Newly Qualified Teacher's Needs: A Comprehensive Analysis among Teachers in Poland and Spain

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Abstract: This article sets out to understand the training needs of New Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in two countries: Spain and Poland, to establish, first, similarities and differences between them in a comparative way, and then, as a cornerstone and starting point in the European project "Digital Academy in teaching practice for a seamless transition from pre-service to in-service-Digital TA- (Project ID: 101055620; Erasmus+ Teacher Academies), with negative impacts for the education system on a large scale. The methodology used is qualitative, whereby a non-probabilistic purposive sample of NQTs was administered a questionnaire structured in 6 axes: respondents' professional needs; personal relationships in a new context; ways to learn, teacher education at the university, personal development, and professional development; which was validated by statistical methods, and after collecting empirical data in both countries, it was integrated, compared, and analysed. The main results show that classroom management and individual work needs represent the main problems for NQTs and that a tutor who provides personal and specialized accompaniment represents one of the best aids to overcome the adversities of NQTs, but also the exchange of experiences in common spaces helps to overcome the lack of confidence. It is also evident that even though educational work is one with

workloads and stress above what is desirable, NQTs believe that it represents change and benefit to society.

1. Introduction

The topic addressed in this research is the training needs of recently graduated teachers, but also those who are in the last stage of their training, say the last year or the last stage where, by the way, they have already gone through the professional practices and have the experience of having faced the reality in situ. For this paper, we will call them both New Qualified Teachers (NQT) and their geographical delimitation is framed in the European continent because the context of this research is the European Digital TA project, whose mission is to improve the practical training of active teachers and teachers in initial training in EU countries, reducing professional abandonment. As a starting point, the training need of an individual, group, or system is defined as the existence of an unsatisfied and indispensable condition to allow it to function under normal conditions and to realize or achieve its objective (Arroyo et al., 2021). The interest in doing this research lies in providing the theoretical and diagnostic bases for the project "Digital Academy in teaching practice for a seamless transition from pre-service to in-service—Digital TA—(Project ID: 101055620; Erasmus+ Teacher Academies)" funded by the European Union, in the empirical part for the determination of actions related to the design of the platform itself, the creation of content, and, of course, for the joint direction of the research team that is part of the consortium. It is also expected to make a valuable and original contribution to the state of knowledge.

The perspective of the Digital TA project considers personal development and the acquisition of skills for teaching practice as something that is introjected from theoretical training and practice but that is improved and perfected through mentoring with experts and exchange with other colleagues who feel identified by the same challenges or difficulties, as it happens in other social groups. Therefore, the project consists of the development of a European digital platform for exchange, practice, and socialization with professional peers, for which it will develop a virtual environment. In this environment, each teacher, his or her experiences, and reflective action will be at the centre of a training activity that is committed to the constant improvement of his or her competencies.

According to the above, the general purpose of this research is to investigate the training needs of NQTs in Poland and Spain in a comprehensive and comparative way in order to obtain results that will give direction and light to the work of the consortium, on the one hand, and for the dissemination of the results in forums and educational communities, on the other hand. To address the proposed general objective, the following four specific objectives are set out. First, to review the literature to identify the areas and gaps where this research may be relevant; second, to define the validity of the instrument, the axes of analysis, and the criteria for data collection to give validity and methodological rigor to the work; third, to empty the empirical information in a structured manner in tables according to the previously defined axes; and fourth, to analyse the findings and contrast them with existing theory.

The magnitude of the problem is related to the number of NQTs that would be affected by the lack of this knowledge. According to data from the europapciudadana.com portal

(2024), the number of basic education teachers—from preschool to high school—amounts to 8 million. Considering that all teachers were at some point in their lives inexperienced novices, this number reveals a great impact on the proposed research and the Digital TA project. The discovery and analysis of the main challenges of young teachers can improve educational support in this sensitive stage of the transition between learning to teach and teaching to learn (Kelley et al., 2020). Therefore, the relevance of this study is to the improvement of public teacher training policies in Europe.

2. Literature Review

Teacher training needs for NQTs is a topic that has been widely studied in the European educational literature. Those who have made a generalized diagnosis in probabilistic and representative samples such as Kozina (2013) conclude that initial teacher education influences teacher stability and satisfaction of beginning teachers and that the school support needed by beginning teachers is closely related to the initial teacher education programs; to those who have segmented their analysis to make it more oriented to certain types of needs, for example, those who discuss training needs for NQT focused on the classroom space and the teaching-learning process with a focus on individual learning needs; and classroom management or classroom behaviour, especially related to conflictive students. In this regard, Gümüs (2022) mentions that the current competency profile of teacher training courses in Belgium and the Netherlands is somewhat distant from the real training needs of NQTs, but they make a detailed contrast between metropolitan contexts and rural contexts because they argue that there are significant differences in the student body.

Bettini et al. (2022), in the same line of training needs for NQTs with an emphasis on urban cores, concludes that although many of the challenges experienced by beginning teachers related to the same issues, their actual manifestation differed depending on the student population of the centers. For example, the problem of "parent contact" was as much about the extreme involvement and demands of wealthy, highly educated parents in some schools as it was about the diverse backgrounds of parents in other schools. Harmsen et al. (2017) studied the relationships between beginning teachers' perceived causes of stress, responses to stress, observed teaching behaviour, and dropout using structural equation modelling (SEM), and in this regard found that beginning teachers' negative emotions, in turn, are negatively associated with observed teaching behaviour. This study also shows that dissatisfaction is positively related to dropout; furthermore, this study provides important clues for improving professional support programs. Murad et al. (2021) concluded that relationships with coworkers were directly related to emotional exhaustion and cynical depersonalization, but, at the same time, although teachers spend most of their time alone with children, the support teachers receive from colleagues can serve as a buffer against burnout.

Along the same lines of individual education needs, but with a focus on needs in special education, we can find the work of Zolkoski et al. (2021), who argue that educator preparation programs must not only focus on teaching the academic skills needed to improve student learning but also on offering multiple experiences that require pre-service teachers to critically examine issues related to culture, linguistic diversity, poverty, and social justice. Donnelly, Murchú and Thies (2016) present their well-known concept of dimensions of multicultural education to help understand how the various components of multicultural education are interrelated and what role an NQT should assume. In a

similar area to the previous one, but focusing on the issue of inclusion in education in its different edges and interpretations, we can find the contributions of Aitken and Harford (2011), who conducted a case study in a secondary school in the Republic of Ireland, which revealed that the induction needs of both newly qualified teachers and those returning to the school after a prolonged period of absence were broadly similar. All participants indicated a need for support in the following areas: managing discipline problems, working with colleagues, negotiating a new school culture, and dealing with management. O'Reilly and Colum (2021) identify three factors that make a difference in how NQTs develop their identity as inclusive teachers: how the school approaches inclusive teaching, the school culture about supporting NQTs' developing identity as teachers, and how they address issues of equality, diversity, and inclusive education.

In a less pedagogical domain, but also very important for the adequate performance of NQTs' roles, we find the contributions of Struyve et al. (2016), whose research reveals that being socially connected with other educators within the school is associated with a reduction in teachers' intention to leave the profession, mediated by their work attitudes, for both novice and experienced teachers; however, social relationships were significantly more important for novice teachers. On extrinsic characteristics of the job, according to Michoń (2023), we can conclude that the challenge faced daily by teachers is to perform in a context of high social expectations and demands while, at the same time, the social prestige of the profession decreases and its value depreciates. Appreciation of the profession is closely linked to the perception and respect for the importance of education in personal, social, and political terms. The review of the literature shows many revealing findings on the subject of the educational needs of NQTs, and the present research aims to contribute to those existing gaps in knowledge that allow a better understanding of the phenomenon studied and, therefore, better school, academic, public policy, and even personal management.

3. Methodology

The methodology used for this research is a qualitative approach, which tries, among other things, to contextualize a phenomenon, to have interpretative richness, and to make more open approaches that focus little by little. The research on the needs of newly qualified teachers in Poland and Spain was carried out using the diagnostic survey method with the use of the survey technique and the use of a research tool in the form of a questionnaire. It includes questions concerning seven areas in which the needs of novice teachers are revealed according to Arroyo et al. (2021).

The seven research areas include:

1. Respondents' professional needs;
2. Personal relationships in a new context;
3. Ways to learn
4. Teacher education at the university
5. Personal development
6. Professional development.

3.1. Questionnaire Validation Process

As part of the research process to determine the needs of newly qualified teachers (NQT), the group of researchers from UJK and UNEAT proposed, first, to

investigate in the existing literature if there was already an ad hoc questionnaire with the objectives of the Digital TA project, but there was none designed specifically for NQT. Therefore, it was decided to design an original questionnaire with the eclectic method. This questionnaire underwent 2 validation processes: one qualitative and the other quantitative. The qualitative validation process consisted of a review by blind peers from both universities, and a total of 19 format corrections and 3 content corrections was made. Once this qualitative process was completed, it was decided to use statistical methods to assess reliability. Using SPSS in its most recent version, 2 models were applied: Content Validity Ratio and Cronbach's Alpha (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Fleiss Kappa Results.

	Overall Kappa					
	Kappa	Asymptotic Standard Error	Z	P Value	Lower 95% Asymptotic CI Bound	Upper 95% Asymptotic CI Bound
Overall	,524	,032	16,226	,000	,461	,587

Note: this table shows the results of the validation of the needs assessment questionnaire using Fleiss Kappa.

Table 2: Cronbach´s Alpha.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized Items	N of Elements
,901	,929	9

Note: this table shows the results of the validation of the needs assessment questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha.

From the quantitative point of view, better results are obtained with Cronbach's Alpha and the CVR (Content Validity Ratio) is 0,66. In the case of Fleiss' Kappa, the correspondence is moderate. This means that the data collection instrument is acceptable for the purposes for which it was designed.

3.2. Sample Selection

In both countries, the sampling process began with an open call in universities and teacher training centers with the support of the respective local Ministries of Education. The incentive to participate, in all cases, was the promise of free access to the Digital TA platform and its included benefits, previously exposed in conferences or through workshops. In the case of Spain, the universe of teachers amounted to 30 thousand, and in the case of Poland, to 25 thousand. Once the call was made, we managed to attract just over 3,000 teachers in Spain and a similar number in Poland, which represents just over 10% in both cases. Once the population had been formed, it was decided that the sample should be a deliberate non-probabilistic sample, based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Inclusion:

- Who had between 0 and 5 years of teaching experience.
- Working in basic education (Elementary, Secondary or Vocational).
- That they are working or in the last year of their studies.
- Who are informed about the Digital TA project
- Residing in Spain and working for the Spanish education system (in the case of questionnaires from Spain).
- Residing in Poland and working for the Polish education system (for questionnaires from Poland).
- Exclusion

- University professors who have never taught at the elementary level
- Teachers with open disciplinary files or with conflict of interest.

The survey involved 134 respondents: 68 from Poland, 66 from Spain. They were newly qualified teachers who have been working in the profession for up to 5 years.

3.3. Characteristics of the Study Group

The majority of respondents from both countries work in primary schools. A similar group of people are employees of secondary schools. Several respondents work in vocational and other schools. All respondents have higher education. Most of them got them at university. Over 90% of respondents from Poland have a master›s degree. Three people have a bachelor›s degree, and two people have a doctorate. In terms of professional development, half of the respondents (33 people) have completed postgraduate studies. In addition, a large number of novice teachers (35 people) improve their skills in the field of TUS, working with students on the autism spectrum, oligophrenopedagogy, surdo- and typhlopedagogy, as well as pedagogical therapy, and inclusive education. 32 of the surveyed teachers completed more than one form of professional competence training.

Of the Spanish respondents, 60 (92.3%) have a master's degree, 3 have a bachelor's degree, and 2 have a doctorate. As in Poland, respondents from Spain attend postgraduate studies and further education courses, including language, ICT, methodological, and other courses. In terms of seniority, the majority of Spanish respondents have been working in the profession for 5 years (30.3%). On the other hand, the respondents from Poland are mainly teachers working in the first year of school (39.7%). A large proportion of the respondents have four years of work experience (23.5%). The surveyed Polish teachers represent the majority of subjects included in the core curriculum for general education. Among the respondents, 20 were teachers of preschool education (9) and early school education (11).

Teachers are also employed as supporting teachers (10 people) and as pedagogues or after-school club tutors. In addition, one teacher works in the school library, and two people conduct compensatory and corrective classes. One person is a special educator, as well as one who teaches yoga classes. More than half (61.8%) of respondents teach only one subject. In contrast, almost a quarter of teachers teach at least two subjects. Three people, including an early school education teacher, a primary school teacher, and one vocational (sectoral) schoolteacher, teach more than three subjects.

Among Spanish respondents, the biggest group is early childhood education teachers, who teach in three areas: harmonious development, discovery and exploration of the environment, communication, and representation of reality. The other primary school teachers in the study teach subjects such as mathematics, language, natural sciences, social sciences, art, physical education, English, biology, geology, physics, chemistry, and philosophy. These initial comparative data show the similarities, characteristics, and peculiarities of both analysis groups after the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4. Results

The comparative analysis is based on each of the areas in which the questionnaire is structured but can be summarized as follows: training needs in both countries, the school context in which they carry out their professional work, how they acquire

continuing education, and the perception of their work from a more personal and developmental perspective.

Area 1: Professional Needs of Respondents

To find out about the professional needs, the respondents were asked to select the 3 most important professional needs and rank them from the most important to the least important. Respondents from Poland considered "individual needs of students" to be the most important professional need—20.6% of respondents made such a choice in the first place. Interestingly, this need was also mentioned by 22.1% of respondents as the second most important need, and by 10.3% of the respondents, it was marked as the third choice. For a slightly smaller group of respondents—17.6%—the most important need at work is the atmosphere of cooperation at school. The third most important professional need in the respondents is coping with problems and discipline. Such a choice was made in the first place by 14.7% of respondents and in the second place by 19.1% of respondents.

On the other hand, the largest group of respondents from Spain (39.39%) highlighted classroom management as the most important professional need. For 9.09% of respondents, the most important thing is dealing with problems and discipline. This need was indicated by 19.69% of respondents as the second most important one. Communication with parents is also important for the respondents, which was considered the most important need by 9.09% of the respondents. A fairly large group of respondents marked this need in the second place in the hierarchy of importance. Interestingly, the dominant option among Polish teachers, marked as the first option for the individual needs of students, was most often marked in the group of teachers from Spain in third place (25.75%). A large number of respondents also marked it as the second most important need at work. A detailed list of the professional needs indicated by the respondents is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Greatest Professionalization Needs of Respondents.

Need	First Position				Second Position				Third Position			
	Spain		Poland		Spain		Poland		Spain		Poland	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Classroom management,	26	39.39	8	11.8	1	1.51	4	5.9	5	7.57	3	4.4
How to deal with discipline problems.	6	9.09	10	14.7	13	19.69	13	19.1	4	6.06	3	4.4
Individual needs of students.	1	1.51	14	20.6	13	19.69	15	22.1	17	25.75	7	10.3
Coaching/tutoring.	5	7.57	0	0.0	1	1.51	0	0.0	3	4.54	0	0.0
Communication with parents.	6	9.09	3	4.4	11	16.66	6	8.8	3	4.54	17	25.0
Self-direction and self-sufficiency of students.	4	6.06	2	2.9	10	15.15	6	8.8	7	10.60	4,	5.9
Inclusive education	1	1.51	5	7.4	2	3.03	4	5.9	14	21.21	5	7.4
Constructive feedback.	8	5.12	3	4.4	15	9,6	3	4.4	13	8.32	0	0.0
Climate of collaboration at school.	8	5.12	12	17.6	15	9,6	3	4.4	13	8.32	12	17.6
TOTAL	66	100	68	100	66	100	68	100	66	100	68	100

Source: own research.

Area 2: Personal Relationships in A New Context

In order to learn about the personal relationships of the respondents at work, they were asked to rate the level of their integration into the school community. On the basis of the analysis of the data in Table 4, it can be concluded that the largest group of respondents, both in Poland (48.5%) and Spain (56.1%), assess their level of integration with the school community as good. Slightly fewer people from Poland (45.6%) and from Spain (36.4%) rate it as very good. None of the respondents rated the

level of their integration into the community in the workplace negatively. Respondents were then asked how they rated their relationships (e.g., tandem learning, sharing materials) with experienced teachers.

Table 4: Assessment of Respondents' Own Integration into the School Community in the Workplace.

Assessment of the Level of Integration with the School Community	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Very good	31	45.6	23	36.84
well	33	48.5	37	56.06
Neutral	4	5.9	4	6.06
Not very good	0	0.0	2	3.03
badly	0	0.0	0	0.0
Number of respondents	68	100.0	66	100.0

Source: own research.

Table 5: Assessment of the Level of Cooperation between Respondents and Experienced Teachers.

Assessment of the Level of Cooperation	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Very good	36	52.9	13	19.7
Good	20	29.4	5	4.5
Correct/Positive	5	7.4	3	4.5
Lack of cooperation	4	5.9	0	0.0
TOTAL	68	100.0	21	100.0

Source: own research.

As indicated by the data in Table 5, the largest group of respondents, both in Poland and Spain, assesses the level of cooperation between respondents and experienced teachers as very good. Respondents were then asked to answer the question of whether they had a mentor. 74% of respondents from Poland gave a positive answer to this question. On the other hand, 26% of respondents do not have such a person at the school where they work. Among Spanish respondents, as many as 95.46% of respondents have a mentor. Only 3 people (4.54%) answered this question in the negative, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Presence of a Mentor in the Work of Respondents.

Presence of a mentor	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Up to, Mom Mentor	50	74.0	62	95.46
No, I don't have a mentor	18	26.0	4	6.06
TOTAL	68	100.0	66	100.0

Source: own research.

Respondents were also asked to indicate specific forms of support they received from their mentors. It was an open question, in response to which respondents from Poland indicated mainly: sharing materials for classes, exchanging opinions, experiences, and ideas regarding work, and advice in difficult situations. Respondents from Spain also indicated that talking about difficult situations experienced at school was the main form of help from their mentor. Respondents were then asked to indicate the forms of support they received from the teaching team (their closest colleagues).

Table 7: Forms of Support from the Teaching Team.

Forms of Support	Poland		Spain		
	N	%		N	%
Mental support	9	13.2	Mental support	4	6.06
Record Keeping	10	14.7	Cooperation Collaborative Teaching	15	22.72
Organization of school work, Joint implementation of projects	11	16.2	Resource Contributions	33	50.0
Sharing Materials	14	20.6	Knowledge exchange	12	18.18
Exchange of experiences, selected issue – help, organization of school work, educational issues, cooperation with parents	31	45.6	Clarifying doubts	2	3.03
TOTAL	68	100		66	100

Source: own research.

An analysis of the data in Table 7 shows that teachers from Poland experience mainly such forms of support from other teachers as the exchange of experiences related to various aspects of the teacher's work (45.6%) and the sharing of various types of materials useful for conducting lessons. Teachers in Spain, on the other hand, mainly mentioned forms of support from other teachers, such as "resource contribution" (50%) and collaborative teaching and co-teaching. Another question asked in the questionnaire concerned the respondents' expectations of the school management.

Table 8: Respondents' Expectations of School Management.

Wait	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Introduction to the Duties of a Teacher	43	63.2	0	0.0
Inclusion in the teaching team	6	8.8	45	66.66
Kindness and kindness	6	8.8	14	21.21
Understanding	10	14.7	7	10.60
Other	3	4.4	1	1.51
TOTAL	68	100.0	66	100.0

Source: own research.

The analysis of the data in Table 8 shows that the largest group of respondents from Poland expects the principals of schools in which they start their professional work primarily to introduce them to the duties of a teacher. On the other hand, for respondents from Spain, the most important is inclusion in the teaching team. Polish respondents expect politeness, kindness (21.21%), and understanding (10.60%) from school principals to a greater extent than from Poland. In the next part, there was also an option for respondents to add their own answers to this question. Their analysis shows that novice teachers also expect their headmasters to provide clear information on timetables, tasks to be performed, documents to be completed, scope of duties, etc. The respondents also expect appreciation for their actions and support for initiatives to improve their competencies in various types of courses and training. The respondents also expressed their expectations towards teaching team. The analysis of the data in Table 9 shows that the surveyed teachers from Poland expect from the teaching team, which mainly includes sharing resources and knowledge, advising students and parents in problematic situations, as well as cooperation on various professional levels.

On the other hand, the research on teachers from Spain expects from the teaching team above all cooperation based on tutoring, as well as sharing their knowledge and experience. Detailed results of the studies on this topic are provided in Table 10.

Table 9: Expectations of Polish Respondents Towards the Teaching Team.

Wait	N	%
Cooperation	10	14.70
Advising in problematic situations with students	10	14.70
Advising in problematic situations with fellow teachers	10	14.70
Advising in problematic situations with students' parents	20	29.41
Sharing resources and knowledge	10	14.70
Conversations on professional topics	8	11.76
TOTAL	68	100.0

Source: own research.

Table 10: Expectations of the Surveyed Teachers from Spain Towards the Teaching Team.

Expectations	N	%
Tutoring (cooperation)	41	62.12
Resources	15	22.72
Exchange of knowledge	5	7.57
Empathy	2	3.03
Others	3	4,54
Total	66	100.0

Source: own research.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the three most significant difficulties and challenges they experience in communicating with other teachers. Teachers from Poland and Spain most often pointed to such difficulties in relations with other teachers as: distance in communication between fellow teachers, unclear and chaotic flow of information, and lack of trust between teachers. A detailed list of respondents' responses is provided in Table 11.

Table 11: Difficulties and Challenges of Respondents in Communicating with other Teachers.

Difficulties and Challenges in Communicating with other Teachers	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Lack of trust	28	41.0	24	36.36
Hostile atmosphere among colleagues – teachers at work	19	28.0	11	16.66
Anxiety	14	21.0	2	3.03
Distance in communication between classmates	37	54.0	8	12.12
Distance in communication with the school management	16	24.0	10	15.15
Unfair and Favorient Treatment of Teachers	10	15.0	0	0.0
Unclear and chaotic flow of information	33	49.0	10	15.15
Mobbing	4	6.0	0	0.0
Others	0	0,0	1	1.51
Total	68	100.0	66	100.0

Source: own research.

Area 3: Ways of Acquiring Knowledge

In order to learn about the ways in which the respondents acquire knowledge, they were asked to indicate three sources of knowledge that they believe are most important in their professional development. The analysis of the data in Table 12 shows that the most important sources of knowledge of the surveyed teachers from Poland include experiential learning (43 responses), workshops and training (38 responses), and postgraduate

studies and courses (31 responses). On the other hand, for novice teachers from Spain, the main sources of knowledge in the professional development of the respondents were postgraduate studies and courses (29 indications), university studies (27 indications), and work-based learning (23 indications). Interestingly, study visits, meetings with practitioners, and international cooperation are the least important for the acquisition of knowledge in professional development. The subjects were also asked to indicate how they developed their self-reflection. Detailed results of studies on this topic are presented in Table 13.

Table 12: Sources of Knowledge in the Professional Development of the Respondents.

Sources of Knowledge	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
University Studies	20	29.4	27	13.63
Postgraduate Studies & Courses	31	45.6	29	14.64
Workshops and trainings	38	55.9	5	2.52
Self-study	23	33.8	15	7.57
Work-based learning	16	23.5	23	11.61
Experiential learning	43	63.2	15	7.57
Contact with a caregiver/advisor	6	8.8	9	4.54
Following by Example	6	8.8	13	6.56
Self-reflection	5	7.4	18	27.27
Publication review	1	1.5	13	6.56
Online Sources	5	7.4	9	4.54
Webinars & Remote Learning	4	5.9	14	7.07
Communities & Practitioners	3	4.4	5	2.52
Study visits	1	1.5	2	1.01
International cooperation	2	2.9	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	1	1.51
Total	68	100.0	66	100.0

Source: own research.

Table 13: Forms of Developing Self-reflection by the Surveyed Teachers.

Formsof Developing Self-reflection	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Photo Recording	0	0.0	0	0.0
Using a Professional Development Portfolio	0	0.0	0	0.0
Consulting professional institutions/associations	2	5.1	0	0.0
Conducting surveys	3	8.3	0	0.0
Taking Notes on Your Teaching	4	36.4	16	7.69
Consulting the literature	11	16.2	0	0.0
Lesson Observations	33	84.6	40	19.23
Consulting with a mentor	35	51.5	13	6.25
Self-esteem	36	52.9	46	22.11
Learning from colleagues	36	52.9	21	10.09
Student feedback	39	57.4	32	15.38
Conversations with colleagues	42	61.8	33	15.86
Total:	68	100.0	66	100,0

Source: own research.

An analysis of the data in Table 13 shows that, according to the surveyed teachers from Poland and Spain, their self-reflection develops most strongly through conversations

with colleagues, feedback from students, learning from colleagues, and self-evaluation. In both groups of respondents, a high similarity in the answers made can be observed.

Area 4: Teacher Education at the University

To find out the respondents' opinions on university education, they were asked several questions in a questionnaire concerning this particular area. At the outset, the respondents were asked to give three proposals for changes in the education of future teachers.

Table 14: Respondents' Proposals for Changes in the Education of Future Teachers Poland

Proposed Changes in the Education of Future Teachers	N	%
Increase in the number of practical classes, reduce theory	44	64.7
Work methodology, more classes in psychology	9	13.2
Preparation for school record keeping	6	8.8
Preparing to work with a child with SEN	5	7.4
Preparing to work with parents	2	2.9
Familiarization with the provisions of the education law	2	2.9
More ICT activities	2	2.9
TOTAL	68	100

Source: own research.

The analysis of the data in Table 14 shows that respondents from Poland most often (64%) suggested limiting theory in university education and increasing the number of practical classes. Significantly fewer indications (13.2%) were received by the proposal to increase the number of classes in the field of educational methodology and psychology in the curriculum. The teachers from Spain—as well as from Poland—pointed primarily to the need to reduce the number of theoretical subjects at university and to increase the number of practical classes that actually prepare students for the teaching profession. According to them, there should be more classes at the university to prepare for classroom management and recognize the needs of students in the classroom, and this is reflected in Table 15.

Table 15: Spanish Respondents' Proposals for Changes in the Education of Future Teachers.

Proposed Changes in the Education of Future Teachers	N	%
Classroom needs	10	14.28
ICT	4	5.7
More English spoken	3	4.28
Real practices	26	37.14
Conflict resolution	9	12.85
Students with special needs	8	11.42
Management	12	17.14
TOTAL	66	100

Source: own research.

Respondents were also asked to identify three skills that were particularly useful to teachers that they had learned at university. The analysis of the data in Table 16 shows that the largest group of surveyed teachers from Poland (66.2%) considered that the most useful skills acquired at the university are related to methodological preparation and include such skills as planning work, developing lesson plans, and support for students, and assessing students' progress. A fairly large group of respondents (52.9%) also appreciated the theoretical knowledge in the field of didactics and psychology

gained during their studies. 25% of respondents considered personal development to be the greatest benefit of university education.

Table 16: Skills Acquired at the University in the Opinions of Respondents from Poland.

Indicated Benefits of University Education	N	%
Methodological preparation: planning work, developing lesson plans and support for pupils, assessing pupils' progress	45	66.2
Theoretical knowledge of didactics, psychology, and substantive knowledge of the subject	36	52.9
Development of personal predispositions	17	25.0
Ability to work in a team	7	10.3
Preparation in the use of information and communication technologies	6	8.8
Individualization of the teaching process	3	4.4
Voice emission	3	4.4
Practical skills	2	2.9
Preparing for public speaking	2	2.9
TOTAL	68	100

Source: own research.

Table 17: Skills Acquired at University in the Opinions of Spanish Respondents.

Indicated Benefits of University Education	N	%
Internship (practice)	35	34.65
Theoretical knowledge	28	27.72
Teamwork	12	11.88
Subjects content more dynamics (methodological strategies)	14	13.86
Attention to diversity	5	4.95
Psychology	6	5.94
Small classes	1	0.99
TOTAL	66	100

Source: own research.

The surveyed teachers from Spain reflected in Table 17 that they appreciated student internships as the most useful in the implementation of the teaching profession (34.65%). As in the case of the teachers from Poland, Spaniards also found the theoretical knowledge gained at the university helpful in doing their job (27.72%). The methodical strategies of the teacher's work learnt during the studies were appreciated by 13.86% of respondents, which is much less compared to teachers from Poland.

Area 5: Personal Development

In order to learn about the personal development of the surveyed teachers, they were first asked to indicate the three most important advantages of working as a teacher. The surveyed teachers from Poland considered the following to be the main advantages of the teaching profession: the ability to work with children (64.7%), a sense of "influence" on younger generations (58.8%), job satisfaction (55.9%), the possibility of professional development (42.6%) and "faith" in the value of teaching (35.3%). The respondents believe that the profession of a teacher in Poland is not associated with social prestige. Only one person surveyed is satisfied with their earnings. This is reflected in table 18.

Interestingly and as indicated in table 19, the choices of respondents from Spain were very similar this time. The main advantages of being teachers were "faith" in the value of teaching (32%), job satisfaction (24%), work-life balance (20%) and a sense of "influence" on the younger generation (16%). The respondents also pointed out the disadvantages of the teaching profession.

Table 18: Advantages of practicing the teaching profession in the opinions of the teachers from Poland.

Advantages of Being a Teacher	N	%
Remuneration	1	1.5
Permanent Employment Contract	16	23.5
Job satisfaction	38	55.9
Career opportunities	29	42.6
Work-life balance	7	10.3
Impact on younger generations	40	58.8
Lots of free time	3	4.4
Opportunity to work with children	44	64.7
Social prestige	0	0.0
Commitment to Social Justice	2	2.9
Belief in the Value of Teaching	24	35.3
TOTAL	68	100

Source: own research.

Table 19: Advantages of the Teaching Profession in the Opinions of the Teachers from Spain.

Advantages of Being a Teacher	N	%
Believing in the value of teaching	40	32.0
Work/ life balance	25	20.0
Job satisfaction	30	24.0
Influence on younger generations	20	16.0
Opportunity to work with children	10	8.0
TOTAL	66	100

Source: own research.

Table 20: Disadvantages of the Teaching Profession in the Opinions of the Respondents.

Disadvantages of the Teaching Profession	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Stress at work	31	45.6	46	25.84
Overwhelming responsibility	35	51.5	32	19.97
Noise	27	39.7	0	0.0
Voice load	27	39.7	0	0.0
Low salary	44	64.7	14	7.86
Conflicts with parents	22	32.4	26	14.60
Lack of independence	1	1.5	0	0.0
Student Violence Against Teachers	3	4.4	0	0.0
Low social prestige	12	17.6	27	15.16
TOTAL	68	100	66	100

Source: own research.

The analysis of the data in Table 20 shows that the largest group of respondents from Poland considered low earnings to be the main disadvantage of the teaching profession (as much as 64.7%). In addition, respondents from both countries considered the main disadvantages of the teaching profession to be factors such as stress at work, the overwhelming responsibility of the teaching profession, and conflicts with parents. A similar number of respondents also pointed to low social status as a problem of the teaching profession. A fairly large group of Polish teachers (39.7%) also emphasized the voice load as a negative aspect of the teaching profession.

Area 6: Professional Development

Teachers participating in the survey were asked to indicate what hinders their professional development.

Table 21: Obstacles to Professional Development in the Respondents' Opinions.

Obstacles to Professional Development	Poland		Spain	
	N	%	N	%
Nothing	11	16.2	8	6.83
Lack of money for training	30	44.1	10	8.54
Lack of time	41	60.3	36	30.76
Excessive workload	23	33.8	34	29.05
Family life	16	23.5	11	9.4
Unfriendly atmosphere in the teaching team	2	2.9	0	0.0
Lack of acceptance by superiors	1	1.5	0	0.0
Lack of interesting courses	3	4.4	16	13.6
Other	0	0.0	2	1.0
TOTAL	68		66	

Source: own research.

An analysis of the data in Table 21 shows that the largest group of respondents from both countries considers lack of time to be the main factor hindering their professional development. A similar group of respondents indicated the workload as an obstacle to their professional development in the second place. Polish teachers also emphasised the lack of money for training to improve their qualifications. Teachers in Spain, on the other hand, feel the lack of interesting courses in their teacher training offer.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The most important professional needs reported by the respondents include recognizing the individual needs of students, an atmosphere of cooperation at school, dealing with problems and discipline in the classroom, classroom management, and positive communication with students' parents. These results are similar to others like Espinosa Martín (2014) & Fernández-Díaz, Rodríguez-Mantilla and Fernández-Cruz (2016), but they also confirm what Kiyançiçek and Çoban (2024) said when they refer to the fact that the educational environment of teachers has been taken care of in terms of incentives, stability, and recognition, but it has been ignored that they face the same adversities as always and generates the levels of frustration and impotence that are even higher due to the high visibility and criticism to which they are exposed.

As pointed out by Biesta (2015), the role of the university and schools, in general, has not been up to the task of training teachers, and despite positive management indicators or high rankings, there are certainly notable deficiencies among graduates in the first stage of their careers. Two specific things become necessary: on the one hand, to improve teacher training itself, which is not necessarily related to indicators but to effectiveness at the time of learning and implementation; and also, with projects such as Digital TA, which aims to create a reflective environment for the improvement of teaching practice focused on novice teachers.

The novice teachers participating in the survey rate their level of integration into the school community at a high level. The respondents assessed the level of their cooperation with experienced teachers in a similar way. Almost all respondents from Spain and the majority of respondents from Poland report that they have a person

in the workplace whom they treat as a mentor. This answer is new in the field of knowledge of teacher training because no research in the existing literature measures exactly the level of teacher integration towards their educational community, but there are no instruments for it either. The research responses refer to a self-perception of integration; however, it reinforces the idea of Kiyançiçek and Çoban (2024) on the concept of school coexistence, which has a clear positive meaning even when there is a certain degree of conflict reinforced by other educational groups such as students, families, and authorities.

In the same line of personal relationships of the novice teacher, the figure of the mentor emerges because the evidence shows that a majority percentage of teachers in both countries have one, but perhaps not in the formal idea of a mentor. The mentor, traditionally, is associated with a vertical relationship between a person of higher status and another in a position. However, in education, a horizontal-symmetrical modality is also possible, in which mentor and mentoree find themselves in similar situations as experienced and novice teachers. Thus, the role that a peer can play is considered to have concrete benefits that are easier to achieve, thanks to the plane of equality in which they relate and the characteristics they share—similar problems and needs, recent academic experiences, empathy with their peers, mutual help, etc.— (Ibáñez García et al., 2020). This situation is fully experienced in professional practices, and from the research data, it is confirmed that the current scheme should be increased and improved to enhance the role of the teacher-mentor-expert who provides advice and security to the novice.

The surveyed teachers experience various forms of support from other teachers, the most important of which are the exchange of experiences related to various aspects of the teacher's work, the sharing of various types of materials useful for conducting lessons, and the contribution of resources and cooperation based on joint teaching. The evidence shows that support and advice in both countries for the organization of work are much needed, which probably has to do with excessive workloads. Above all, the respondents expect from school management a substantive introduction to the teacher's duties, a friendly inclusion in the teaching team, and an understanding of the actions taken by them at the initial stage of their work at school, which is sometimes associated with ignorance and a sense of being lost.

This has to do with the natural and inherent need of human beings to belong to a group. The sense of belonging, or feeling of belonging, is the subjective identification that an individual experiences concerning a group, an organization, or a community, where he/she feels comfortable, welcome, and/or accepted, that is, where he/she feels he/she belongs. The sense of belonging is a fundamental element in the constitution of human communities (García-Lirios, 2021); in this case, an educational community is much needed for the integration of novice teachers. Novice teachers also expect their headmasters to provide clear information regarding the timetable, tasks to be performed, documents to be completed, and the scope of duties, as well as appreciation for the actions taken and support for initiatives to improve their competencies at various types of courses and training.

The surveyed teachers expect from the teaching team, mainly include sharing resources and knowledge, advising students and parents in problematic situations, as well as cooperation on various professional levels, and sharing their knowledge and

experience. The expectations of novice teachers, according to the data, are diverse but focus on tutoring and individualized help, which reinforces the concept of mentoring mentioned above and mentioned, thus the role of the mentor teacher becomes relevant. According to Orland-Barak and Wang (2021), some of the characteristics that a mentor teacher should possess are: to be a successful, respected, and appreciated member of his/her school; to have access to information and people who can help the novice teacher in his/her professional development; to have a friendly personality; to be solidly linked to his/her school; to feel satisfied and comfortable in his/her work; and finally, to be willing to invest the time and effort necessary to be a good mentor teacher.

The difficulties experienced by the respondents in communicating with other teachers are, first of all, the distance in communication between them, the unclear and chaotic flow of information, and the lack of mutual trust. Although all communication problems have to do with a bad transmission of information and erroneous feedback, the origin and management of these problems are different; for example, communication flows have an organizational origin, and their solution lies in establishing clear manuals and procedures for all possible cases; in other words, it is necessary to stop appealing to the informal and move towards more structured communication, without minimizing the importance of informal communication in certain contexts (Koch & Denner, 2022). Concerning the lack of trust, it may seem that this is natural in the first contact with other teachers, but it is a bad sign if coexistence and teamwork do not improve over time or, worse, worsen, because then we are facing a problem of greater magnitude that also has an organizational diagnosis and solution: poor working environment and operational inefficiency. Currently, the work environment is one of the factors that organizations, including schools, consider most relevant for the achievement and attainment of their objectives. Likewise, it has been observed over time that the interest that schools show in having not only qualified teachers but also seeking and promoting good internal communication is reflected in the use of soft skills for effective communication. It is precisely these skills that play an important role within them since, apart from creating a good working environment, they lead the whole team towards the fulfilment of educational objectives (Biesta, 2015).

The most important sources of knowledge used in their professional work include experiential learning, work-based learning, workshops, training, university studies, postgraduate studies, and courses. According to the respondents, their professional self-reflection develops most strongly through conversations with colleagues, feedback from students, and self-assessment of their actions. It cannot be concluded that one source of information is in the majority concerning the rest, both for Spanish and Polish teachers; however, it can be seen that there is a certain predilection for university training and scientific studies, which affirms that there is still confidence in traditional training.

In the context of the problems and difficulties experienced at school, the surveyed teachers would be willing to take part in training concerning, first of all, didactic and educational work with pupils with special educational needs, motivating pupils to learn, pupil assessment, class management, problems with violence and discipline in the classroom, and social and emotional aspects of learning and evaluation. If this answer is linked to some previous ones related to mentoring, we can conclude that the mentoring process is very relevant to minimize the lack of confidence and the difficulties faced by NQTs during their first years of professional practice. Returning to

the organizational issue of improving the flow of information, a major difficulty of NQT can be solved administratively if all the procedures are perfectly documented in flow charts and manuals that are disseminated among the centre's working community. The NTQs in the study also raised their voices regarding proposals for the future to improve education, and the answer is clear: they need more and better practices. When thinking about teacher training, it is common to insist on the relationship that must necessarily exist between theory and practice. However, no matter how much this need is reiterated, few training experiences manage to articulate this relationship satisfactorily and reflectively.

In education, the proposal of reflection from practice is associated with the currents of active pedagogy and sustained by Dewey (Greenberger, 2020) at the beginning of the 20th century, who established the differences between routine action, based on tradition and external authority, and reflective action, which is an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or knowledge in the light of its bases and the consequences it produces. In teacher training institutions, there is a tendency to think that if students are put in contact with the theoretical foundations of education and are allowed to apply them to school reality, they will be able on their own to transfer them from the scientific context to the professional one, reflecting them in their thinking and behavior; indeed, it is thought that the ideal is that direct transfer and application. We are faced with a linear and simplified vision of the theory-practice relationship that overstretches theory and reduces the complexity of practice.

Even so, the evidence shows that students value their university education and believe it to be useful and necessary for their professional practice, so we are talking about a complementary approach, not about putting internships above professional training. Although so far both processes work, there are several points where they are separated and generate moments of uncertainty in the student because they do not see the link between one process and the other. The main advantages of the teaching profession were considered by the respondents to be the opportunity to work with children, a sense of "influence" on younger generations, job satisfaction, the possibility of professional development, and "faith" in the value of teaching. This is very important because it is evidence that generations of teachers have a set of values inherent to their profession, that they are not there to take the fast track, for money, or for any superficial or economic advantage that another profession might represent. Out of love for their profession, teachers can show openness to anything that improves their practice and continues to provide them with high levels of satisfaction.

The teacher should stand as a model of an ethical and moral person, because he/she is responsible for his/her thinking and acting as a human being, wherever he/she is, and is not only committed to what he/she teaches, argues, and performs in class. Ethics and morals can be seen in the NQTs. Firstly, ethics is a behavior that manifests from a process of reflection and choice of norms and principles that direct their being, while, from practice, morality is shown by combining criteria and values that lead their actions, where the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral parts are involved (Cantú-Martínez, 2018). However, although there is an innate vocational question and teaching is related to the possibility of change and influence, it is inevitable to bring to the analysis the disadvantages expressed by the teachers. However, although there is an innate vocational question and teaching is related to the possibility of change and influence, it is inevitable to bring to the analysis the disadvantages expressed by the teachers.

The main disadvantages of the teaching profession were considered by the respondents to be factors such as stress at work, overwhelming responsibility of the teaching profession, conflicts with parents, low social status of the profession, and voice load as a negative aspect of the teaching profession. For novice teachers from Poland, the main drawback of the teaching profession is low salaries. These results are consistent with those expressed by Fantilli and McDougall (2009) at the university level, where the teachers surveyed showed their perception of discomfort, with a moderate or intermediate burnout syndrome, higher in women and new teachers. It was evidenced, as in this research, that teachers show a moderate level of dissatisfaction and a certain degree of apathy, especially in the area of personal relationships, associated with a greater perception of health problems.

In the context of public health, it is configured as an opportunity to pay attention to a human group whose presence and social influence transcends generations. Being their psycho-emotional situation a factor of impact in the educational environment and the training of students, understanding that the consequences of stress affect the social, psychological, physical, and labour dynamics. It diminishes the positive influence and personal fulfilment and enjoyment of work and may contribute to the presence of depressive symptoms and their consequences. Therefore, it is a priority to join efforts to promote the health of teachers and the quality of their educational transcendence in the new generations (Benevene et al., 2019). The relevance and usefulness of the Digital TA project are demonstrated by the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, especially those that emphasize the importance of a close tutor-like accompaniment in view of all the difficulties and vicissitudes faced by NQTs.

Some practical implications of the results obtained in this research are stated in two ways. The first has to do with the evident need to modify teacher education and training programs in basic education since both countries have the same problems and deficiencies; therefore, in addition to pedagogical training, teachers should have psychological, administrative, and technological training to accelerate their adaptation to the new work environment, as well as to develop peer support and teamwork skills. At the public policy level, coaching and mentoring programs should be implemented for teachers during the first 5 years of practice to avoid desertion but also to foster institutional values related to interdisciplinary support and community education rather than the crude individualism installed by liberal democracy.

Some limitations of the study had to do with the interpretation of open data since the grouping of information was done in a differentiated manner: on the one hand, responses from Spanish teachers were grouped and analyzed; and on the other hand, the same was done with Polish teachers. This did not imply a loss of focus in the results, but it did imply a slight dispersion in the information. Some future lines of investigation for this research can be structured in different ways. First, the profile of the tutor-mentor who is responsible for supporting the teaching tasks of NQTs can be developed to avoid their desertion and improve support and performance in the first years of practice. The same questionnaire and comparative analysis can also be applied to other European countries to further contrast the responses, and depending on the ministry of each region or country, the empirical information can be used to make public policy decisions in favor of teachers. En el área de NQT, esta investigación puede ser el principio de otras investigaciones que intenten profundizar

más mediante estudios cuantitativos o estudios de caso. In the area of NQT, this research can be the beginning of other research that attempts to go deeper through quantitative studies or case studies.

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