

Teacher education in response to the expansion of compulsory schooling: reflections from the Autonomous Community of Catalonia

La formación docente frente a la ampliación de la escolaridad obligatoria: reflexiones desde la Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña

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Abstract

The proposal to extend compulsory schooling to the age of 18, as outlined in the report by the State School Council, opens up a crucial debate on the meaning of basic education and, in particular, on teacher education. This article analyzes the challenges that such an extension would entail for both initial teacher education and professional development, taking the case of Catalonia as a reference. Based on a qualitative, interpretative methodology, the study triangulates documentary sources, interviews with key stakeholders, and a focus group with education professionals. The findings identify four key dimensions: (1) the need to strengthen ethical commitment as a core principle in access to and training for the teaching profession; (2) the importance of modeling this commitment within university teaching; (3) the centrality of the practicum as a strategic space for constructing teacher identity; and (4) the urgency of

consolidating training teams with diverse and socially engaged profiles. These dimensions suggest that a potential extension of compulsory education would require profound transformations in teacher education models, beyond regulatory or curricular reforms. The conclusions point to an opportunity to rethink the architecture of teacher education from a more inclusive and contextualized perspective, aligned with current educational challenges. Experiences such as the MIF Program, the institute-school model, and the Sensei residency program offer valuable reference points for moving in this direction. Finally, the article highlights the need for teaching policies that ensure equitable access to the profession, promote ethically grounded training connected to the realities of educational institutions, and recognize teachers as key agents in supporting increasingly diverse and continuous educational trajectories.

Key words: teacher education, preservice teacher education, access to the profession, teacher professional development, compulsory education, educational legislation.

Resumen

La propuesta de ampliar la escolarización obligatoria hasta los 18 años, recogida en el informe del Consejo Escolar del Estado, abre un debate esencial sobre el sentido de la educación básica y, en particular, sobre la formación del profesorado. Este artículo analiza los desafíos que dicha ampliación implicaría para la formación inicial y el desarrollo profesional docente, tomando como referencia el caso de Cataluña. Desde una metodología cualitativa de corte interpretativo, se triangulan fuentes documentales, entrevistas a actores clave y un grupo de discusión con profesionales de la educación. Los resultados permiten identificar cuatro dimensiones clave: (a) la necesidad de reforzar el compromiso ético como eje en el acceso y la formación docente, (b) la importancia de modelar dicho compromiso desde la docencia universitaria, (c) la centralidad del prácticum como espacio formativo estratégico para construir identidad docente, y (d) la urgencia de consolidar equipos formadores con perfiles diversos y socialmente comprometidos. Estas dimensiones sugieren que una posible ampliación de la educación obligatoria exigiría transformaciones profundas en los modelos formativos. Las conclusiones apuntan a una oportunidad para repensar la arquitectura de la formación docente desde una lógica más inclusiva, contextualizada y coherente con los retos actuales. Experiencias como el Programa MIF, el modelo de institutos-escuela y el programa de residencia Sensei aportan referentes útiles para avanzar en esa dirección. Finalmente, se destaca la necesidad de políticas docentes que garanticen un acceso equitativo a la profesión docente, promuevan una formación conectada con la realidad de los centros educativos y reconozcan al profesorado como agente clave en el acompañamiento de trayectorias escolares diversas y continuas.

Palabras clave: formación del profesorado, formación inicial docente, acceso a la profesión, desarrollo profesional docente, educación obligatoria, legislación educativa.

Introduction

The proposal to extend compulsory schooling to the age of 18, as put forward in the report of the State School Council (2023), has sparked a debate that the educational community needs to address, as it reopens a fundamental question: what is the purpose of basic education in Spain? This question directly challenges the various actors in the education field, beyond its potential regulatory implementation, since such a measure would entail a structural reform with direct implications for multiple dimensions of the education system, including school organisation, curriculum, academic guidance and, above all, teacher education and professional conditions. This article reviews some of the arguments in favour of this potential reform, particularly the need to reduce early school leaving and to guarantee a continuous, equitable and high-quality educational pathway up to the age of majority.

In particular, international reports highlight that proper planning and implementation of education and training policies within the formal education system are essential to addressing challenges such as youth unemployment, promoting economic development, and fostering social cohesion (OECD, 2015). These goals are in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education (UNESCO, 2015). Moreover, various comparative reports (OECD, 2020; Eurydice, 2022) highlight that the extension of compulsory education is a growing trend in Europe and is considered by the countries that have adopted it as a strategy to reduce early school leaving and enhance educational equity.

In this sense, the nationwide debate is not limited to the mere extension of schooling time, but reflects a paradigm shift that calls for rethinking the objectives of this educational stage, the role that school should play, and the necessary preparation of teachers to support students in a stage characterised by a diversity of pathways, interests, and social contexts. This shift also compels a reconsideration of which training approaches enable teachers to carry out effective pedagogical interventions in these contexts. As Hattie (2003) argues, the key lies in identifying and strengthening those specific teaching practices that have proven to be effective in enhancing learning,

beyond general structural or curricular reforms. This, in turn, requires a major rethinking of models of initial teacher education and professional development.

In the context of this debate, the Catalan education system offers precedents and experiences that help anticipate reflections on the challenges that a potential extension of compulsory education would imply. In recent years, Catalonia has advanced in designing education policies aligned with international trends, focusing on fundamental axes to guarantee the improvement of equity and educational quality in the education system. Within this framework, the government's plan identifies five priority areas for action, the most important of which are the strengthening of the Catalan school model and the promotion of the teacher profession. Indeed, the Catalan Education Law (LEC, 2009) explicitly recognises the central role of teachers in improving education and establishes institutional commitments to guarantee measures for improving initial teacher education and professional development, as well as promoting teachers' collaboration and pedagogical innovation.

In this sense, the report "L'estat de l'educació a Catalunya" (Albaigés & Martínez, 2013) emphasizes that optimising education system outcomes is closely linked to the quality of the teaching workforce, a position consistent with the international consensus reflected in the UNESCO "Guide for the development of teaching policies" (2020). This consensus is further supported by international studies such as TALIS (OECD, 2019), which highlights the importance of improving teacher education and professional development as key levers for effective education reforms. These reports call for the implementation of comprehensive teacher policies aimed at strengthening teacher selection, initial teacher education, and professional development, to establish clear mechanisms to assess and improve teacher quality, and to implement concrete measures to enhance the social prestige of the profession, among others. This need is also reflected in various studies that identify structural weaknesses in initial teacher education and professional development, including weak links to professional practice, insufficient context-based preparation, and a lack of integration between theory and practice, factors that lead to a widespread perception among teachers that

they are insufficiently prepared for professional practice (Escudero, 2009; Muñiz-Rodríguez et al., 2016; Manso & Garrido-Martos, 2021).

Efforts to improve teacher education have taken the form of specific professional development and pedagogical innovation initiatives. One of the examples worth highlighting is the “Programme for Improvement and Innovation in Teacher Education” (MIF), which has had a significant impact on initial teacher education through measures such as the introduction of the Personal Aptitude Test in 2014, which aims to ensure that future teachers possess key competencies and an appropriate vocational profile (Martínez, 2020). In addition, the creation of the double degree in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education allows students to obtain two degrees, qualifying them to teach at both educational levels upon completion of their studies. The MIF has also promoted international mobility, educational research and strengthened collaboration between universities and educational centres, with a direct impact on improving the quality of teacher education (Ametller & Codina, 2017). Moreover, the MIF has also contributed to rethinking the structure of university education with the aim of preparing teachers to work across all educational stages. Although these actions have primarily focused on the initial stages of basic education, they represent valuable steps towards exploring how more integrated and coherent learning models could be adapted and integrated in a scenario of extended compulsory schooling.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight an aspect already identified as key by the MIF programme: the need to properly manage the transition between initial teacher education and teachers’ professional integration. In Catalonia, this need has been addressed through the Sensei Programme, the first pilot initial teacher residency programme developed by an educational administration at the national level. The programme provides intensive support and mentoring to novice teachers through a residency system in educational centres, thereby fostering the consolidation of essential professional competences during the first years of teaching (Departament d’Educació, 2023).

The Catalan government’s reforms also include the expansion of the network of all-through schools (*instituts-escola*, in Catalan), a model that

integrates primary and lower secondary education in a single educational project, ensuring continuity across both stages. Inspired by comprehensive education systems in other countries, such as Denmark, Finland and Portugal, this model has gained prominence in Catalonia in recent years and has posed significant challenges for teacher education, which remains segmented by subject areas and educational stages, as well as promoting reflections on pedagogical continuity, coordination between stages, and the limitations inherent on more cohesive school trajectories (Rivas et al., 2024). The consolidation of all-through schools has underscored the need to strengthen teacher education to respond to these new pedagogical and organisational demands, demonstrating that any restructuring towards integrated educational models requires substantial transformations in teacher education. In this sense, a potential extension of compulsory schooling should carefully consider the training challenges faced by both current and future teachers.

This article aims to analyse these challenges and to identify some of the key dimensions that need to be revised or strengthened in teacher education. This is done through a detailed analysis of the regulatory framework, territorial experiences such as the all-through schools or the MIF programme, and contributions from recent academic literature. This analysis is complemented by an interpretative methodological approach that enables the collection of perspectives and meanings contributed by the different actors within the educational community. Far from offering close answers, the article aims to contribute to the necessary debate on the possible extension of compulsory education and the central place of teachers in this process.

Method

The article presents the results of a broader project focused on the analysis of education policies and their impact on equity, with a particular emphasis on teacher education. Within this framework, the Catalan case is examined to explore the challenges of teacher education and professional development in the context of the ongoing national debate on the potential extension of compulsory schooling. Given the nature of the phenomenon and the

need to understand the meanings attributed to it by the actors involved, an interpretive methodological approach was adopted to provide a contextualised understanding of the object of study.

Data collection

The data collection combined documentary analysis and qualitative techniques. First, an exploratory documentary review was carried out (Latorre et al., 2003), focusing on regulatory frameworks, educational policies, and key reports related to the Catalan context. Documents analysed included the Catalan Education Law (LEC, 2009), international reports by the OECD (2015, 2018, 2020), Eurydice (2022) and UNESCO (2020), as well as studies on teacher education. In addition, three significant initiatives in Catalonia were reviewed: the Programme for Improvement and Innovation in Teacher Education (MIF), the all-through school model and the Sensei Programme, due to their value as integrated training proposals in the light of the possible extension of compulsory schooling.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with key stakeholders, following Brown and Danaher's (2019) recommendations, which stress the usefulness of this method for exploring participants' personal experiences and nuanced perceptions of teaching challenges. A semi-directed focus group was also conducted, adopting Rodas and Pacheco's (2020) approach, which highlights its potential to foster dialogue and mutual learning among participants, with the aim of encouraging collective reflection and contrasting viewpoints on the topic of study, as suggested by Patton (2015), who underlines the value of open-ended questions to stimulate in-depth discussion. The focus group was structured around three general questions, allowing participants to freely express ideas or reflections they considered relevant.

Sample

With the aim of deepening the understanding of different perspectives on teacher education, participants representing diverse voices from the Catalan educational context were intentionally selected, ensuring a balance in gender, educational background, and professional trajectory.

For the semi-structured interviews with key actors, purposive sampling was used to select participants with experience in leadership positions or with significant involvement in pedagogical innovation processes. A total of three individual interviews were conducted: (E1) a teacher with more than fifteen years of teaching experience and over two years in leadership roles; (E2) a teacher with twenty-three years of teaching experience and six years in school management; and (E3) a representative of pedagogical renewal movements, with experience both in teaching and in leadership positions.

The focus group, on the other hand, was composed of ten participants who provided a plural perspective on teacher education. The sample included profiles linked to different roles related to initial teacher education and professional development: students, teacher educators, and in-service teachers. The specific composition of the participants was as follows: (P1) a teacher with 40 years of experience, former school principal, and head of education at a local council; (P2) a university professor with 30 years of academic teaching experience; (P3) a university lecturer with 8 years of academic teaching experience; (P4) a pedagogue with 30 years of experience and currently pursuing a PhD in Education; (P5) a pedagogue with 6 years of professional experience; (P6) an in-service primary school teacher with 4 years of experience; (P7) an in-service primary school teacher with 15 years of experience; (P8) a recently graduated early childhood education teacher, with one year of professional experience; (P9) a recently graduated primary school teacher, with one year of professional experience; and (P10) an in-service primary school teacher with 10 years of experience and currently pursuing a PhD in Education.

In all cases, informed consent was obtained from the participants, respecting the ethical principle of confidentiality as defined by Flick (2014), who emphasizes the protection of participants' identities and the secure

management of sensitive data.

Procedure

The interviews and focus group were fully recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy in the subsequent data analysis. A thematic content analysis was then conducted, following the constant comparison method described by Strauss and Corbin (2015). This approach, based on the systematic comparison of each unit of meaning with those previously analyzed, was essential for identifying similarities and differences, which made it possible to redefine, merge, or subdivide categories until achieving an emergent conceptual structure consistent with the data. To organise and systematise the analysis, the Atlas-ti software was used, which facilitated the coding and systematic comparison of the data. As a result, four key categories were identified: (a) ethical commitment to teacher education access; (b) modelling commitment in university teaching; (c) the practicum as a space for teacher development; and (d) a diverse profile within training teams.

Results

In considering the challenges of initial teacher education and development in the context of a possible extension of compulsory schooling, four key interrelated categories emerged: (a) ethical commitment in access to teacher education in response to new educational challenges; (b) modelling commitment in university teaching as a way to meet emerging educational demands; (c) the practicum as an essential space for teachers' professional development in the context of increasingly complex educational realities; and (d) the importance of consolidating training teams with diverse profiles to effectively address the extension of compulsory schooling.

Ethical commitment to access to teacher education

At a time when the possibility of extending compulsory schooling is being debated, it is essential to ask who will accompany these new educational trajectories. And what profile of teacher is needed to sustain change? How should they enter the profession and with what level of commitment?

In Spain, unlike in many other countries, access to pre-primary and primary teacher education does not require any specific ethical or vocational prerequisites. Although the Ministry of Education has proposed the introduction of an entrance exam for these studies (MEFP, 2022), its use has been limited to some autonomous communities, such as Catalonia, where it is necessary to pass the Personal Aptitude Tests. In the case of secondary education teachers, access after completing the master's degree in teacher education does not include any assessment of ethical commitment and pedagogical vocation, despite these being fundamental aspects in the scenario of extended compulsory schooling.

In relation to this evidence, Oliver-Trobat et al. (2021) point out that the current debate mainly focuses on their role in improving the quality of studies and on the appropriateness of such cognitive competence tests. However, there are various proposals to introduce an additional test to assess the ethical and moral dispositions of students seeking access to initial teacher education. This lack of ethical or attitudinal commitment has been the subject of debate in recent years. Several studies have advocated the need to include criteria that go beyond instrumental competences and allow the identification of profiles that are committed to the educational task in its social dimension (Bolívar and Pérez-García, 2022; Oser et al., 2021). Regarding the filter of access to the degree, one of the participants stated:

There is no filter, either at entry or during the course, to ensure that students have certain values and responsibilities towards society. There are people who have developed this ethical awareness, but they have acquired it in other educational spaces or experiences outside university education. [...] A moral and ethical filter is also necessary. (P4)

Models such as the Finnish one have moved in this direction, valuing

prior experiences such as volunteering or working with vulnerable groups. These pathways are regarded as indicators of professional commitment:

In Finland, prospective students are examined for their social background, whether they have done voluntary work, whether they have worked with children or with certain vulnerable groups. If you have not had this experience, it is understood that you are not ready to commit yourself. (P1)

However, there are also some warnings. Such criteria may favour candidates with greater social capital or more favourable socio-economic conditions. As with extracurricular activities, access to certain experiences and opportunities is not equal for all. Although a priori it may appear to be a positive element of selection, because of its important benefits, it can also become a new source of inequality when it intersects with other socio-economic elements. Furthermore, by trying to standardise the structure of engagement through specific actions, there is a risk that some people will start volunteering or doing leisure activities to pass the test, rather than doing them of their own free will. Some authors warn that such filters may exclude people with teaching potential, even if they have not yet fully developed this commitment (Bolívar & Pérez-García, 2022; Manso, 2021). This concern was echoed by one of the participants, who pointed out that requiring a ‘social curriculum’ could be discriminatory, as not all people have the same opportunities to volunteer: “Often, those who are able to volunteer have a high socio-economic profile [...]. I have many students who could not consider becoming educational leisure time (*esplai*) monitors because they had to help the family business” (P3).

In this vein, other voices argue that, rather than establishing prior filters, the formative role of initial teacher education should be strengthened as a means of fostering professional commitment. From this perspective, it is suggested that the assessment of such commitment should take place at the end of initial education, prior to entering the profession, rather than at the point of admission.

We cannot demand commitment to education before a career; it is during the training itself that we must create opportunities for the person to understand the importance of socio-educational action.

Vocation is a phantom that we must overcome: we are tired of hearing that people go into teaching because they like children, but that does not guarantee anything. On the other hand, there are very valid people who have not had the opportunity to fall in love with education. (P2)

This vision is also shared by school experiences that promote more inclusive educational models. A senior member of a secondary school highlights the importance of understanding the teacher's role as an ethical guide, going beyond the mere transmission of content: "The teacher who leaves the faculty thinks that he/she is going to teach science; well, no, he/she is going to educate people or accompany people" (E3).

However, there is no consensus on the timing, methods, or actors responsible for assessing this ethical commitment. This need raises more questions than certainties: when should commitment be assessed? How should it be assessed? Who is qualified to do so? As one participant stated: "It would be very difficult for me to decide whether someone is ethical enough to be a teacher or not. Who should decide?" (P6). Ethical assessment is further complicated by the diversity of perspectives and criteria. If defining standards is already difficult, delegating their assessment to a single person or instrument becomes even more problematic. The process should therefore be transparent and democratic, ensuring a plurality of voices.

Another key issue is the content to be assessed. Proposals such as interviews or the construction of a social curriculum have been considered; however, as previously noted, such measures risk exacerbating inequalities and making access to teacher education more elitist.

In short, in a context of educational expansion, rethinking access and teacher education is a key task, but also an opportunity. It is not only a question of responding to the structural challenges of the education system, nor of adapting the processes of access to teacher education, but also of integrating into this stage professionals capable of supporting it from a more solid ethical commitment, more coherent with the social and pedagogical demands of the current context.

Modelling engagement in university teaching

Preparing teachers to support longer and more complex school trajectories is one of the main challenges currently facing the education system. This requires a review of the curriculum, not only in terms of what is taught, but also how it is taught. Pedagogical practices in initial education should not be limited to theoretical content but should include meaningful experiences that enable future teachers to face complex educational situations, develop sensitivity to them, and build a conscious commitment to the social function of education.

Some participants underlined the importance of strengthening content that fosters understanding of and connection with human diversity. The way in which educational relationships are approached, the topics addressed, and the extent to which reflection and dialogue are encouraged are key to preparing teachers capable of accompanying meaningful educational trajectories: “I think there is a lack of content such as emotional education or the relationship with the family. Working on this would contribute to a more inclusive school by making us more aware of different needs” (P5).

In this regard, several studies (Coleman-King et al., 2021; Contreras et al., 2016) highlight that lived stories and experiences, particularly during the practicum, provide valuable opportunities to address educational dilemmas with ethical and emotional implications. These practices not only facilitate the analyse of complex conflicts, but also the development of a pedagogical approach to everyday life, as required by those working in the later stages of schooling.

The time to think pedagogically about an educational situation is always with a lived situation. When I tutor internships, I always tell them to take all the stories they have not been able to solve to the other subjects. It is not necessary to always be connected to school, but to always think about school stories. (P2)

However, it is not enough to include content that exposes students to diverse and ethically complex socio-educational situations; it is equally important to address how the relational-ethical dimension is developed. In teacher education, the principle that method is part of content becomes

particularly relevant, as teachers learn to teach by observing their own educators: “You can’t teach what to do if you don’t do it” (E2).

This statement serves as a wake-up call for universities: promoting pedagogical principles in discourse is not sufficient, they must be embodied in educational practice. It is therefore essential to cultivate educational relationships during teacher education, not only by explaining its importance, but also by experiencing them through concrete and meaningful experiences.

I don’t think it is necessary to create a specific space to work on the ethical-moral dimension. I believe that it is possible to work within the training, from the different subjects, by creating spaces for dialogue and listening. Listening to and between the students. It is certainly important to accompany the students personally and this educational relationship can model this ethical-relational dimension. (P8).

In short, educating teachers for more extensive schooling requires rethinking university practices as spaces where the educational relationships and ethical commitment are built from the experience itself. But this education cannot depend on methodological or attitudinal changes alone; it requires a structural change to sustain it. In this sense, the MIF Programme proposes a new architecture for teacher education at all levels of education that includes more intensive practices, deeper pedagogical preparation and stronger links with schools (Martínez et al., 2016).

The practicum as a space for teacher development

Having reflected on the ethical dimension in university teaching practices, it is also necessary to consider the role of the practicum in shaping teaching identity. Accompanying more complex school trajectories requires more than theoretical preparation, it demands first-hand experience of the real diversity of the education system.

As Colén (2017) and Tejada-Fernández et al. (2017) point out, internships represent a key moment for the ethical, pedagogical, and professional positioning of future teachers. However, this positioning does

not happen spontaneously; it largely depends on the school to which students are assigned and the type of educational reality they experience.

Each school and each situation are very different and changing. [...] The practicum is a very important moment that helps to create a certain co-responsibility between the different agents. Depending on what the student experiences during the practicum, he or she may end up more or less concerned with social inequalities. (P2)

For this reason, it is essential that students complete their internships in a variety of schools. Exposure to different social contexts, from culturally diverse realities to those characterised by high levels of vulnerability, allows the development of a critical, inclusive, and more committed perspective.

Education should force you out of your bubble, out of your reality. If you've always lived in "Nou Barris", you'll do your internship in your neighbourhood, and you won't see any other reality. It is necessary to look at different socio-educational realities, we cannot just go to one type of centre. And the subjects have to be taken out of the standard reality. (P4)

Despite this need, not all universities set clear criteria for the choice of centres. In many cases, students repeat contexts similar to their own, or choose because of proximity, missing the opportunity to broaden their professional perspective. The internship system should ensure contact with at least one more complex environment and establish minimum common criteria such as rotation through contrasting educational realities.

Beyond exposure to different school contexts, it is essential that the practicum allows for genuine immersion in the school's educational project and institutional functioning. As one secondary head teacher put it: "The Master's students come very theoretical, they value very much the fact of being in the school, in the staff room, in the classes, as if they were active: but they don't know what a school project is" (E1).

Rethinking the practicum means moving beyond a mere period of observation or isolated intervention, transforming it into a strategic and ethically committed formative experience that response to the current challenges faced by schools. This need is particularly relevant by those working in the final

stages of compulsory schooling. In this sense, the Sensei Programme has begun to explore the continuity of this logic through a professional induction phase that extends support into the first years of teaching.

More diverse profiles in training teams

The profile of those who educate future teachers has a significant impact on the overall quality of teaching in the education system (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020; Roofe et al., 2023). However, this quality is often assessed primarily in terms of academic or research experience, without sufficient consideration of ethical commitment. It is not enough to have competent teacher educators; they must also be leaders in social and educational engagement. What is ultimately at stake is the type of professional that future teachers see as role models: how they conduct themselves in the classroom, how they address conflicts, and how they embody the core values of the teaching profession.

They must not only be practising teachers, but also good teachers in the ethical sense. Not all active teachers are suitable for teacher education. [...] The haste with which the university recruit teachers at the last-minute means that, although they are well-qualified, they are not sufficiently involved in the institution or in the education processes. (P9)

If teachers are expected to guide broader and more complex processes, universities cannot limit themselves to providing only technical skills or prescriptive didactic recipes. They must offer professional role models who demonstrate how to support students and how to manage diversity in different contexts. What is expected of future teachers must also be embodied by those who educate them. As one secondary school headmaster observed: “There is a need for a very clear specific education for teachers who are going to work in these schools. It is not so much a question of a particular profile as of a different attitude; it is about finding a teacher who wants to learn” (E3). In short, the aim is to be a reference point for commitment to the teaching function and for developing a critical understanding of today’s social challenges.

Within this framework, there are conflicting views on the diversity of

the profile of teacher educators. On the one hand, the plurality of backgrounds, cultures, genders, and approaches is positively valued, as this diversity enriches teacher education and broadens the perspectives from which schools are analysed.

I feel that diversity in terms of geography, gender, and other factors is necessary. Diversity, at least in terms of bibliographic references, opens up other worlds, other realities, and allows you to dialogue with other knowledge. What do we consider valid knowledge? What benchmarks are we providing? (P7)

From this point of view, diversity is not merely a symbolic gesture but a pedagogical resource that helps students to build their identity as teachers from multiple viewpoints.

Other voices, however, caution that diversity should not be translated into quotas or mandatory representation, but into a shared conceived as a shared responsibility among all teacher educators: to create critical spaces where these realities are openly debated: “The responsibility is shared and cannot be left only in the hands of people who belong to these collectives. It is the different subjects that must include the discussion of these concerns” (P4).

Finally, the challenge of extended schooling also requires a rethinking of how teacher educators are selected and prepared, favoring profiles capable of integrating ethical commitment, solid educational experience, and a critical understanding of the education system.

Conclusions

The possibility of extending compulsory schooling to the age of 18 reopens a fundamental debate on the purpose of basic education and on the type of teachers needed to guide longer, more diverse, and more complex educational pathways. In this context, teacher education is presented as a key element of the education system, both in the initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. The findings of this study, based on the analysis of the Catalan case and the voices of different educational stakeholders, identify some fundamental challenges that must be addressed with the depth and

commitment that their complexity demands.

Across the four dimensions analysed, tensions and proposals converge towards the same conclusion: the need to rethink teacher education from a more engaged, contextualised, and ethical perspective. First, access to the profession remains a critical issue. Although Catalonia has introduced instruments such as the Personal Aptitude Test, a broader debate on the role of ethical commitment in access to teacher education and the teaching profession is still lacking. Such commitment cannot be reduced to a mere declaration of intent or an instrumentalised assessment; it must be conceived as a dimension to be built and cultivated throughout the entire process of teacher education. However, this debate must also consider the risks of inequality associated with certain access filters. Criteria such as the requirement of a track record of volunteering or prior experience, if not applied with caution, may privilege candidates with greater social capital, potentially creating new forms of exclusion in access to the profession.

Second, teacher educators have a key role in this process. The university cannot reduce its educational function to the transmission of content alone; it must also question how this content is taught, what types of experiences are offered to students, and what professional models are presented as references. Commitment to teaching, diversity, and social justice must be made tangible in the university's own pedagogical practices. Initial teacher education must offer significant experiences that enable future teachers to grasp the deeper meaning of the educational task and to make an ethical commitment to the realities of education.

The third key dimension is the practicum. The importance of linking theory and practice has long been emphasised, but this work shows that simply placing future teachers in classrooms is not enough. To respond to the demands of a broader and more inclusive schooling, it is a priority to ensure practice in real and diverse contexts that allow genuine immersion in the complexities of the education system. At the same time, this also requires clear criteria for the selection of training centres, as well as strengthening the links between university, schools, and the wider social environment. Practical experience should cease to be an isolated episode and become the backbone of teacher education. This is the only way to broaden the pedagogical and social

horizons of future teachers and to avoid practices that focus on homogeneous or unrepresentative scenarios. However, rethinking the practicum also means questioning its temporal limits. In this sense, initiatives such as the Sensei programme are moving towards a logic of professional induction that extends support beyond initial teacher education, facilitating a gradual incorporation with greater support at the beginning of the teaching profession.

With regard to the profile of training teams, the need is emphasised for professionals who not only have academic or research experience but also are genuinely committed to their educational work and the values it implies. Diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and approaches is understood not as a symbolic attribute but as a pedagogical condition that enriches teacher education and broadens understandings of the teaching role. This challenge also calls for rethinking the very architecture of teacher education, moving towards a more integrated model with stronger links between theory and practice, and a closer connection with schools.

The Catalan experience provides concrete examples that help identify possible pathways towards a more coherent model of teacher education, linked to practice and responsive to the real needs of a more integrated education system. Initiatives such as the MIF Programme, the all-through schools or the Sensei programme do not solve all existing problems, but they offer valuable insights into possible ways forward at a critical moment of educational transformation.

The current revision of university curricula, following the approval of the LOSU (2023), represents an opportunity that should not be missed. This is the time to propose teacher education in which ethics, practice, and diversity play a central role. Far from being a mere curricular update, the challenge is to develop an educational proposal that provides future teachers, who will accompany this new educational stage, marked by the possible extension of compulsory schooling and by new training requirements, with conceptual frameworks, pedagogical tools and training experiences that reflect the complexity of current educational practice.

Despite the contributions of the study, some limitations must be acknowledged to contextualise its scope. First, its focus on the Autonomous Community of Catalonia provides a contextualised understanding of this specific educational reality but may limit the generalisation of the findings

to other regions of Spain. Future comparative research in other Autonomous Communities would allow contrast realities and enrich the analysis of teacher education policies in relation to the extension of compulsory schooling. Second, although the selection of participants was diverse in terms of professional profiles and levels of experience, it should be noted that some educational actors, such as students at advanced levels, were not directly represented. Widening the range of voices involved in future research would complement the perspectives gathered.

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