

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' ASSESSMENTS OF THE TEACHING VOCATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

VALORACIONES DE DOCENTES Y ESTUDIANTES SOBRE LA VOCACIÓN DOCENTE, Y SU RELACIÓN CON EL DESEMPEÑO PROFESIONAL DE LA PRÁCTICA EDUCATIVA

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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Teaching vocation is a fundamental element of educational practice and an essential factor for achieving quality in educational systems. However, its study and analysis have been minimized, diminishing the importance of identifying its development in teachers. The general objective of this study is to analyze the ideas that teachers and students at a teacher training center have about teaching vocation and how it relates to professional performance. This analysis will focus on the ideas of teachers and students at the Regional University Center of Juticalpa in Honduras. An exploratory qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach was used. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and students; the participants consisted of 90 teachers and student teachers. The student teachers agreed that motivation is fundamental for teachers, and that creating motivational spaces fosters a favorable environment for achieving the objectives of the educational process. This intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is related to the ethics that each teacher must demonstrate to achieve the expected performance. It is concluded that self-realization and a passion for teaching are the most outstanding pillars on which the vocation of each teacher is forged and consolidated, triggering internal processes that demonstrate results in the integral formation of young people and children.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

vocación docente, formación del profesorado, desempeño docente, enfoque fenomenológico, análisis temático.

La vocación docente se convierte en un elemento fundamental de la práctica educativa, es un factor imprescindible para lograr calidad en los sistemas educativos. Sin embargo, su estudio y análisis ha sido minimizado restando importancia en identificar su desarrollo en los docentes. Se establece como objetivo general analizar las ideas que poseen docentes y estudiantes de un centro formador de maestros

acerca de la vocación docente y cómo se relaciona con el desempeño profesional a través del análisis de las ideas que poseen docentes y estudiantes del Centro Regional Universitario de Juticalpa en Honduras. Se utilizó una metodología cualitativa exploratoria, esta metodología tiene un enfoque fenomenológico. Se realizó el levantamiento de información a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas aplicada a docentes y estudiantes; los informantes corresponden a 90 docentes y estudiantes profesores. Los estudiantes del profesorado formador coincidieron en que la motivación es fundamental en un docente, así como la generación de espacios motivacionales logra crear la inducción favorable para que se logre los objetivos del proceso educativo. Esta motivación intrínseca como extrínseca se relaciona con la ética que debe mostrar cada docente para tener un desempeño esperado. Se concluye con que la autorrealización y la pasión por enseñar son los pilares más sobresalientes en los cuales se forja y consolida la vocación en cada docente desencadenando procesos internos que demuestran resultados en la formación integral de jóvenes y niños.

Introduction

Historically, the teaching vocation has been viewed as one of the main pillars underpinning the work of teachers; it is a key element in ensuring quality education, especially in contexts marked by challenges and socioeconomic and educational inequalities. In the 21st century, teaching has undergone a profound transformation, shifting from a purely technical approach to the implementation of reflective practice that centers on the holistic development of the student as the core of the teaching and learning process. This transformation has made it clear that the teaching vocation should not be limited to an abstract desire or cultural heritage of peoples; rather, the teaching vocation is a living experience that is strengthened and demonstrated throughout the training process and is subsequently put into practice in professional work, leading to personal and institutional achievement (Torres, 2023).

The Honduran education system has failed to educate young people and children in line with expected educational progress; enrollment rates and educational quality have not been sufficient to improve the living conditions of the country's inhabitants; Studies show that there has been a decline in the quality of national education over the past few decades, a trend that has worsened, as stated in the ASJ report (2022), which details that no improvements have been made in educational teaching processes over the past four years; on the contrary, teacher performance has declined, affecting the education of young people and children entering the various grades and levels of the educational system. Furthermore, teachers' motivation and competencies have been underestimated in educational assessments and studies in Honduras, as no research has been conducted that focuses specifically on these aspects of teacher training in the country.

Understanding the importance of teachers' sense of vocation and its relationship to performance will help improve the quality of education because the effective use of human resources has an impact on educational success; these factors, which are interrelated with teacher performance, will lead to students' comprehensive achievement and educational improvement, reflected in higher standards in national education; furthermore, the importance of vocation as a factor in teacher performance will ensure that we have teachers who are highly committed to the education and instruction of children and young people, leading to significant improvements in national education and, consequently, in the quality of life of Honduran society.

A systematic search for articles related to the teaching vocation reveals that, in Latin America, results from platforms such as Scielo and Ciencias Latina show that the countries with the highest output of published articles are Mexico, with approximately 300 articles; Colombia, with 100 published articles; Chile, with 200 articles; and several other countries, such as Costa Rica, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Ecuador, where the number of articles on the teaching vocation does not exceed one hundred. At the national level, a review of various sources at the main national research centers revealed only three articles addressing the topic of the teaching vocation; most of the studies conducted were quantitative in nature and did not focus on the qualities that teachers demonstrate as necessary for practicing this profession.

The few studies found refer to quantifying classroom resources without focusing specifically on the intrinsic qualities of teachers; in various studies, the teaching vocation is often confused with teacher identity or job motivation, and it must be understood that vocation refers to that passion and love for the development of educational practice. Therefore, this study is established as an initial stage of analysis with an exploratory approach to begin investigating this topic in the country, carried out at the teacher

training institution so that its results can later serve as a basis for understanding what occurs in other educational institutions, allowing for the extrapolation of findings to the entire country through further research. This research will serve as a starting point that will positively impact other regional schools, leading to the formulation of comprehensive intervention proposals.

In light of the foregoing, it can be noted that, at the national level, there is insufficient evidence to support a meaningful analysis of teaching vocation and its relationship to the professional performance of teachers.

In Honduras, it is unclear how the teaching vocation is valued and developed in university education, given that this element represents an essential pillar of teachers' comprehensive training; various factors limit its proper development. It is noted that teachers lack passion and love for the teaching profession (ASJ, 2024), which negatively impacts students' education, limits their performance in the classroom, and prevents the achievement of educational quality; however, the issue has not been explored in great depth.

It is therefore necessary to conduct an analysis to determine whether teachers possess the necessary qualities to carry out this important work, starting with an essential element such as vocation, since it is a key factor in a teacher's commitment, passion, and dedication to the education of children and young people. It is a vital profession in society; According to García (1999), "not everyone is cut out for this profession, contrary to what is so often believed; one must have the right personal profile" (p. 436).

In 2004, Honduran education authorities implemented a series of changes aimed at modernizing the obsolete and traditional national education system at all levels. The National Basic Curriculum was launched, with its main goal being to transform traditional teaching methods and establish an education system based on the constructivist model; This evolution responds to current social changes that demand a more timely and comprehensive education for the individual, equipping students with knowledge complemented by skills and abilities so that they can interact effectively in their learning process, thereby preparing the kind of individuals sought by the globalized educational and labor markets.

In the 21st century, society underwent a transformation toward globalization, reflected in a technological and knowledge-based society. The demands placed on inclusive educational systems created challenges for teachers. Reforms were implemented in Latin American educational systems that adopted active and participatory teaching methods, and educational legislation was part of this transformation process by adopting a national curriculum based on constructivism. Under this approach, the student's role is transformed by placing them at the center of the teaching and learning process. Students cease to be passive recipients and become the primary agents of the educational process, where they draw upon their prior knowledge to complement it with new information, creating spaces for reflection that lead to meaningful learning. This establishes an education based on learning by doing.

The introduction of constructivism into classrooms presented an opportunity for the education of future generations to be reflected in quantitative and qualitative changes that would position the educational system as one capable of preparing students to compete in this globalized world; however, 20 years after its implementation, it is evident that the changes expected from the adoption of a methodology designed to educate students holistically have not been substantial.

Recent research studies conducted in Latin America have shown a decline in the vocational commitment of new teachers and students in various teacher-training programs, raising alarm and concern about the effectiveness and efficiency of education

systems and the achievement of standards that promote quality in education (Ponce, 2025). In Honduras, the most recent curriculum reform implemented by the Ministry of Education dates back to 2004; despite the changes that have been made, challenges related to teacher identity, motivation, and retention in the teaching profession continue to pose obstacles in the Honduran education system (Ministry of Education, 2024).

There are various factors that influence the choice of a teaching career as a lifelong profession; these factors can be either extrinsic or intrinsic, such as family influence, socioeconomic conditions, personal interests, or the lack of other alternatives. However, the discovery of one's vocation during the formative process is a topic that has received little attention from a phenomenological perspective (Fernández et al., 2024).

The most recent studies in education highlight the need to understand, from the perspective of future teachers, how they view their training, the conditions they encounter in the workplace, and the predominant social role of teachers in society. This understanding of the reality of teaching influences job performance, emotional well-being, and retention in the profession (Carrera et al., 2024). If these aspects are not analyzed in depth, teaching performance may be misunderstood from a purely technical perspective, without recognizing that it is closely linked to the real-life experiences gained through professional development and the emotions that shape an educator's identity.

Vocation as a Teacher

From a contemporary perspective, the teaching vocation can be defined as a dynamic construct that reflects a passion and love for teaching, an ethical commitment, and a sense of identification with the profession that shapes all other professions. It is not understood from a natural, innate perspective, but rather as a day-to-day process shaped by the desire to teach within a social, institutional, and personal context (Ponce, 2025).

Formal education begins with the instruction provided in elementary school, where teachers are responsible for academically preparing the children who will be the future of the country. But what happens when a teacher lacks the necessary skills to instill in children a love of learning? This is when academic development exhibits visible deficiencies; these weaknesses manifest as poor teaching practice or didactogenia, which, according to Cukier (1996), is defined as "the negative influences caused by inadequate teaching" (p. 228).

Teachers must be agents of change—individuals who become transformers, whose educational practice focuses on bringing about meaningful changes in each student. They must carry out their work with the goal of equipping students with the tools necessary for a holistic education. According to Prieto (2010), teachers today fulfill various roles, including "instructor and subject matter specialist, educator, problem solver, mediator in conflict situations" (p. 330). This requires proper preparation to leave a positive mark on each young person and address the didactogenic issues that so greatly affect students' educational development.

When a teacher shows shortcomings in their teaching methods or in fostering a love of learning among their students, it becomes necessary to investigate which factors are preventing the expected outcome from being achieved; In this regard, Velásquez (2017) found that a calling to teaching influences a teacher's ability to achieve a fulfilling professional life, resulting in greater motivation in their work, which positively impacts the quality of teaching and student learning.

The following is a review of research addressing the importance of a calling to teaching in the teaching process and how this formative aspect is necessary for achieving educational quality among students.

Among the research studies on the importance of a calling to teaching for achieving quality in the teaching-learning process, Herrera et al. (2023) stand out through their study titled "Professional Identity and the Calling to Teach." Herrera set out to determine the relationship between professional identity and the calling to teach at the elementary school level; This study proposes maintaining or enhancing the teaching vocation as a viable measure for achieving higher educational quality from the earliest years of schooling. At the conclusion of this study, it was concluded that

Professional identity is closely linked to the teaching vocation, and it is of the utmost importance that the teachers surveyed strengthen their identity in order to maintain or enhance their vocation, thereby providing a quality educational service that meets the expectations of Peruvian society and contributes to its comprehensive development. In a fragile context, a calling becomes an act of hope, in which the teacher becomes an agent of change and is seen as a leader capable of bringing happiness to those around them. Therefore, there is a need for professionals with strong ethical principles who work not only in the realm of knowledge. (Herrera et al., 2023, p. 114)

This highlights the need to foster a sense of vocation among teachers in order to achieve greater empowerment and a sense of belonging in their educational work, using professional identity as a starting point—which will serve as the catalyst for improving the quality of teaching.

Similarly, Enríquez (2018) conducted a study on teaching vocation and professional performance that focused on analyzing the relationship between teaching vocation and professional performance, concluding that there is a relatively strong correlation between teachers' sense of vocation and their professional performance; This relationship manifests itself in the acquisition and prevalence of psychological and social characteristics that significantly impact educational work and the achievement of the objectives and expectations of the educational process.

Similarly, Gómez (2019) conducted the study "Teacher Reflection as a Strategy for Acquiring Practical Knowledge: Supervision Interactions in the Practicum." The general objective of this study was to describe professional practice based on the motivations and challenges perceived by student teachers, as well as to determine what student teachers learn during their training that enables them to reflect on their work. At the conclusion of this study, Gómez concluded that student teachers observed more positive than negative incidents during their reflection on their own practice, both when working with a peer and with a mentor. This is because, during reflection on a teaching experience, it is easier to discuss motivations than the challenges encountered, since student teachers lack sufficient training to critically reflect on more abstract aspects of the session, relying instead on superficial ideas.

In addition, Sánchez et al. (2021) conducted a study on "How do teachers understand their calling?" Implications of the perceived vocation in the teaching profession, with the findings showing that the perceived vocation, from the participants' perspective, is influenced by various educational role models from childhood and adolescence, which encourage them to choose a career in teaching as their primary option in their academic and professional development. The participants indicated that this sense of vocation was present at the outset and throughout the course of their professional careers. That is why new questions or research topics may arise here, such as: Is a calling necessary to be a teacher? Is a calling something innate? And so, the age-old debate: Is a vocation "innate or acquired"?

Continuing with the research background, Camacho (2023) conducted a study on the teaching vocation and attitudes toward research among education students at a national university in Metropolitan Lima. The main objective was to determine the

relationship between the teaching vocation and attitudes toward research. The study concluded that there is indeed a significant relationship between the teaching vocation and attitudes toward research, This is fundamental to understanding that teaching is a process of constant professional development; teachers must continually research methods, strategies, techniques, and ideas necessary for implementation in their teaching practice. This reinforces the assertion that a calling to teach is essential for the training and development of the teaching profession.

At the national level, the evidence points to weaknesses in research on teacher education with regard to the teaching vocation. Notable among these are the studies by García (2008) and Rivera (2014), who set out to determine whether students' academic performance is linked to their motivation during the educational process. They concluded that teacher preparation is essential for understanding student behavior in each educational process; This preparation is strongly linked not only to the strategies teachers employ but also to their intrinsic qualities—whether they demonstrate motivation and possess the necessary skills to perform their duties. This latter element is linked to the teaching vocation required for proper educational induction at all levels.

Teaching Vocation and Professional Performance

Furthermore, teaching performance demonstrates the efficiency with which educators carry out their duties, both in the development of knowledge and in instructional and methodological planning, with the aim of contributing to the achievement of educational objectives and the promotion of educational quality. Yaranga-Rodríguez & Yaranga-Rodríguez (2024) define it as the essential factor in educational quality, resulting from the integration of instructional planning, pedagogical implementation, assessment, and professional development.

A teacher's professional performance encompasses a series of competencies that are demonstrated in the classroom, including elements such as teaching methodology, lesson planning, and interactive strategies designed to achieve positive outcomes. Moreno (2023) states that teachers who are truly dedicated to their calling tend to demonstrate stronger performance. As a result, they are willing to innovate, reflect on their practice, and improve processes to enhance teaching.

Recent research has shown that a sense of vocation in teaching has a direct impact on job performance. Torres Hernández (2025) demonstrated that teachers with a stronger sense of vocation reported greater satisfaction with their work, which was reflected in lower levels of emotional exhaustion and improved effectiveness in their work.

Finally, the teaching vocation is not a category isolated from teaching performance; its influence is significant because it creates opportunities to promote reflection and action. Strengthening the teaching vocation will lead to better performance, and it must be fostered from initial training through professional practice (Morales, 2025).

Method

This study was an exploratory qualitative study, according to Hernández and Mendoza (2023). In this type of research, "exploratory studies are conducted when the objective of the study is to examine a research topic or problem that has been little studied, about which there are many uncertainties, or that has not been addressed in greater depth before." (p. 358). It is well-suited because it allows us to describe phenomena from a qualitative perspective, understanding the phenomenon throughout

its entire process; in this way, it enables us to understand and, at the same time, reflect on the behavior of the elements under study.

The research design is a phenomenological study. According to Hernández and Mendoza (2023), “its main purpose is to explore, describe, and understand people’s experiences with regard to a phenomenon and to identify the common elements of those experiences” (p. 493). This study employed a phenomenological design because it focused on understanding the essence of lived experiences related to the teaching vocation; its significance lies in exploring how teachers perceive the value of the teaching vocation and its influence on educational quality; This study does not aim to quantify how many teachers and students feel they have a calling, but rather to understand, from the perspective of the study participants, the meaning of vocation and how it influences educational quality and practice. In this type of study, the focus is on subjective experience; this is identified from the outset and may vary depending on human experience. “It can encompass exceptional events, but also routine and everyday occurrences” (Hernández & Mendoza, 2023, p. 493).

Phenomenological qualitative research seeks to understand participants’ accounts of the phenomenon under study based on their prior experiences; it focuses on understanding the impact that event has on human development, emphasizing the changes or modifications in behavioral patterns that have been achieved.

Why is this research qualitative? The qualitative approach is adopted because it allows for an exploration of essential aspects of teaching—aspects that require interpretation from the perspective of qualities rather than quantification—taking into account the importance of teaching from the perspective of actions.

Population and Sample

For the purposes of addressing the central theme of this research, the study population consists of 90 teachers and students from various teacher-training programs in 2025 in the following degree programs: Social Sciences Teacher Education, Spanish Language Teacher Education, English Language Teacher Education, and Elementary Education—the program includes teacher educators from each of these specializations.

A non-probabilistic, purposive sample was defined because 54 participants—including both faculty and students from teacher-training programs—were selected to be representative of the degree programs, and a random sample was defined because the individual participants will be selected at random. Furthermore, the relationships identified correspond to perceptions and meanings constructed by the participants, which helps prevent undue generalizations in the research process.

Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method because they offer the interviewee greater freedom and autonomy and enrich the study by yielding reliable data. This instrument was adapted from the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEES) (2015), which was developed as part of a report on teachers’ perspectives on the factors that influence their performance; it was validated by five specialists holding doctoral degrees who are experts in research and teacher education. The categories of analysis and indicators related to the topic under study were based on an adaptation of indicators from Cabarcas and Contreras (2019) and Vásquez (2020), which were also analyzed in the expert review.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted using open-coding and axial coding processes, which, according to San Martín (2014), allow for the identification of concepts and relationships among the categories obtained during coding; this relationship is determined by the properties and dimensions of the subcategories and categories to be linked, bearing in mind that “a category represents a phenomenon—that is, a problem, an issue, an event, or an occurrence—that is defined as significant to the interviewees” (Strauss and Corbin, 2015, p. 137).

Ethical Procedures

The research was reviewed by the ethics committee of the Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana in a document dated July 19, 2024. In addition, an informed consent form was included, requesting participants' authorization to collect data, record audio, take photographs, and do whatever else is necessary to enhance the research. The identities of the individuals involved, as well as their ideas and opinions, were kept confidential; in the data analysis, the informants and their opinions were assigned numerical codes.

- The information was protected through confidentiality measures; the names and characteristics of the participants are not disclosed.
- Attached to the data collection instruments is the informed consent form, which requests participants' authorization to collect data, record audio, take photographs, and do whatever else is necessary to enrich the research.
- This research protects the intellectual property of the authors who provide the theoretical basis for the study and includes a section listing the bibliographic references used.
- The identities of those involved, as well as their ideas and opinions, will remain confidential. In the data analysis, the informants and their opinions will be numerically coded.
- Participants will have access to the information collected in order to verify the accuracy of the information provided.

Results

In the open coding established in this study, teaching vocation and factors influencing teaching performance were considered as categories of analysis; in the axial coding, it was found that teaching vocation is understood as a fundamental and necessary link between the personal goals that teachers express and the shared demands of their work in the classroom. In the research dimension, it is concluded that the motivation demonstrated by teachers and the personal satisfaction associated with self-actualization are not understood solely as an intrinsic feeling within each teacher; rather, these aspects grow when teachers find real and fulfilling meaning in the constant pursuit of becoming better professionals, through deep and sincere reflection combined with the creation of knowledge that extends beyond the classroom: “My vocation also drives me to keep learning and give my best to my students” (informant 4, personal communication, 2025) and “It is an internal motivation that drives me to want to share knowledge, inspire others, and contribute to the personal and academic development of my students” (informant 51, personal communication, 2025).

The ideal of being a teacher involves adapting to changes and the evolving demands of educating people, especially at a young age—aspects that are inherent to the profession, such as ongoing professional development, the use of teaching methods that

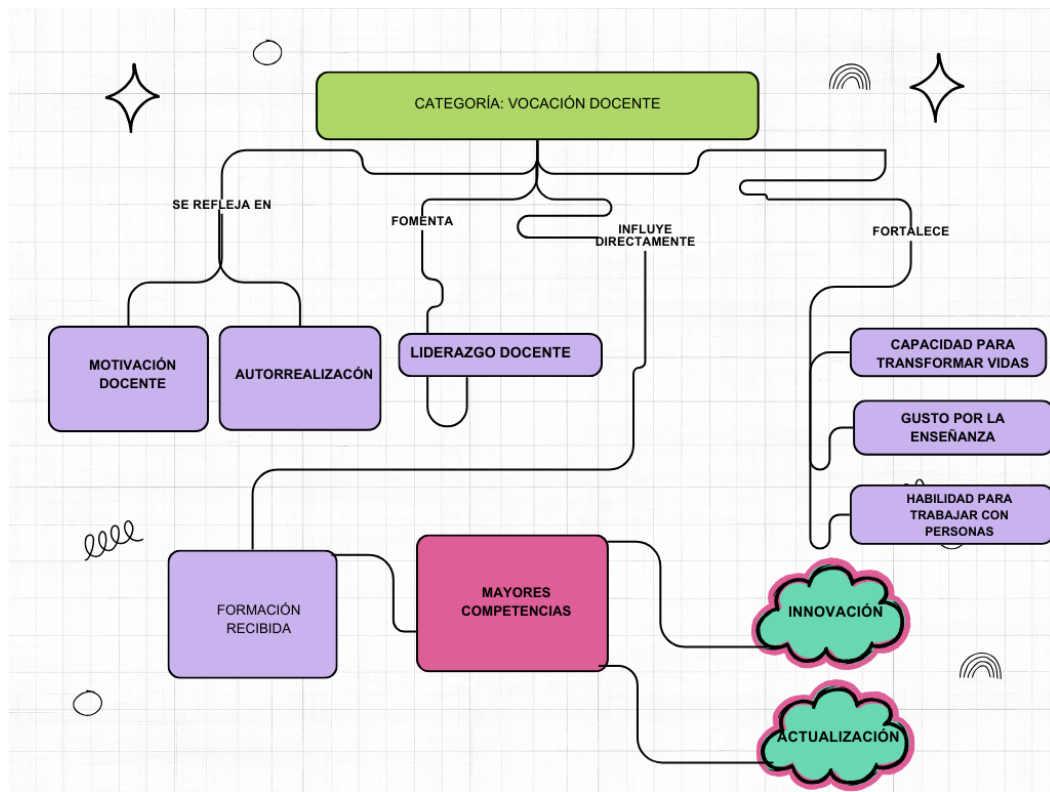
bring about substantial change in students' learning, and the continuous professional development that teachers must pursue to be more effective in their practice. This demonstrates that the teaching vocation is not something fixed or static, but rather a dynamic, flexible path that is strengthened day by day with the goal of improving the quality of teaching. In this regard, it is clear that the quality of a teacher's work depends greatly on the level of dedication they demonstrate; based on this, the quality of education improves. The academic team confirmed that initial training and professional development are solid foundations for a teaching vocation, as they enhance both teachers' confidence in their work and the quality of learning they facilitate for their students. A teacher with a strong sense of vocation will be able to respond to the challenges that arise in the classroom: "It's also a matter of classroom management, because conflicts arise, and through those conflicts, one teaches what values are" (informant 4, personal communication, 2025).

A calling is nourished by real-life experiences in teacher training that enable educators to be more innovative and proactive in adapting to and responding to various challenges in their environment; this reinforces the link between a calling to teach and professional performance. It is also confirmed that a teacher who loves and values their profession and demonstrates a calling never stops learning; they are always willing to improve, stay up to date, and innovate, strengthening their pedagogical identity through continuing education: "Learning about different pedagogical approaches has motivated me to innovate and keep my passion for my work alive" (informant 45, personal communication, 2025). Finally, in the social dimension, it was found that the teaching vocation goes beyond the purely individual level and the nature of the work itself; it manifests itself in a commitment to the educational community and to the society that surrounds the teaching and learning process, and is reinforced by the promotion of values of solidarity and the pursuit of social equality in education, as stated by Informant 1: "Teachers are not only there to impart scientific knowledge but also to teach aspects that will help students thrive in society, in their families, and elsewhere" (personal communication, 2025).

From the above, it is clear that a commitment to teaching in all its dimensions is part of a holistic approach to developing teachers as agents of change in personal, social, and collective reality, thereby contributing to the improvement of social development. A vocation is not something one is born with, but rather the result of a process of creation and interaction with one's environment, society, and peers; it is complemented by training and the need to make a meaningful contribution to society. It is not merely about performing a job, but about leaving a legacy that will endure in the minds and across the generations of a nation.

The following is a summary outline of the "teaching vocation" category:

Figure 1
Category summary: Teaching Vocation



By summarizing the category of teacher performance factors, we can understand that a teacher's vocation is not a construct that arises spontaneously; rather, it is a virtue that is forged through the development of personal skills, abilities, and attitudes. The social and educational context is a necessary factor in shaping a teacher's professional identity. On a personal level, the results indicate that self-confidence, the ability to understand and empathize with others, a personal commitment to becoming a better teacher every day, enthusiasm for teaching, and the teacher's ability to overcome the challenges that arise in the teaching profession are fundamental, in addition to empathy, which is essential for understanding the teaching profession from the perspective of educating with integrity and responsibility, as Informant 45 put it: "A good teacher is not limited to what they already know, but seeks to improve day by day to respond to the changing needs of their students" (personal communication, 2025).

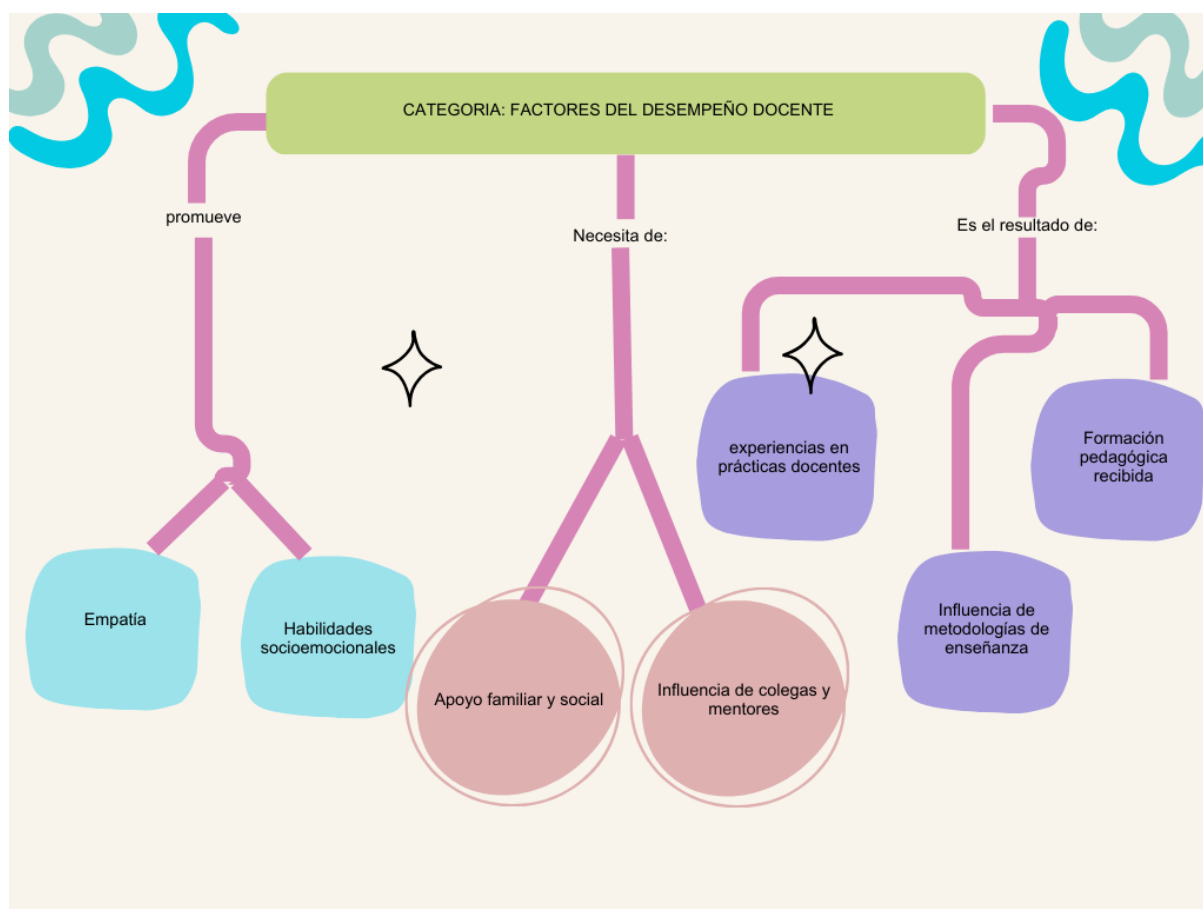
These results confirm that education is not an isolated, disconnected activity; rather, it draws on experience and the interactions with the environment surrounding the educational process. Academically speaking, it has been confirmed that teaching practicum experiences strengthen effective teaching practices; the pedagogical training received serves as the foundation upon which teachers' work is built, providing a solid basis that reinforces classroom instruction. Informant 15 highlights the importance of observing different teachers and adopting the best practices from each one: "Everyone has their own way of teaching, and I try to take the best aspects of each teacher and incorporate them into my own teaching style" (personal communication, 2025).

Thus, teaching is understood as a process of constant learning—a process of reflection, action, and continuous interaction that requires willingness, innovation, and critical thinking. In summary, the results in this category show that the factors influencing teacher performance are diverse and combine to shape a strong, adaptable teaching vocation oriented toward social change.

The following is a summary diagram of the "Teacher Performance Factors" category:

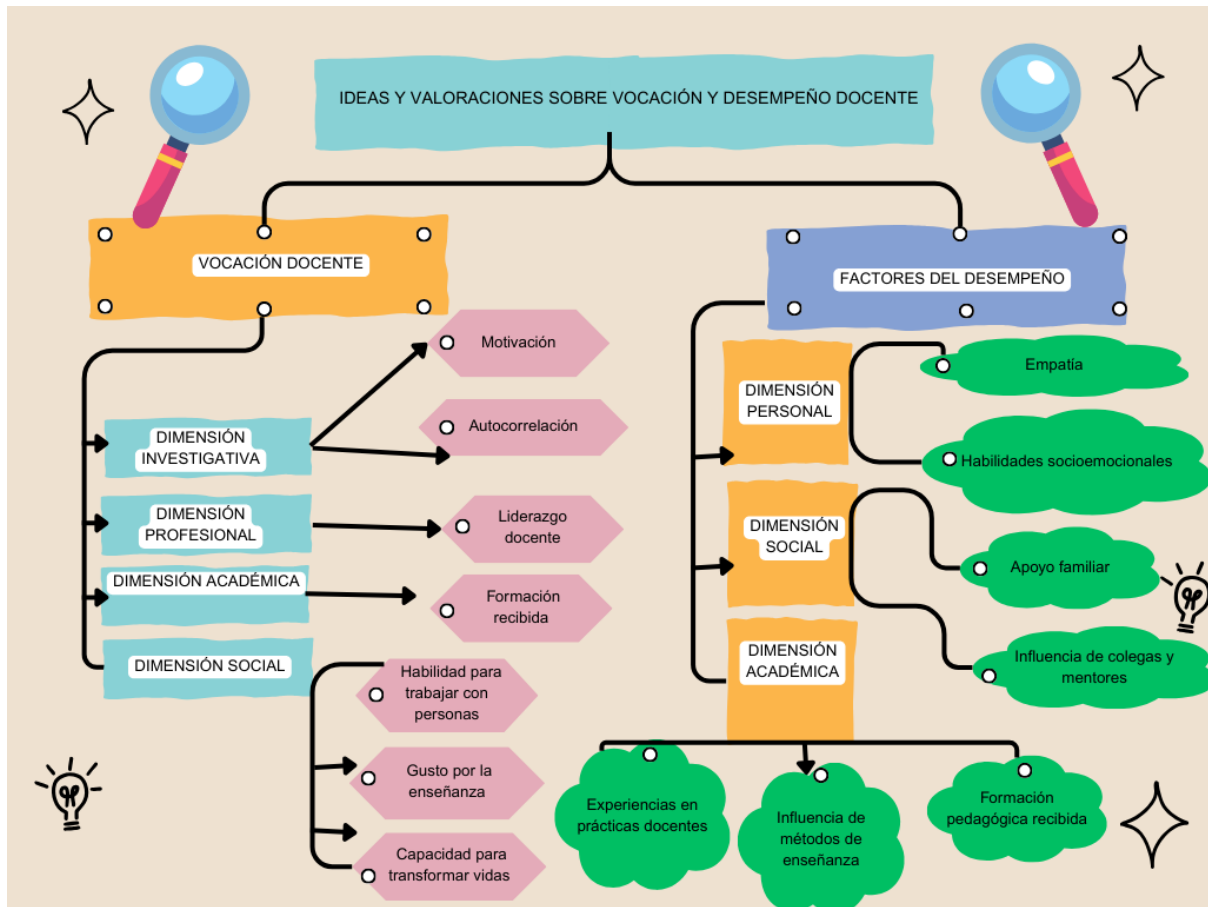
Figure 2

Category summary: factors affecting teacher performance



Finally, the following is a summary overview of the analysis of the categories. It provides a concise presentation of the results found across the categories, dimensions, and indicators; it serves as an executive summary of the findings from the interviews conducted with 54 participants, including teacher educators and students in the teacher-training programs at the Juticalpa Regional University Center of the Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University.

Figure 3
General overview of the categories



Discussion and Conclusions

The findings are presented as a profound result of the interaction between vocation and teaching performance. According to García et al. (2023), in initial teacher education contexts, teacher self-actualization is driven by three main factors: an emotional connection to teaching, social recognition of the role, and alignment between personal values and pedagogical practice.

Self-actualization is valued not only as the satisfaction of achieving academic goals, but also as the constant reaffirmation of establishing a life purpose. This is supported by recent literature, in which authors such as Villalobos Vergara (2022) point out that self-actualization in teacher education increases professional commitment, improves resilience in the face of adversity, and strengthens the capacity for pedagogical innovation.

In short, the personal and professional fulfillment that stems from a calling to teach not only strengthens their commitment to teaching but also serves as an endless source of motivation and resilience. This sense of satisfaction, which is renewed with every meaningful experience, strengthens the connection between personal identity and the role of a teacher, thereby fostering a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

With regard to the professional dimension, it is evident that teaching leadership is understood as a commitment that goes beyond the purely academic, as it reveals how a

sense of vocation influences the way future teachers conceive of educational leadership. According to Mendoza Laz et al. (2025), vocation-based management fosters motivation and mutual respect, leading to more meaningful learning.

Professional development for teachers is presented as an ongoing process that is closely linked to one's calling. According to the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (2025), career guidance should be adapted to educational contexts and meet the needs of students.

With regard to teacher performance, in line with Ainscow and Messiou (2023), cited in Morales (2025), the accounts show that, in terms of the social dimension, teachers with a strong sense of vocation act as agents of social change by including students at risk of exclusion and providing them with support beyond the classroom, thereby contributing to the students' holistic development.

These accounts reflect the findings of Mu et al. (2024), who argue that teachers' self-efficacy affects motivation, resilience, and classroom climate. These findings confirm that confidence in teaching is a driving force behind future teaching performance. According to Llorent et al. (2024), teachers with stronger social-emotional competencies are able to create more inclusive environments with higher levels of trust and learning.

In summary, in line with this, Vásquez (2024) emphasizes that communities of teaching practice promote professional development by fostering the exchange of knowledge and strengthening pedagogical identity.

Furthermore, from an academic perspective, it is shown that teacher performance is not an isolated outcome, but rather a comprehensive formative process influenced by professional development, educational practices, pedagogical training, learned methodologies, and perceptions of educational quality. The testimonials show that students view these experiences as essential to solidifying their commitment to teaching and to establishing themselves as leading professionals capable of responding to current and ever-changing educational contexts.

Conclusions

1. The teaching vocation is understood as the most decisive factor in educational practice; it is the central axis around which the other elements of the educational process interact, since participants recognize that motivation, pedagogical identity, and ethical commitment determine the way in which teaching is carried out.
2. Teacher performance is based on personal and professional factors related to the teaching vocation; the most notable of these are self-efficacy, empathy, and social-emotional skills, all of which directly influence the quality of teaching.
3. The relationship between vocation and teaching performance is dynamic and reciprocal: a sense of vocation among teachers drives continuous professional improvement; at the same time, successful and effective teaching performance reinforces the sense of vocation among current and future teachers.
4. Initial teacher training provides a necessary space for both practicing teachers and teacher-candidates to solidify their vocation and professional performance, as it allows them to integrate personal motivations linked to pedagogical competencies into the development of their professional identity.

Limitations

In any research process, limitations arise that hinder the theoretical and data collection phases. In this research process, the main limitations include limited access to studies related to the topic at hand that are specific to the local context, and the fact that the analysis of the teaching vocation in the country has not been prioritized, which makes it difficult to establish a starting point for understanding the local background of the research.

In addition, there were challenges in reaching some participants in person; in some cases, it was not possible to conduct a face-to-face interview, so the interviews were conducted via email and social media. This required adjustments to the data collection plan, including rescheduling the interviews and focus groups.

Finally, given the subjective nature of the data, it is not possible to generalize to all teachers in the country. This study was conducted at the Juticalpa Regional University Center of the Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University, located in northeastern Honduras, which means that the statements, perceptions, assessments, and experiences expressed in this study reflect the specific situation of teacher education in this locality; therefore, they cannot be generalized to the entire country; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as a situated and localized analysis; they are not universal observations or conclusions that apply to the entire country and cannot be applied to all educational contexts in Honduras.

Proposals for Continuity

First, it is suggested that a study be conducted to advance analysis at the national level, involving teacher training at the country's various regional centers. This line of research will allow for a comparison of the findings obtained at the Juticalpa Regional University Center of the Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University with those from other regions of the country, with the aim of identifying unique characteristics, differences, and similarities, thereby generating patterns that converge in relation to the country's educational and sociocultural contexts.

This would provide an overview of how the teaching vocation is perceived and how it influences teacher performance, while also generating insights that can be shared with the country's educational decision-makers for implementation in national educational curricula and teacher evaluations, and that can be useful in designing educational proposals and policies that promote the teaching profession in Honduras.

Second, it is suggested that a course of action be developed to conduct research focused on observing teaching and learning practices in the classroom, identifying educational practices that demonstrate, through action, how educational processes shaped by the teaching vocation are applied. It is important to conduct a study that goes beyond the discursive level by adopting an approach that allows for the observation of vocational elements within educational practice. In this way, we can develop a pedagogical bridge between theory and practice, fostering a pedagogical connection through teaching work to understand how teachers apply their vocation, thereby highlighting their educational and formative experiences.

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