give exams to inmates so that they can continue advancing. But in reality, the only thing they do -I think it is the INEA, I think it is called INEA-, what they do is to supply the materials. They go, they enroll them, they tell them "Here are the materials and we will see you in three months to give you an exam". So, they have no counseling about what they are studying. The university students, the PESCER Law students, were forming groups of advisors and they were giving classes to their classmates. On the one hand, they took classes and, on the other, they became advisors to help their classmates, right? In prison you find a diversity of people and backgrounds, there may be engineers as well as inmates, people who already have a career and were studying a law degree as a second university choice just to stay away from the prison environment, as a means of survival. And what they were doing was supporting their classmates to give them classes in the content of the programmes, whether it was elementary, middle school, or high school. And they were selecting where they were good at to be able to share their knowledge and support their classmates. So, I always found this extraordinary, because they started doing it informally and, as time went by, INEA hired them as advisors and paid them for the advice they gave to their classmates. It is a phenomenon of extension, of spreading knowledge and making it extensive, which I think is wonderful. (...)

R - Of course, and did they tell you a lot about these experiences? in the classroom, was there space to talk with them?

I - Yes.

R - Is that how you got to know about them?

I - Yes. Normally -I say this personally, I don't know what other teachers do- but when I arrived at the classroom, the first thing I did was to ask them how they had been the weekend or the days before the class, about their safety, how they felt, who came from their family to see them. We would give each other some space. The classes are 3 hours in prison, so we gave ourselves a space of approximately 20 minutes to listen to them, and to share their own experience. This is also very important for them, it is very, very important. They say, "I am very grateful to the university and the professors because they treat me as a person". So, it is very strong.

R - For you, was there any campus where... no, not a campus, a centre where it was more difficult for you to teach?

I - Yes, and it is correct to say campus because it is the prison campus, it is not the university campus, but it is a campus that is an educational centre in prison. The East Prison. I never liked it; it was very difficult for me to go to teach at East Prison. In fact, it is the one I went to the least amount of time.

R- Why is that?

I - I don't know, I'm not sure why. I mean, there is absolutely nothing different, visible or perceptible that... different from others. Psychologically, the East Prison was always difficult for me, I think the atmosphere was heavier.

R - Did you notice more tension in your students, or, rather, like the whole entrance to the prison? The tour?

I - The entrance. That tour was the same, that tour is the same. But it was on the campus that I felt less comfortable. Yes, I think there was... among the students there was more tension, so it was the campus where I felt the least comfortable.

(...)

R - And, going back to the subject of your classes, I am intrigued by how do you evaluate the students given all the limitations that they have, and considering that you are aware of the processes they may be going through. How did you make decisions to evaluate their performance, and what activities did you prefer to do?

I - Look, I usually did progressive evaluations. All activities are consecutive, starting with worksheets. I ask my students, and it's always something I've done, to write by hand. They have to read and research the unit topics and develop them by hand. Not to copy me, but to think about what they read and write it down, to develop the topics. The worksheets, obviously because of the work they have to do, become an element for assigning points. But this is so that they know that what they are doing is going to imply, in the end, some value in the grade. However, -and I always emphasized this in class: "it is the benefit that you apparently get, but the real interest of having you work by hand is that you read and participate in class because everything that you work by hand is what we are going to discuss here in class. You have the topics; this is what you have to read, and this is what you have to work on." In such a way that, in each class -and this is still the case in my classes outside of prison-, with the worksheets that they have already made, they contribute with the elements of the discussions of the topics, and they all contribute because they start commenting "hey, but I also have this", "I also found this".

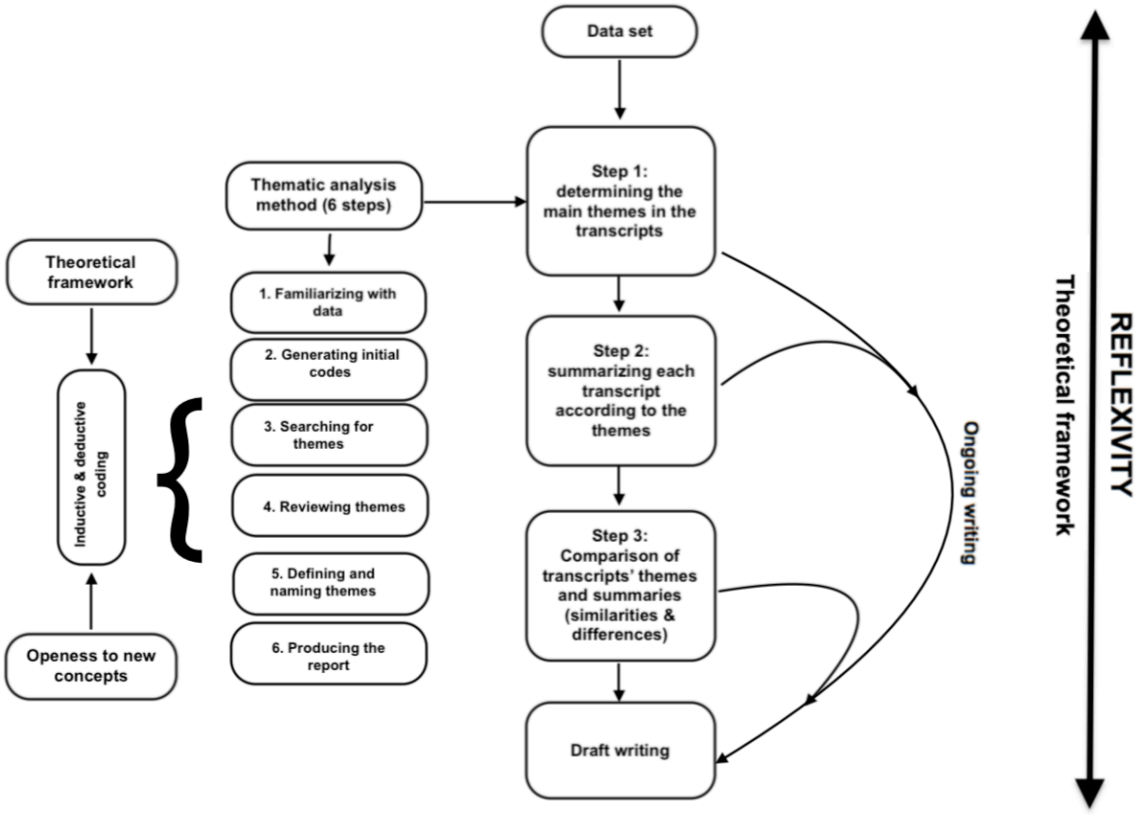
And what we do are annotations on the blackboard of common elements that they share, and then we systematize all the information to become a single unit of knowledge, that is, we analyze the information, and then we integrate all the elements again. When they discover the function of the worksheets -because they discover it, don't they? -, at first, they do it reluctantly, they have to be writing, they don't like it very much. But when they discover that what they worked on is what allows them to take part in class, it develops in a very dynamic and enthusiastic way. Even those who do not bring the worksheets that day, and therefore do not take part, feel very bad, they feel that they are left out of a discussion, and, above all, they assume that it was their responsibility to have been left out of the discussion. It becomes a ripple effect. Then there are activities -all the time within the group- that are being evaluated. I also work a lot on the subjects I have, with mind maps, concept maps, or synoptic charts. Depending on the knowledge I want them to acquire, is how we distribute the activities, right? And the truth is that those who are there in the classroom, who are interested, follow the activities, and participate. Some activities are basically to elaborate documents from all the information, such as contracts or documents, such as family lawsuits, and divorces, for example. And these are the instruments with which I evaluate them. In the end, I only give them an exam - well, I

used to give them in prison - a general exam of everything they have already worked on during the semester and the result of that exam only becomes a summative one, a summative one.

But I think that they... they, what I came to perceive is that, despite the mood, which is not usually the best, when they are working in the classroom it is different, it is completely different. They are very aware of their situation, of course, and all the time they are working precisely against those emotions, right? They stay on school grounds not only during jail hours and not only during school hours but even outside of school hours, right? They go, they eat at the school centre, and on days when there are no classes, they try to be at the school centre doing homework, work, or in the library. Many times, even those who do not have visitors on the day of the visitors prefer to be at the school. Even if there are no classes, on vacations, and if the school centre is open, they prefer to be at the school centre. Because it is precisely the place where they feel safe, where they feel comfortable and, above all, away from other risks such as... not only their physical safety but also away from the drugs that circulate in jail, away from aggression, both verbal and physical. So, the campus for them becomes a space where they can be comfortable and safe within their own context.

Annex 3. Data analysis

A. Diagram 1. Phenomenological analysis map



B. Table 1. Final codebook

Code	Code description	Files	References
Academic affairs	Information related to the diverse administrative affairs concerning PESCER's functioning (course planning, teachers' training, recruitments & contracts, evaluation, teachers' support, rules, etc.)	**112**	**274**
Academic courses and programmes	Information related to the academic courses and programmes offered by PESCER according to the teachers, and how this relates to their day-to-day job	10	42
Perceptions about contracts	Information related to the types of contracts (fixed-term, indefinite-term, etc.)	9	24
Curricular content	What the teachers share about the contents they teach in class (courses' syllabus, subjects, units)	10	29
Evaluation techniques	Evaluation strategies undertaken by the teachers	11	27
Perceptions about leadership	What PESCER teachers think about the program's leadership	6	11
PESCER as mediator	How do teachers perceive PESCER's administration as an intermediary for situations involving teachers and the penitentiary system	10	18
Psychological support	Issues related to the psychological support provided to teachers by the UACM and the PESCER	6	8
Teacher recruitment	Information related to what PESCER teachers think about recruitment processes (the ways in which the PESCER looks for teachers, and in which teachers apply to the PESCER)	10	29
Retention and performance	Information related to what PESCER teachers think about the ways in which the PESCER manages Faculty and student retention	4	9
Rules	Information concerning how PESCER teachers perceive the rules to be followed in the program	3	9
Schedules	Information concerning how PESCER teachers perceive class scheduling	8	12
Teacher training	Information related to how PESCER teachers perceive induction and ongoing training	10	21

Code	Code description	Files	References
	opportunities		
Teachers' collaboration	Information related to teachers' networks within the PESCER (structures that can facilitate peer-work, etc.)	5	13
Teaching loads	How do teachers perceive their workload	5	11
Wages	What teachers think about their salaries	5	11
Prospects about PESCER's future	What teachers express about their future steps in PESCER, and of the programme itself	**9**	**19**
Gender as a transversal dimension of teaching	Issues concerning gender factors that interviewees point out as something relevant for teachers' practice (can be related to students or teachers)	**10**	**27**
UACM Institutional affairs	Teachers' opinions regarding the UACM as the institution that designed and manages PESCER: administration, finances and institutional basics	**12**	**50**
Justice and the penal system	Teachers' ideas, opinions and anecdotes about justice and the penal system in broader terms	**12**	**42**
Pandemic	Opinions and anecdotes regarding the pandemic as a contextual element that changed PESCER's usual functioning	**8**	**21**
Pedagogical strategies and resources	Teachers' accounts about their day-to-day classroom dynamics concerning teaching processes	**62**	**215**
Computer access	Teachers' accounts about access to computers	3	6
Courses' planning	Teachers' accounts about learning and teaching processes, courses content (beyond the curriculum), and courses design	10	30
Didactic tools	What are the main didactic tools teachers identify in their teaching practice?	11	57
Digital challenges	Teachers' opinions about the limitations in terms of technologies, especially ICTs, within the school	10	31
Pedagogical activities	Teachers' accounts about the learning activities they promote or have undertaken within the classroom	12	48
Prison libraries	Teachers' opinions about the role and state of the prison libraries	5	13

Code	Code description	Files	References
Teaching model	How do teachers describe their teaching practice in broader terms; to what teaching schools or models they adhere, explicitly or implicitly?	11	30
Ideas on the purpose of education and teaching	Teachers' ideas about the meaning of education, in general terms and within the prison, and their ideas about what education should not be	**48**	**85**
Education as social reinsertion	Ideas about education related to the re-insertion of persons who broke the law (in line with the prison ideology)	8	15
Education as a link with the outer world	Ideas about education within confinement as a link with the outside (of the prison)	1	2
Education as a pragmatic tool	Ideas about education as a tool for solving everyday life problems	2	4
Education as a product	Ideas about education regarding its marketisation (privatisation)	1	1
Education as an activity	Ideas about education as an activity in prison for spending time, give meaning to time	2	2
Education as development	Ideas about education as a path towards the development of a nation, a society, or a human individual	2	2
Education as freedom	Ideas about education as a condition for freedom	3	6
Education as inclusion (as a right)	Education as a right and as equity	8	17
Education as professional training	Ideas about education as a tool for future employment opportunities	2	3
Education as social work	Ideas about education as a social responsibility, particularly in vulnerable contexts	5	10
Education for community-building	Educational ideas based on notions on community, and of transformation for and with others (in a civic sense)	2	2
Education & teaching as a critical act	Educational ideas related to teaching for promoting critical thought.	7	9
Transformative education	Educational ideas related to significative learning and creative pedagogies for transforming the subject at an existential level	5	12

Code	Code description	Files	References
Relationship with students	**Teachers accounts and perceptions about their relationship to students**	**60**	**282**
Boundaries	According to teachers, where are the boundaries between teachers and students, how do they define them and why?	11	53
Classroom social dynamics	According to teachers, what are the social dynamics within the classroom, beyond the pedagogical activities?	6	39
Empathy	Empathy's role in the teaching practice regarding students' processes, according to teachers' experiences	12	40
Extracurricular dialogue	Accessibility of teachers to allow certain approximation of the students beyond the classroom setting or beyond the class schedule	9	26
Perceptions about the students	What opinions do teachers hold about the student/prisoners inside the prison?	12	103
Tensions	Teachers' accounts of situations of tension with the students	10	21
Teacher's identity	Extracts related to teacher's trajectory and professional background	**32**	**96**
Life story	Teachers' story and how they came to work in PESCER	11	43
Other jobs and activities	Experiences beyond PESCER, professional or not, that teachers identify as relevant in their careers	10	24
Subjects of interest	Teachers' interests regarding the subjects they specialize in	11	29
The prison as a workplace	Ideas and impressions about the prison: as an institution, as a workplace	**65**	**253**
Accessing and getting to the prison	Teachers' accounts about the transportation to get to the prisons, and the procedures for entering the prison and getting to the classrooms	9	26
Breaking myths	Teachers' narrations about particular situations or experiences that meant a dismantling of their ideas about the prison, and the prisoners	8	19
Differences among prisons	Differences about teaching in each prison according to teachers' experiences	10	30

Code	Code description	Files	References
Psycho-emotional and ethical challenges	Situations or experiences that teachers have identified as particularly challenging in emotional or ethical terms	8	38
Tensions with penitentiary system	Teachers' narratives about moments and situations in which they have experienced confrontation or discomfort with the prison system	9	34
The prison order	Teachers' ideas and opinions about the inner functioning of the prisons (what happens inside regarding hierarchies, rules, dynamics, etc.)	11	76
The school space	Teachers' accounts of experiences where the school space has taken a significant role	10	30

C. List of final family codes

- The prison as a workplace
- Teachers' relationship with students
- Teachers' identity
- Pedagogical strategies and resources
- Ideas on the purpose of education and teaching
- PESCER academic affairs
- Justice and the penal system
- UACM institutional affairs
- Gender as a transversal dimension of teaching
- The pandemic's impact on PESCER
- Prospects about PESCER's future

D. Table 2. Teachers' experiences: themes & subthemes

	THEMES	SUBTHEMES
1	The meaning of the school space	• The school as a space in tension • The school as a safe space
2	The student-teacher relationship as a key element of the educational process	• Deconstructing prejudices • The role of empathy and respect • Boundaries
3	The impact of the prison context on pedagogic strategies & resources	• N/A
4	The impact of penitentiary violence on teachers' well-being	• N/A
5	The value of education as a drive for teacher's motivation	• N/A