

The Phenomenological Confidence of the Teacher in Conducting Learning Projects

Rosa Ines Rondinel Carrillo¹, Victor Hilario Tarazona Miranda², Freddy Antonio Ochoa Tataje³, Ricardo Guevara Fernandez³, Linda Shardin-Flores⁴ & Joel Uribe Martinez⁵

¹ Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola, Perú

² Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Perú

³ Universidad Privada César Vallejo, Perú

⁴ Universidad Continental, Perú

⁵ Universidad Privada del Norte, Perú

Correspondence: Rosa Ines Rondinel Carrillo, Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola, Perú.

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Abstract

The present research intends to capture in essence the meaning of teachers' experiences in relation to confidence in the management of learning projects, deepened through the hermeneutical phenomenological method, the qualitative approach and the interpretive paradigm. The sample was made up of teachers who were successful in the implementation of learning projects. They were asked to narrate an anecdote, used with a conversational interview as an instrument for collecting their experiences. From the analysis and interpretation of the data, individual thematic units emerged, such as individual physiognomy, motivation, values, confidence, mistrust, frustration, reflection, satisfaction, vocation, teamwork, autonomy and commitment. After categorization, the central theme or group physiognomy 'teacher confidence' reflected in the phenomenological text was conceived. It is concluded that, in environments of trust and security, comprehensive values are developed to optimize learning and project development.

Keywords: trust, reflection, frustration, vocation, hermeneutic phenomenology, essential meanings

1. Introduction

The crucial function of education is to educate citizens with social values that allow coexistence and respect for differences. People are oriented to be supportive and, at the same time, competitive and responsible. Chávez, Montero, Padrón and Sánchez (2018) visualize education as a social phenomenon that generates changes for the socio-cultural development of the individual; a socialization of values, norms and behavior patterns in citizens is indispensable, allowing them to empower their creative capacities and making them feel part of society through their active participation in local, regional and national development. Education develops the creative capacity that makes individuals capable of analyzing a situation and making decisions focused on the needs of others, generating new knowledge that will allow them to learn throughout their lives (Summo, Voisin and Tellez, 2016).

Teachers must be prepared to identify problems and propose solutions in search of life improvement (Rodríguez and Hernández, 2018). There is a requirement for an education that promotes coexistence, social cohesion, inclusion, and that stimulates a sense of belonging as a way to satisfy the need for identity. Martínez, Carballo, Pérez and Del Valle (2014) strongly affirm that education must educate individuals intellectually, socially, civically, scientifically and professionally, since it acts as a catalyst for a series of human forces such as will power, the desire to do things well, dedication and creativity to facilitate the improvement of educational quality, in addition to making it more pleasant to stay in the institution, thus leading the education of subjects with a sense of belonging.

In this sense, a humanist vision of education demands from teachers a philosophical and existential position, which mobilizes educational practices towards the construction of new knowledge, new ways of communicating, new methods, new ways of being and acting (Ospina, 2008); it also demands a philosophical thought that facilitates the comprehensive education of students (Astudillo, 2019). The teacher who leads learning projects guides and educates reflexive individuals for the understanding of reality, their progress as people and in search of the wellbeing of others. Depending on their attitude towards the problematic situation, reflective teachers pose situations for searching and resolution of problems (González, Barba y Rodríguez, 2015). Confidence is fundamental, as well as spaces of dialogue and listening to show concern, developing in the students values such as responsibility, honesty, respect towards others and towards themselves so that they become reflective, critical, emotionally balanced people, with good self-esteem, assertiveness, tolerance, proactivity and always looking for social welfare.

Uranga, Renteria and Gonzalez (2016) state that the teacher creates respect and trust, besides guiding the group's coexistence towards the development of learning projects that require everyone's participation. The teacher's example can always denote personal responsibility and capacity to fulfill work. It is indispensable that the teacher be aware that he or she is a representative of an institution whose purpose is to educate better future citizens. Because of the aforementioned, the present study had as a fundamental aim: to approach phenomenologically teachers' experiences and their confidence in the development of learning projects in order to achieve the reflection and transformation of their pedagogical action and, as a consequence, to improve the comprehensive education of students. It aims at committing teachers to develop confidence in students and to educate safe, autonomous, creative people with comprehensive values, who learn how to solve problems and are proactive for the well-being of the community.

2. Theoretical Background

Trust can be defined as an attitude that contributes to interaction with others; while we interact we trust and, as we trust, we start new relationships. When you trust someone, you risk to relate affectively and start meaningful human relationships. In order to generate interpersonal trust, Sandoval (2011) states that sincerity, transparency and respect are needed; these are observed in the relationships that one has in a closer environment. There are various approaches and perspectives of trust in subjects. From the ontological perspective, it is understood and explained when there is a direct and reciprocal exchange, and the actors involved work together to achieve a common goal (Giddens, 1991, quoted by Fernandez, 2013). Trust and reciprocity do not function separately, but are rather integrated to establish mutually beneficial agreements (Tereucán, Briceño and Gálvez, 2016). Therefore, trust, as a process, is dynamic, psychological and social. From the psychological perspective, it reveals the vulnerable position of one of the parties with respect to the opportunism of the other. Ortiz and Díaz (2018) state that the teacher needs to feel vulnerability in order to affirm his or her humanity. Vulnerability becomes a source of concern for others as well as a source of trust. For trust to exist there must be risk, otherwise there will be no trust; on the other hand, whenever there is trust, interdependence appears; the latter occurs when the interest of one of the parties would not be achieved without the support of the other (Sheppard, 1998, cited by Fernández, 2013).

Trust is a positive disposition towards the behavior or conduct of others; it is a dynamic, psychological and social process that reduces uncertainty in relationships; it is also seen as an attitude that is learned in school interaction, whose secondary effect is optimism, autonomy and innovation of the person (Yáñez, Pérez and Yáñez, 2005). Participation and trust are reciprocal processes; they depend on each other and develop from each other; thus. Contreras (2016) points out that the importance of trust in schools lies in the fact that it allows for the creation of safe environments, so that students feel comfortable while interacting with others. In addition, it generating harmony with themselves, thus improving learning. Teachers must therefore lead, maintain and establish constructive and trusting relationships.

Interpersonal relationships are made up of cognitive and affective trust; the former is more rational and requires a minimum of prior knowledge of the object to be trusted, since credibility is evaluated by weighing it against evidence (Foronda and Galindo, 2012). On the other hand, affective trust takes into account the feelings, intuition and instincts of the people who trust, i.e. it has emotional connotations and attitudes such as benevolence or good faith, altruism, commitment, mutual respect and, at the same time, absence of opportunism (Fernández, 2013). Affective trust would be one of the central psychological mechanisms that explains why teachers want to work on learning projects (Yáñez y Cuadra, 2014).

Trust in teachers is the feeling of security in the actions they carry out as cultural socializing agents that mediate, guide and facilitate learning. It allows them to face the adversities and risks of teaching, reduces anxiety, allows them to make pertinent decisions and to innovate in the profession. Peña, Weinstein and Raczynski (2018) state that in

schools where the level of teacher confidence is high, there is greater willingness to innovate and learn continuously. Trust in teachers admits new challenges, causes them to be able to solve problems with optimism and to accept their mistakes. Sandoval (2014) points out that a teacher with all these dispositions transmits and spreads them; therefore, the climate in the classroom and the teaching-learning process are improved, thus facilitating self-reflection of the pedagogical practice.

Trust in learning projects allows for a healthy coexistence and positive interrelationship by generating a climate of security and familiarity between teacher, student and peers; it also fosters the development of values such as responsibility, honesty, perseverance and mutual respect. Mejía and Urre (2015) emphasize that trust is the fundamental pillar of coexistence; it is the engine that could deploy affective and cognitive skills. Analogically, confidence in working with projects facilitates students to make pertinent decisions, take risks and overcome difficulties, acquiring security, strengthening their self-esteem and consolidating their personality, building emotional bonds of friendship among students and ensuring meaningful learning with collaborative work, respecting the rhythms and learning styles of each student.

3. Methodology

This research was included in the interpretative paradigm since this model understands and interprets the meanings of teachers' experiences and experiences with respect to confidence in the development of learning projects. A qualitative approach was used for observation because it describes and interprets according to opinions. The meaning of experiences is understood through the inductive method, analyzing individualized experiences to reach generalities related to trust. The hermeneutic phenomenological method was followed because a compilation of sociological and psychological definitions of trust was made, above all, related to teacher trust. In this respect, Manen (2003) refers that hermeneutic phenomenology, according to Heidegger in 1962, has certain ways (methods) to reach a clarification and to reveal its natural essence sustained in traditions, knowledge and life history of great thinkers (Fuster, 2019).

Four phases were fulfilled in the investigation to achieve the objective. The first phase, called budget clarification, consists of putting into brackets the values, prejudices, attitudes, beliefs and conjectures that the researcher has regarding the confidence of the teacher who conducts learning projects in order to avoid influence or contamination (Martínez, 2014).

The second phase consists of collecting the lived experience, which is stated in the description of the experience as unprejudiced as possible, and it must manifest the natural experience of the participating subjects (Manen, 2003 y Ayala, 2008). In order to do this, the experience was collected through the writing of the anecdotes from five teachers of secondary level who were conducting learning projects. These were free of causal interpretations or theoretical explanations; Then, a conversational interview was conducted to clarify some of the points in the anecdotes and to build loyalty to it; then there came the rewriting or expansion of the anecdote, respecting the veracity of the personal experience, consigning the most relevant things in meaning and eliminating additional parts (Fuster, 2019).

In the third phase, we reflect on the lived experience with interpretation of the experiential material or the extended protocol. We carry out the thematic analysis on a general level; we determine the sententious or holistic phrase, i.e., a phrase that contains the meaning as a whole of the text or protocol. The objective of this stage is to achieve a joint vision of the protocol (Manen, 2003; Ayala, 2008 and Martínez, 2014). Then the determination of thematic units was made, which consists in delimiting the significant areas. A protocol may have one or several thematic units, which will serve as input to determine the central theme consisting on the creation of the theme by alternating what the subject says with the meaning. Finally, the scientific language of the central theme was determined; at this point, the researcher reflects on the central themes that the subject's language still maintains, and expresses them in a scientific language, using psychology, pedagogy, sociology, among others (Manen, 2003; Ayala, 2008 and Martínez, 2014).

The fourth and last phase consists of writing and reflecting on the lived experience; the writing of the phenomenological text is done through the individual and group physiognomy; the first one is done through the integration and description of the central themes in a particular structure of each subject. The basic structures of the studied phenomenon must be consigned in it. The second group physiognomy is the integration of all the particular structures in a general structure.

Table 1. Comet's pedagogical reflection

Paragraphs extracts	Central theme.	Expression in scientific language
<p><i>...made me reflect to be better every day and help student, that is to say, to guide them to be better and develop their diverse capacities ...their emotions started changing, they diminished their aggressiveness (paragraph 14)</i></p> <p><i>...I was happy to see how they were developing... they shifted their attitude and they were improving, ... in their way of being, ... and became a very nice and united group (paragraph 11)</i></p>	<p><i>The teacher shows the pedagogical reflection that s/he carries out in her daily work in the classroom demonstrating it with satisfaction for the achievements and positive changes in his/her students, and s/he wants to keep on improving to continue his/her counselling work.</i></p>	<p><i>The teacher understands, interprets and analyzes his/her pedagogical work, and gives meaning to her experience with the students by achieving positive changes of attitude in them</i></p>

3.1 Self-Elaboration

The sample was intentional non-probabilistic, since the choice of elements depends on reasons related to the characteristics of the research in question (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2014). It was constituted by five teachers; four of them were appointed staff members and one was hired, with an average of eighteen years of experience in the area of Science, Technology and Environment at secondary level, and they were experienced in conducting learning projects. Teachers were assigned a pseudonym: Moon, Comet, Asteroid, Meteorite and Star. Firstly, a close observation was used as a technique that allowed the link to the experiences narrated in the anecdotes; the conversational interview followed to verify the fidelity of the story and to deepen on it; for this purpose, a guide of questions was elaborated based on this protocol. The answers permitted the consolidation of the anecdotes, and after several readings with the participation of the subjects, the meaning could be apprehended.

For the analysis and interpretation of the data, both empirical methods linked to the technique and instruments of the study and reflective methods were used to analyze the experiences lived and to determine their essential structures. The method of thematic analysis (analytical-synthetic method) determined the sentence or holistic phrase and allowed obtaining the essential meanings of the lived experiences (Ayala, 2008). The inductive-deductive method was also used when turning the expressions of the central theme into scientific language, from which knowledge is inferred.

4. Results

It can be said that trust generates security, a very important value in the process of teaching and learning. Generating trust and security is an essential function of educational centers; making students feel happy, comfortable and helping them see and feel that learning is a pleasure. Giving students confidence, praising their successes and positive achievements, supporting and valuing their efforts is giving them the opportunity to be people with high self-esteem, people who believe in themselves and are motivated to continue with their life projects.

Those students who stutter when they speak feel ashamed, they get red in the face with embarrassment in order to speak and they even feel like crying as they do. But where is the teacher? I would tell them: "excellent, very good answer, two points," and you could see how this child was filled with emotion...the next class he already wanted to participate...and thus I helped to raise his morale. (Star, confidence, Paragraph 22)

One lady started crying so much that I was moved and when I asked her what had happened, she looked at me and said that she did not want to be a boss because she was very much afraid of letting me down as no one would listen to her. Besides that she was very shy and short, I gave her so much confidence and security that

in the end she turned out to be a very good boss... she was not one of the best, I did not go with her to the successful experiences and she is not showing off, small and powerful. (Star, confidence, paragraph 60)

The feelings that the project of sprouts leaves on me are of much joy, I am happy that they have lived these experiences, sometimes, I feel like I'm more in family with them... as you earn their trust, they look for you, they do not leave you alone, they approach you; you feel more in family, really... (Moon, reflection, paragraph 44)

Confidence generates security, it allows the student to develop in a climate of tenderness. Stability and emotional support make students believe in their capacities; family treatment also favors a trusting coexistence. On the contrary, mistrust is a feeling that generates insecurity and promotes fear. In the following anecdote, the teacher's uncertainty is experienced when he sees the student's failure to present his project; the teacher's lack of credibility towards the student is observed, as he did not trust that he would win first place; on the other hand, the mistrust experienced was due to the teacher's lack of information regarding his student's project.

It was surprising when he brought his material, I see in his hand that he was bringing a small box of unpolished wood just like that,... Seeing his work, made me uncomfortable,... Why did he bring that? ... I doubted his project; "teacher, I do have some things, this is my solar oven. (Meteorite, mistrust, paragraph 11)

The way he presented his work gave us the impression that he was doing it just to comply...to obtain a grade and save himself, i.e., not to look bad. (Meteorite, mistrust, paragraph 18)

I felt a bit worried about what they would say, a little disappointed maybe because of the student's attitude, I thought he was playing a joke on me. (Meteorite, mistrust, paragraph 17)

It is necessary for teachers' interpersonal relationships with students to happen on the basis of an assertive communication, that they cultivate confidence, highlighting their achievements and efforts, helping them to accept their failures and analyze them, encouraging them to try again, cultivating in them the spirit of optimism not setting unattainable goals. Trust promotes effective teamwork to succeed in different scenarios, especially in the classroom because the task is properly accomplished when there are clear objectives, defined goals, fluid communication, commitment and confidence. It also encourages collaboration and mutual aid among students

I tell them 'willpower', I observed this when they got into an agreement, "you are going to bring this", they committed themselves like that, and when they did not comply, they told that student, "why didn't you bring it?" They were like ants, some went peeling, and all were working. (Luna, teamwork, paragraph 19)

Working as a team was interesting to me... Having the support of the Communication teacher helped me, suddenly doing it alone, I would not have done it so well. It was the same with the Math teacher... At least with them, I did feel support. (Luna, teamwork, paragraph 36)

During the break... to see our difficulties because you have to make an evaluation of your project; it is not to advance for the sake of advancing, I met with my boys who were the owners of the project "to see what we are doing wrong," "what else? please help us", "Yes, miss, we can do it". They contribute to the solution, and so we improved, without them I could not do it. (Star, creativity, paragraph 59)

The teacher expresses the great satisfaction, security and support she felt when working collaboratively with her colleagues, optimizing results in her project. The teamwork is focused on mutual support among its members. Solidarity and comradeship among students is also appreciated so that they can accomplish what they set out to do. Trust generates autonomy, thus creating indissoluble links; there is no autonomy without trust. In order to recognize the talent, creativity and autonomy of the students, trusting them to provide solutions to problems, it has been necessary to go through a whole process of pedagogical strategies.

The students told us that they would solve the problem no matter what, so we left it there and that was it... (Asteroid, perseverance, paragraph 17)

In my students, their curiosity was so great that they tried to do more than what was asked of them, they wanted to discover for themselves what would happen if they did this or that, in many cases, it gave them freedom to do what they thought... (Star, motivation, paragraph 28)

The achievements of my young scientists were noted when they presented their works at the science fairs, they were in successful experiences; very skillful and talented boys, since they had developed capacities of investigation and experimentation... The girls are ready, they have already created that skill quickly, they put together their panel...and they present themselves as real scientists, very creative, in every sense of the word,

very cute my little ones, showing what they know, just as they learned it, they love it... (Star, confidence, paragraph 56)

Confidence generates a good climate for learning since it is a motivating axis; all members of the educational institutions must work to generate safe environments and strengthen confidence in students and themselves; in this way, students improve their learning, they are more creative, innovative, and they work in teams or individually with open communication.

What I did at the beginning was to tell them the biography, for example, from Newton, and every time I talked to them, it was like a story and the students realized that to be a scientist or to do science, it is not necessary to be a great scientist or a great gifted one because Newton was not one, neither was Dimitri Mendeliev... So it was from there that I exerted an influence on them, taking our great scientists as a basis. (Star, motivation, paragraph 6)

There was so much emotion on me and on the students that we forgot about everything else, we got lost in the results, I swear that the emotion was too much and I swear that the level of emotion resulted according to the results of experiment because there were experiments in which you had to see colors... (Star, Motivation, paragraph 18)

One day it occurred to me to bring a little bottle, it caught their attention... "Teacher, we can do it, can you teach us?", I told them I could, and said that it was not difficult just to awaken their desire, and we started first planting lentil seeds. It was contagious, as they began to see how the plants grew and began to try it... (Moon, motivation, paragraph 2)

And everyone was getting contaminated, they were learning. Once they planted lentils, then quinoa, kiwicha, others planted beans, and so they started looking for more seeds, and they were seeing that some delayed more time and so they were experimenting... (Moon, motivation, paragraph 5)

In schools where trust, confidence, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are fostered, meaningful learning for students will be enhanced.

observations, comments and reflections based on mutual trust and the desire to improve (Eirin, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that, by generating environments of emotional trust, interpersonal relationships are optimized, and a good work climate is fostered by the emotional support that teachers receive; therefore, work relationships are improved. If there is no trust, there is no possibility of developing meaningful human relationships (Sevillano and Escobar, 2011).

Teachers do a selfless work when supporting students in their learning; they do this out of commitment, vocation and self-confidence optimizing results and interpersonal relationships through cooperation. Similarly, emotional or affective trust is defined as that in which its participants help each other in a selfless way; that is, by their own will with benevolence, vocation and commitment.

Tschannen (2014) states that trust is an important element for the achievement of teaching- learning processes and objectives, and that it requires a close interdependence between its different members. Therefore, we consider that the emotional trust of the teacher towards all educational actors is fundamental in educational institutions. The results also show that teachers work with harmony and intelligence, promoting a climate of affective or emotional trust in reference to feelings, good will, altruism and mutual respect, without opportunism. Peña et al. (2018) identified loss of trust or rather loss, as a gain of confidence. Although both investigations mark opposite positions identified in the context of the study, both agree that it is fundamental to focus on crucial moments in order to build bonds of trust.

The fundamental axis for the strengthening and development of a student's personality is confidence. Sans, Ruiz and Perez (2009) state that teachers' trust has an impact on different components of the student's personality such as attitude and commitment, it also helps to solve problems, using creative strategies and resources, as confirmed by Woolfolk (2010), who maintains that creativity is the ability to solve problems in a unique way. Teachers promote and develop a climate of trust and tenderness, creating a warm, welcoming and close relationship that reaffirms communication, empathy, mutual help, solidarity and willingness to listen.

It is because of teachers' self recognition and confidence on themselves that students solve problems and reduce the level of complexity with creativity. Actually, Di Leo (2009) states that trust is a strategic resource for students to reduce complexity. On the other hand, the meanings found reveal that students believe in themselves and their capacity. He concludes that trust contributes to achieve ontological security; i.e. their being-*in-the-world*, without which they would not be able to relate to others. In this context, trust becomes a fundamental device, since it allows one to approach relationships with the new, with a certain security and some expectation of success (Callejo and Ramos, 2017). Finally, trust enables students to develop freely in front of their classmates and to act with freedom and autonomy if teachers offer them confidence.

6. Conclusions

Trust is a topic which is not discussed much in the field of education; actually, it is not taken into account as a major axis of educational policy, or taken into consideration as such in learning projects. Although teachers do not reflect on the subject, trust is seen as the emotional support that helps to promote an affective and safe climate in the classroom to improve learning and optimize interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, thus promoting respect and honesty. On the other hand, trust generates security by making students feel like in a family setting. Project work favors the affective coexistence and the practice of values such as honesty, responsibility, familiarity; thus, generating a climate of confidence. Likewise, values education generates satisfaction for teachers and security for students. Consequently, values such as honesty, responsibility, familiarity, and truthfulness developed in learning projects generate confidence and improve the climate in school classrooms and consequently in learning. Teachers who reflects on their pedagogical performance acquire more confidence; it is necessary to emphasize though that reflection would be more beneficial if it were done jointly with other colleagues, creating reflection spaces on the meaning of teaching experiences. Teamwork with mutual help allows for cooperation and solidarity among the members of learning projects, motivating them to learn individually and collectively in a pleasant way, as the targeted aims are reached. Finally, trust optimizes classroom work; it allows teams to assess their actions with honesty; it is therefore necessary to recognize that trust is the pillar of teamwork in learning projects. To trust is to give freedom to act, and self-confidence generates autonomy to solve problems.

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