

Early Years of Teaching in Contexts of Poverty: Questions Based on Evidence from the U.S. to Spark Conversation in Chile

Primeros años de docencia en contextos de pobreza: preguntas que la evidencia desde EE.UU. sugiere para la conversación en Chile

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Abstract

In light of the lack of research in Chile about beginning teachers in high-poverty schools, this literature review examines 44 papers published in the United States about this topic over the past decade. Because the two countries are different in many ways, the conclusions from one cannot be extrapolated to the other; however, both share a neoliberal context, making this review valuable. Overall, the studies suggested that the early years of teaching in high-poverty schools have become increasingly complex, due to economic, political, and cultural factors. The main research focus has been on teacher retention, and results indicate that monetary bonuses above an average teacher salary are not as relevant as other factors for attracting teachers to high-poverty schools. Research in the United States indicates the need to pay attention to working conditions, collaboration between colleagues, the pressure to achieve on standardized tests, and the lack of *cultural relevance* of what is taught in high-poverty schools. The review concludes by proposing six questions based on evidence from the United States to spark conversation in Chile.

Keywords: beginning teachers, high-poverty schools, mentoring, teacher retention

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Resumen

Dada la poca investigación en Chile acerca de profesores que comienzan a enseñar en colegios en situación de pobreza, esta revisión de literatura sintetiza 44 estudios publicados en EE.UU. acerca del tema durante la última década. Las diferencias entre ambos países sugieren no extrapolar conclusiones indebidamente de un lugar al otro; no obstante, el contexto neoliberal compartido hace valiosa esta revisión. En general, los estudios señalaron que los primeros años de docencia en contextos de pobreza están siendo cada vez más complejos debido a factores económicos, políticos y culturales. El principal foco de investigación ha sido la retención de profesores, y los resultados señalan que la entrega de bonos monetarios por sobre un sueldo de profesor promedio no es tan relevante como otros factores para atraer profesores hacia contextos de pobreza. La investigación realizada en EE.UU. invita a poner atención a las condiciones de trabajo, la colaboración entre colegas, la presión por resultados en pruebas estandarizadas y la falta de *relevancia cultural* de lo enseñado en contextos de pobreza. La revisión termina planteando seis preguntas que la evidencia desde EE.UU. sugiere para la conversación en Chile.

Palabras clave: profesores nuevos, colegios en situación de pobreza, mentorías, retención de profesores

Research confirms that the first five years of teaching are the most difficult (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This is associated with high rates of teacher turnover during these years. In the United States, between 40% and 50% of teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In Chile, Valenzuela and Sevilla (2013) estimated that the situation is similar: around 40% of teachers stop teaching in the first five years. Evidence in the United States also indicates that this attrition is greater in contexts of poverty (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Marinell & Coca, 2013). That is, schools in more vulnerable contexts have the most unstable educational communities.

The new *professional teaching career* in Chile (hereinafter, PTC) seeks to address the aforementioned problem, among other things. The aim is to elevate the status of teaching and improve conditions for teachers who work in state-funded schools (Congreso de Chile, 2016). In order to achieve this objective, the new PTC increases the salaries of teachers, including a monetary bonus for working with vulnerable students, and increases the availability of class-preparation time. An induction process is also introduced for novice teachers by mentoring with experienced teachers. The expectation is that these changes will attract young people with higher PSU scores to study pedagogy¹, that they will want to teach in contexts of poverty, and that hopefully, they will remain there.

However, the reality is that there is little evidence in Chile related to teachers in their early years (Ávalos & Aylwin, 2007; Cisternas, 2011), and even less regarding what specifically occurs in contexts of poverty. There are studies that characterize those who start teaching in different contexts, showing that schools with more vulnerable students tend to hire teachers with lower scores on the *Inicia* test², who studied at less selective universities, and who usually come from similar backgrounds to those to which they return to teach (Cabezas, Gallegos, Santelices, Aguirre, & Zahri, 2011; Meckes & Bascopé, 2010; Rivero, 2013; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009). It is also known that most teachers do not receive formal support when they start teaching (Flores, 2014; Ruffinelli, 2014b) and that the majority of the initial training programs do not prepare them to teach in deprived contexts (Ruffinelli, 2014a). Some studies also suggest that the increased school coverage among the poorest sectors of society in recent decades has meant that teachers in contexts of poverty relate to students with diverse educational aspirations and dissimilar approaches to schooling, which makes their task considerably more difficult (Zamora & Zerón, 2010; Zurita, 2013). With this information, the wager that better salaries will lead to better educated young teachers working in contexts of poverty and that mentoring will improve their induction and tenure in those contexts may well pay off, but there is no solid basis for this in national research. There are only international studies, and they are very much debated.

¹ Similarly to the SAT, the PSU (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*) is the standardized test used in Chile to measure the knowledge of those applying for university education.

² *Inicia* is a test of disciplinary and pedagogical content knowledge that has been applied in Chile to students graduating in pedagogy with the aim of acquiring information to improve initial teacher training programs.

Given this situation, this paper summarizes the research conducted in the United States regarding teachers who started working in contexts of poverty, seeking to shed light on the Chilean debate. The differences between the two countries mean that one is compelled to be cautious when extrapolating conclusions from one to the other, since «the form in which each beginning teacher addresses teaching is not the same between one geographic place and another, nor within the subcultures in the same country» (Ávalos, 2009, p. 44). Nevertheless, the common neoliberal context makes this exercise worthwhile. The question that guides this literature review is: *What does the evidence from the United States over the last decade say about beginning to teach in high-poverty schools?* It is assumed that a teacher who is beginning teaching has practiced for five years or less.

The focus on the last decade is due to the fact that this issue has gained importance in the United States in recent years. In 2002, the United States approved the *No Child Left Behind* (hereinafter, NCLB) law, which stipulates that every public school should have a minimum level of quality according to results on standardized tests, and every student has the right to have *highly qualified teachers* (henceforth, HQTs). It also states that the school authorities are legally responsible for guaranteeing this, which placed the focus of research on high-poverty schools. The problem of teacher attrition at these schools led to attention being centered on those beginning to teach in these contexts, as shown by the increase in the number of publications on this topic since 2006.

The review only includes articles that explicitly mentioned the socioeconomic vulnerability of the students, which is complicated in the United States since there is no standardized indicator of school vulnerability as there is in Chile (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación [ACE], 2013). The United States classifies schools depending on the ethnic origin of their students or whether they are urban, suburban, or rural, but not on the socioeconomic level of their families, although there are correlations.³ The metric closest to a measurement of school vulnerability in the United States is the proportion of students who receive free or reduced lunch (henceforth, FoRL), but the criteria for this benefit varies depending on the state. In light of this reality, this review includes all of the articles that explicitly mentioned working with students in poverty, regardless of the system of measurement used to determine that. This excludes studies in urban schools that did not explicitly mention the socioeconomic factor, as there are also middle-class urban schools.

Search, selection and organization of literature

Based on the research question, searches were conducted on Google Scholar, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), and Education Research Complete (ERC) with the terms: *novice teachers*, *beginning teachers*, *induction*, *low-income schools*, *high-poverty schools*, and *hard-to-staff schools*. These search engines were used because they are the ones most commonly used in education research in the United States.

Initially, the search produced more than 100 papers, but the list was reduced to around 50 after excluding experiences from outside the United States. Within this group, there were only 36 literature reviews and empirical peer-reviewed studies, which are the focus of this review. Finally, an examination of the bibliographies of these 36 works enabled the identification of 8 new articles that had not been found by the search engines. The papers covered in this review include literature reviews, and qualitative and quantitative empirical studies of various sizes.

The 44 articles were classified according to: (a) their research question, (b) their theoretical assumptions, (c) the research design, and (d) results. Subsequently, it emerged that the most appropriate way of presenting the literature is by grouping the studies according to their research questions. From this perspective, the articles reviewed addressed specific dimensions of some of the following four questions:

1. What are the characteristics of novice teachers who continue teaching in high-poverty schools, and how can they be attracted to these schools?
2. What support is needed by novice teachers who work in contexts of poverty?

³ In the United States, most high-poverty schools have more African-American and Latino students than the average in the schools.

3. What tension has been caused in those who begin to teach in contexts of poverty by the pressure to obtain results on standardized tests and due to requirements for inclusion of more diverse student populations?
4. How are the changes in career paths and training of teachers changing the teaching force that begins to teach in contexts of poverty?

The following is the research landscape in the United States over the last decade in accordance with these questions. There are issues related to the situation in Chile and issues that are absent from national debate, either due to the differences between the two countries or because in Chile there is no sensitivity to or research on these matters.

Findings

Novice teachers that remain in contexts of poverty and how to attract them

Twelve papers studied what kind of teachers start teaching in high-poverty schools and remain there. In general, these studies assumed that, given the turnover of teachers in these contexts, the characteristics that explain the retention of a teacher should be taken into account when seeking staff for these schools.

Guarino, Santibáñez, and Daley (2006) reviewed 46 empirical studies on recruitment and retention of teachers and concluded that the labor market theory is valid for teachers in the United States. That is, teachers enter the profession and remain there as long as it is the most attractive alternative in terms of: (a) salary, (b) working conditions, and (c) the satisfaction of doing something meaningful (i.e., intrinsic rewards). This explains why turnover rates have been higher among young teachers who experienced failure and those with better teaching evaluations.

Darling-Hammond (2010) and Scheopner (2010) also reviewed the most important research in the 2000s on recruitment and retention of teachers and concluded that, although teachers have altruistic motivations, there must be competitive salaries to attract young people with high scores on standardized tests to teaching. In addition, for these teachers to start at high-poverty schools and remain there, it is essential that there be: (a) adequate working conditions, (b) collaboration between peers, and (c) the experience that teaching impacts their students. Therefore, they suggested that, in order to retain teachers in contexts of poverty, school cultures need to be improved and novice teachers should be given help to mature pedagogically so that they can experience the positive outcomes of good teaching.

To operationalize the right of every student to have HQTs, the NCLB law stated that a HQT is someone who has had a certain minimum of training and has received state certification of being a HQT. Eckert (2013) studied the relationship between this definition and retention of teachers in contexts of poverty and found that the retention of the teachers had no relation to state certification as a HQT. Her evidence shows that teachers remained in high-poverty schools when they felt empowered and they felt that their work impacted lives. This led Eckert to say that the legal definition of a HQT in the United States needed to be revised.

After an extensive review of the literature, Stotko, Ingram, and Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) concluded that teachers who remain in high-poverty schools are those who declare a commitment to social justice. As a consequence, they suggested that addressing teacher turnover in the United States requires that social motivations be as highly valued as academic qualifications when recruiting. In the same regard, Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, and Freitas (2010) showed that Latino and African-American teachers stay for longer in high-poverty schools than their white colleagues. Their explanatory hypothesis was that this occurs because of «commitment to their people», which agrees with the observations of Irizarry and Donaldson (2012) when studying teachers from *Teach for America* (hereinafter TFA). They found that 20% of Latino teachers stayed for more than four years in the contexts of poverty where they began teaching, while only 13% of white teachers stayed for the same amount of time. Latino teachers explicitly said the most important reason to remain was their desire to «serve their people».

Three longitudinal studies analyzed the relationship between the social commitment of a novice teacher

and their initial training (Frankenberg, Taylor, & Merseth, 2010; Lazar, 2013; Whipp, 2013). Their findings showed that those who continued teaching at high-poverty schools after two years were those who had a previous social commitment to teacher training. What was the contribution of the teacher preparation programs in this regard? They helped teachers to understand the structural dimension of certain social problems, hitherto invisible to them (Lazar, 2013).

Two studies investigated the criteria used by those beginning teaching when they chose their job options. Milanowski et al. (2009) surveyed more than 250 pedagogy graduates and found that monetary bonuses were less important to them as a motivation to work in high-poverty schools than the working conditions. The most important factors for them were: (a) the reputation of the principal, (b) the provision of induction programs, and (c) curriculum flexibility. Consequently, Milanowski et al. postulated that educational policies that limit curriculum flexibility discouraged teachers who were considering teaching in contexts of poverty. Shuls and Maranto (2014) compared the teacher recruitment strategies between KIPP schools (*Knowledge is Power Program*) and their neighboring public schools, and observed that KIPP schools appealed more to social ideals.⁴ Their conclusion was that this call for social commitment partially explained the higher teacher retention rates at KIPP schools compared to the neighboring public schools.

Taken together, these 12 studies confirmed that those who begin teaching in contexts of poverty in the United States and remain there are primarily those who declare a social commitment. This commitment is typically based on experiences or convictions prior to teacher preparation, such as having experienced marginalization themselves. Therefore, African-American and Latino teachers stayed at high-poverty schools for longer than their white colleagues. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the studies also indicated that social commitment is not enough. For socially committed teachers to remain at high-poverty schools it is important to offer them market salaries and conditions that enable them to mature professionally in order to make a difference. Due to their altruistic motivations, monetary bonuses on top over an average salary were less important than good education support programs, curriculum flexibility, etc.

Another important factor in this group of studies was the effect of the NCLB law on retention of teachers in contexts of poverty. On the one hand, Eckert (2013) found that state certification of HQTs had no relation to the retention of teachers in these schools. On the other hand, Milanowski et al. (2009) found that the curricular rigidity associated with the requirement to obtain good results on standardized tests discouraged pedagogy graduates from teaching in contexts of poverty. Both results suggested that the educational policies of the United States do not favor attracting teachers who will remain teaching at these schools. Obviously, mere retention of teachers is not synonymous with quality education. However, if the stability of communities of educators is a requirement for everything else, then the educational policies of the United States require changes in this area.

Support for novice teachers in contexts of poverty

Sixteen papers studied the support needed by those who begin teaching in high-poverty schools. Young, Hong, and Holdgreve-Resendez (2010) reviewed the literature in the United States and showed that most school districts have opted for mentoring. The wager was that this would help novice teachers to avoid focusing on their crises, instead altering their teaching strategies and remaining focused on the students.

Given the recent introduction of mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), analysis of its efficacy is crucial. From this perspective, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) reviewed the most important quantitative studies in the United States and concluded that, in general, mentoring does make a difference in terms of retention of teachers and increasing student scores on standardized tests, but this takes years to appear. This effect, however, is lower in high-poverty schools. In this regard, Glazer et al. (2010) compared the effects of a formal and intensive induction versus an informal and less intensive induction in schools where more than 50% of the students had FoRL.⁵ The result was that there were no significant differences in terms of

⁴ KIPP schools are charter schools whose goal is for children from vulnerable contexts to develop the skills, character, and habits necessary to be successful in college. To achieve that, they offer a safe and structured environment and a longer school day than usual, they seek to have high expectations for every student, and they emphasize character development. In Chile, *Colegio Ayelén* in Rancagua is inspired by this philosophy.

⁵ An informal and less intensive induction is what schools can offer with their own resources, such as pairing a novice teacher with a more experienced colleague without assigning them a specific time for this mentoring. A formal and intensive induction implies additional resources so that there are a specific structure and times for this mentoring.

teacher retention, and there was only a significant difference in student scores on standardized tests where the induction lasted for two years.

Kardos and S. Johnson (2010) surveyed a representative sample of teachers who were completing their first year of teaching in three US states. They found that 78% of novice teachers had an assigned mentor, but only 58% had three or more pedagogical conversations with their mentor. In high-poverty schools, most teachers had fewer than three conversations. Using a smaller sample size, LoCascio, Smeaton, and Waters (2014) obtained similar results: all of the teachers studied in contexts of poverty had an assigned mentor, but 85% said it was not easy to meet with their mentor and over 30% said they never met them. These findings suggest that mentoring has been less effective in high-poverty schools because novice teachers and their mentors tend to meet less due to contextual factors.

The other large-scale quantitative study on the effectiveness of mentoring in high-poverty schools was conducted by Grossman et al. (2012), who surveyed 1,683 teachers who were finishing their first year of teaching in New York public schools. They found that the positive or negative perception of mentoring was directly related to the quality of working relations in each school. In this vein, L. Johnson (2011) suggested that high-poverty schools should invest in developing *professional learning communities* rather than individual mentoring.

Baker-Doyle (2012) studied what kinds of support networks novice teachers had at high-poverty schools and found that the most valued support came from colleagues who were beginning to teach at the same school. Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) and Tamir (2013) reached a similar conclusion: the school culture and relationships with colleagues were the most important factor in understanding the attrition and retention of novice teachers in their schools. Most of those who left teaching did so because of dissatisfaction with the work environment.

Three publications focused on the emotions experienced by teachers in their first year of teaching at high-poverty schools and their strategies to overcome adversity (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010; Darby et al., 2011; Huisman, Singer, & Catapano, 2010). Darby et al. (2011) observed that most novice teachers expressed concern for their students not performing at grade level; however, the requirement to obtain good results on standardized tests prevented them from dedicating as much time to them as they would have liked. This made several of them question their professional competence or feel anger towards their administrators. All three articles indicated that relationships with colleagues were fundamental to address this situation. Castro, Kelly, and Shih (2010) also pointed out that a key strategy was to return to the original motivations to begin teaching and perceive the positive outcomes of the efforts made.

The last three papers in this group included the opinions of the mentors to investigate how mentoring should be developed in such contexts (Achinstein, 2012; Gardiner, 2012; Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009). In general, they noted that, at first, it is necessary to provide emotional support to novice teachers and provide them with tools to manage the classroom, but over time it is essential to help them focus more on the students than their own survival. Mentors also mentioned that the pressure to achieve good results on standardized tests was hurting their work with their mentees, as some novice teachers feared that their mentors were evaluating them (Gardiner, 2012), and several of them spent a significant amount of time helping novice teachers to overcome these pressures. Given the importance of the culture of each school in the growth and permanence of teachers, Yendol-Hoppey et al. (2009) suggested that, in contexts of poverty, mentors should not be understood solely as support for novice teachers, but rather as an aid to promote «cultures of collaboration» and thus improve the process of teacher learning in the whole school.

Together, these 16 publications confirmed that the development and permanence of novice teachers in contexts of poverty depend mainly on the work environment and construction of significant support networks with peers. The studies also underlined that mentoring has a marginal effect on retention of novice teachers in these contexts. Given this evidence, L. Johnson (2011) and Yendol-Hoppey et al. (2009) suggested that mentors be reconceived as facilitators of collaboration and teacher learning in the entire school.

These papers also indicated that the demand for results on standardized tests is having negative effects on supports for teachers beginning to work in contexts of poverty. Given this reality, Castro et al. (2010)

and Huisman et al. (2010) stated that the support provided to novice teachers should consider the added stress from the need for results at the start of the teaching career in vulnerable contexts.

Effects of the pressures to obtain results on standardized tests and the growing diversity of the student population among those beginning to teach in contexts of poverty

Seven studies were focused on changes in conditions for those who start teaching in contexts of poverty due to the pressure they receive to achieve good results on standardized tests since the enactment of the NCLB law and because of changes in the student body due to immigration. In this regard, the proportion of *students of color* has grown considerably in recent decades in the United States⁶ and has been concentrated in high-poverty schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010), which has implied new challenges for teachers, such as language barriers and cultural differences. The seven studies argued that recent public policies have forced a focus on tests that has prevented addressing growing student diversity adequately.

In the largest qualitative study in this review, Crocco and Costigan (2007) interviewed more than 200 teachers who were starting to teach in high-poverty schools. In general, they found that novice teachers judged the requirements associated with the NCLB law to be «oppressive» (particularly if they were forced into rigid adherence to a compulsory curriculum). Crocco and Costigan noted that various researchers argue that the educational problems in the United States are due to the poor quality of teachers, but this ignores the experience of oppression shared by many teachers, from which it follows that the problem cannot be solely teacher preparation. Three studies of the experiences of novice teachers came to similar conclusions and noted the importance of developing *culturally-relevant pedagogy*⁷ and understanding the structural dimension of the problem (Bergeron, 2008; Eslinger, 2014; Picower, 2011).

Three papers studied the experiences of teachers of color who were beginning to teach in contexts of poverty with the aim of developing culturally-sensitive teaching (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011, 2012). These studies came to three conclusions. First, that these teachers felt powerless to develop teaching that included the African-American or Latino culture that they shared with their students due to rigid curriculum and assessment requirements. Second, that after a time, most of these teachers had internalized a contradiction: they were critical of the emphasis placed on standardized tests, but at the same time they devoted much time and effort to improving their students' results. Lastly, the research showed that, because of this, some students questioned the cultural identification of these novice teachers, asking them if they were «with them» or whether they had become «part of the dominant white majority».

Altogether, these seven studies revealed an aspect of beginning to teach in high-poverty schools that was absent from other articles. They demonstrated the impotence experienced by many novice teachers in light of the demands of public policy regarding achievement of better results on standardized tests, as well as the painful experience of witnessing (and being part of) the dynamics of cultural imposition associated with the dominant curriculum, more evident now than before due to the increase in immigration. The evidence indicates that many teachers arrive in contexts of poverty with the expectation of working together towards social change, but after a time they felt that this was almost impossible. Faced with this reality, some left teaching, others chose to try to make changes in the educational system from within, and others remained, but adopting overtly anti-systemic positions.

Changes in the teaching force that begins to teach in contexts of poverty due to changes in the career paths and teachers' training

The fourth and final group of publications consists of nine studies focusing on the growing diversity of ways to prepare to teach in contexts of poverty in the United States, and the changes in the expectations of novice teachers as regards continuing to teach until retirement. The diversity of ways to prepare to

⁶ In the United States, the term *person of color* refers to those who are not part of the white majority, that is: African-Americans, Latinos, etc.

⁷ *Culturally-sensitive teaching* is teaching that assumes that education always contains cultural assumptions that are not always declared. A culturally-sensitive teacher understands that the curriculum and the school have an implicit culture, and seeks ways in which to build bridges between the different manners of understanding the world that exist among their students.

teach refers to the fact that, given the shortage of teachers, several state governments in the United States authorized alternative routes to teacher certification (henceforth ARTCs). That is, people who had not studied pedagogy at university were authorized to enter the teaching profession. This meant that there has been a proliferation of training programs that are transforming teaching in contexts of poverty in the United States.

Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) and Humphrey, Wechsler, and Hough (2008) studied seven ARTCs and discovered that: (a) the teachers certified by ARTCs were older than pedagogy graduates; (b) the quality of teachers who came from ARTCs, measured in accordance with the scores of their students in standardized tests, depended on their personal characteristics and those of the school in which they started working but not on their teacher training program; and (c) mentoring did not have a major influence on the permanence of these teachers at their schools or the scores of their students, which is consistent with the overall evidence on the effectiveness of mentoring in contexts of poverty. The conclusion was that ARTCs can be a source of effective teachers in high-poverty schools, but not all of the teachers who come from these programs will be effective. Carter and Keiler (2009) made similar findings.

After observing and interviewing more than 200 teachers from TFA, Veltri (2008) studied what kind of solution TFA represents for the shortage of teachers in contexts of poverty. Her finding was that the experience of beginning to teach after only five weeks of training was generally problematic. However, the most complicated problem was that, with their «missionary discourse», TFA was helping to understand teaching in contexts of poverty as a community service rather than as a profession.

Castro (2014) studied the visions that candidates had about teaching in contexts of poverty when graduating from an ARTC, and identified four types. There were: (a) *visionaries*, who understood the schools as communities and their role as collaborators within them; (b) *reformers*, who understood their role as agents of structural transformation; (c) *saviors*, who were saw themselves as heroes to the rescue of children in poverty; and (d) *opportunists*, who just wanted to find a steady job. Like Veltri (2008), Castro (2014) questioned the imaginaries of the *saviors* and *opportunists*.

Using data from surveys answered by 2,029 TFA teachers, Donaldson (2012) studied whether older teachers were more likely to remain in contexts of poverty than younger teachers. She found that TFA teachers who had started teaching after the age of 25 were more likely to remain in the contexts of poverty where they began to teach than their younger colleagues. In addition, teachers who began teaching after the age of 25 included a higher proportion of men and African-Americans.

The last three papers in this group were based on the ideas of S. Johnson and *The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers* (2004), about the changes in career paths for the new generations of teachers. S. Johnson et al. suggested that, unlike those who started teaching in previous decades, present novice teachers expect a good salary and opportunities to avoid teaching in the same classroom until retirement. Therefore, they recommended that rather than understanding teacher turnover as a failure in terms of retention, the PTC should be adapted to the contemporary labor scenario, which has high attrition rates in many professions, not solely among teachers.

These three studies investigated how those who began teaching in contexts of poverty imagined their professional careers. They discovered that the future perspectives of these teachers varied along a continuum (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Olsen & Anderson, 2007; Rinke, 2011). Some of them saw themselves as long-term teachers, while others had the aim of teaching for only a few years. In fact, only 20% said they wanted to teach until retirement (Olsen & Anderson, 2007). However, the majority said that they wanted to continue working in contexts of poverty, but in other roles. The three papers concluded that there is an urgent need to develop a more flexible framework for the PTC in contexts of poverty that takes into account this generational change in perspectives.

Collectively, these nine publications noted that, due to economic, political, and cultural factors that transcend the education system, those who start teaching in contexts of poverty in the United States have changed in terms of age, initial training, and future projections. The evidence also revealed that some discourses among those who were beginning to teach in these contexts could have complex effects on the professional nature of teaching. As a group, these studies showed that the teaching profession in contexts of poverty in the United States is being reconfigured and posed two questions: (a) What kind of solution

do ARTCs associated with the idea of volunteering represent to teacher turnover? and (b) How should the PTC be understood in contexts of poverty so that short-term commitments can be allowed without weakening the professional nature of teaching or damaging the stability of educational communities? These are obviously complex topics and are open to discussion.

Discussion

In summary, *what does the evidence from the United States over the last decade say about beginning to teach in high-poverty schools?* The review of the literature shows that there are a variety of topics being studied, as well as diverse perspectives to address these themes. However, the research as a whole suggests that the early years of teaching in contexts of poverty in the United States are increasingly complicated due to multiple economic, socio-political and cultural factors.

The first characteristic of the studies was their focus on teacher retention due to the high teacher turnover in these schools in the United States. This was by far the most recurrent research problem and the most common way of framing other problems. For example, most of the studies about mentoring were conducted from the viewpoint of improving retention of teachers in these schools, but not so much from the approach of professional development (although they are complementary perspectives).

In Chile, the scant research on those beginning to teach in contexts of poverty has not been focused on retention of teachers, but rather on attracting teachers with better disciplinary knowledge to such contexts (Cabezas et al., 2011; Meckes & Bascopé, 2010; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009). Among other reasons, this could be because the expansion of teacher preparation in Chile may have created the false impression that teacher turnover is not a problem in the country, although it actually is (Valenzuela & Sevilla, 2013). Beyond the economic costs, the key problem is the stability of communities of educators in contexts of vulnerability, which are an essential requirement when considering quality education.

From the evidence in the United States on teacher retention, it follows that those who stay longer in high-poverty schools are those who have a social commitment based on experience prior to their teacher training. This is why teachers of color, many of whom come from contexts of poverty, spend more time teaching in these contexts than their white colleagues, who are usually from the middle or upper classes. Given this social motivation, the research indicated that monetary bonuses were not as important for people choosing to teach in contexts of poverty as the work culture, although it is important that there are *market wages*. What does this suggest for Chile, where the available evidence also indicates that teachers from lower socioeconomic contexts are those who spend the most time teaching at these schools (Rivero, 2013)? The situation seems to suggest a *trade-off* between teachers with greater disciplinary knowledge who tend to remain for less time in these schools and teachers with worse academic training, but who stay for longer.

Regarding the support strategies for novice teachers, the evidence from the United States revealed that mentoring has not had a significant effect on teacher retention in contexts of poverty, and only has had an effect on student performance on standardized tests after two years. Therefore, some have suggested that, in these contexts, mentors should be considered as facilitators of teacher collaboration at the school level rather than being individual mentors. This raises important questions about the effect that mentoring that will be implemented in Chile could have in contexts of poverty. Consequently, it will be important to give particular attention to what happens in contexts of poverty when assessing implementation of mentoring. The fact that the literature in the United States indicates that the question about the most appropriate socialization of teachers in these contexts is open to debate should be taken as an invitation to explore alternative ways for induction.

The research reviewed also indicated that the experience of beginning to teach in contexts of poverty in the United States is a difficult experience because of the scarcity of resources, but even more so because of the pressure to obtain good results on standardized tests, along with an experience of *cultural distance* between the school and the students (i.e., between the school institution and students' culture). The qualitative studies showed that many teachers started teaching in contexts of poverty in an effort to make a difference and, within a short period of time, found that it was almost impossible because circumstances forced them to choose between their students (and their cultures) and the educational system (and its formal rules and requirements).

In Chile there is still insufficient evidence regarding the effects of standardized tests on teaching in contexts of poverty, but Ruffinelli (2014b) noted that the penetration of standards and accountability in school practices was forcing novice teachers «to relearn what is useful to [...] comply with the curricular

coverage and perform in external tests» (p. 71). In the same vein, Flores (2014) stated that the SIMCE⁸ «is molding the professional practice of novice teachers» (p. 47). In any case, notwithstanding the effects of SIMCE itself, what should be the subject of research in Chile, according to the evidence from the United States, is the limited attention that the educational system devotes to popular culture and its implications for schooling. As Zamora and Zerón (2010) and Zurita (2013) mentioned, the expansion of school coverage among the poorest sectors of society in recent decades means that teachers «are now associated with students who have different educational aspirations, different cultural values, and dissimilar approaches to schooling» (p. 100). But there is almost no discussion in Chile about this situation and its implications for schools and teachers. The attention focused on intercultural education in recent times represents a first approach to this issue (Donoso, Contreras, Cubillos, & Aravena, 2006; Huircan, 2010), but it is still a topic that is far removed from the debate of teaching policies.

One final feature of the research reviewed was the increasing attention in the United States to the transformation of the teaching profession in contexts of poverty due to the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics of globalization. Several studies inquired how the PTC should be understood in contexts of poverty in order to allow short-term commitments without undermining the professional nature of teaching or damaging the stability of educational communities. There seems to be a certain consensus in the United States that a PTC is needed with multiple entrances and exits, but there is also concern about the type of solution to teacher turnover represented by the ARTCs that associate teaching with volunteering. The best evidence that this topic is understudied in Chile is that the new PTC is conceived as a linear pathway that assumes that teachers will teach from the start of their career until retirement (Congreso de Chile, 2016).

More research is required on these topics, as well as further discussion of the theoretical assumptions of the various studies. In this regard, the research scenario in the United States shows that there are very different perspectives on understanding what is meant by an *inclusive educational system*, which are almost never considered in the studies. To some, inclusion simply means raising the scores of students in contexts of poverty on standardized tests. To others, inclusion is less standardization and more curricular and pedagogical freedom to respond to the cultural diversity of the student body. Obviously, this difference directly affects how education and teaching are understood in contexts of poverty, with an immediate effect on the experience of those who begin to teach in these contexts. Consequently, this is a theme that requires further development.

These philosophical differences are also present in the scant Chilean literature on the subject. On the one hand, there are studies that examine the distribution of novice teachers in different schools and contexts, at the basis of discussion of the new PTC (Cabezas et al., 2011; Meckes & Bascopé, 2010; Rivero, 2013). On the other hand, there are papers that reflect on the everyday experiences of teachers in their schools, which report «an abysmal gap between what is ordered by public policies [...] and what actually happens in everyday pedagogical practices conducted in schools in the country» (Zurita, 2013, p. 367). From the perspective of this second group of studies, «the success of policies and reforms [...] depends on [...] the incorporation of social, cultural and everyday teaching dimensions» (Fardella, 2013, p. 90). As in the United States, it seems that more discussion is required in Chile about these theoretical assumptions, building bridges between the various points of view.

In relation to this diversity of philosophical perspectives, it is noteworthy that none of the studies reviewed reflected on the objectives of education in contexts of poverty in the United States and how they affect novice teachers. There were comments on the need for *cultural sensitivity*, due to the distance between students' culture and school culture. But these allusions referred to contextualizing official content, with the same university orientation of the entire educational system of the United States. None of the authors reflected on the relevance of mandated contents for these contexts or addressed issues related to vocational education, curricula associated with minority cultures, etc. This is a complex issue since it touches upon profound ideals associated with meritocracy and the *American Dream*. However, the reality is that the United States is a very unequal society and many young people do not enter college (NCES, 2010). Consequently, school education oriented solely towards college is irrelevant to many. It is possible that the frustration experienced by many novice teachers in contexts of poverty in the United

⁸ The SIMCE (*Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación*) is the group of standardized tests used by the Education Quality Agency, an independent body of the Ministry of Education, to assess the learning of Chilean students in relation to the objectives of the national curriculum.

States is related to this structural problem and the disaffection towards the school that this creates on many youth.

The previous reflections suggest that much caution is needed to consider the evidence from the United States in Chile. Given the last 50 years of US influence on Chile, it is a fact that the similarity between the cultural values of both countries has grown. It is also true that, although standardization policies and accountability are different and Chile is now controlling the number of SIMCE tests, the increase in standardized tests in recent decades has followed a similar trend to the United States (Salazar, 2015). However, only 5% of high school students from the United States are in vocational schools (NCES, 2010), while in Chile this figure is nearly 45% (Ministerio de Educación [Mineduc], 2012). In summary, while it may seem tempting to directly use the evidence from the United States in Chilean reflections, what has happened there over the last decade is not necessarily what has happened or will happen in Chile.

Conclusions

This paper summarized research in the United States about teachers that begin to teach in contexts of poverty, with the aim of shedding light on the situation in Chile and particularly the implementation of the new PTC. Although the findings cannot be directly extrapolated from one country to the other, being aware of the research scenario in the United States helps to relativize certain statements that may seem obvious in Chile, such as that mentoring will improve induction and retention of novice teachers in contexts of poverty, or that monetary bonuses will lead to more teachers choosing to work in contexts of poverty. Observing the evidence from the United States also enables sensitivity to be developed for issues that are apparently absent from the Chilean debate, such as the changes in the career paths of new generations of teachers or the cultural dimension of contexts of poverty and their implications for the educational system (and the experiences of novice teachers).

In order to make statements about the reality in Chile, more specifically national research is required. Nevertheless, this review allows certain questions to be raised from the US evidence for discussion in Chile.

1. *What is understood in Chile by HQTs for schools in contexts of poverty?* Available research indicates that the most common assumption is that HQTs are those who come from selective universities, where they have the best scores on the *Inicia* test (Cabezas et al., 2011; Meckes & Bascopé, 2010; Rivero, 2013; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009). But, how does this understanding relate to the permanence of teachers in schools or to their *cultural competence* to work with students in poverty? There is a tension here that requires more complex analyses.
2. *What attracts Chilean teachers to contexts of poverty and why do those who stay there do so?* The new PTC seeks to attract young people educated at selective universities to these contexts through monetary bonuses, but the evidence from the United States suggests that the most important factors are a social commitment and the conditions at each school. Will the bonuses offered by the new PTC be effective?
3. *What supports are needed by those who start teaching in contexts of poverty in Chile, given the specific tensions that they experience and the evidence that teacher training does not prepare them to teach in these contexts* (Ruffinelli, 2014a)? What will be needed for mentoring to bear fruit in contexts of poverty in Chile, considering the negative evidence from the United States?
4. *What effect does the pressure to obtain good results on the SIMCE test have on teachers in high-poverty schools in Chile?* There is already some evidence that this pressure influences what teachers do in the classroom (Flores, 2014; Ruffinelli, 2014b). Will it be a factor that generates disaffection towards teaching in contexts of poverty, as has happened in the United States?
5. *How are career perspectives changing for teachers in Chile due to the changes in the country's work culture?* Is this a factor that has been considered in the new PTC?
6. Lastly, *what is expected from education in contexts of poverty in Chile?* School coverage has increased, but there is little discussion about curriculum diversity. As in the United States, there are more than a few Chilean teachers who consider that certain minimum contents are irrelevant in these contexts (at least my colleagues and I perceived this to be the case when I worked in this field some years ago). How are this issue and its consequences addressed in Chile?

The country is about to implement a new PTC that will define the future of its teachers, but there is little national evidence about the early years of teaching in contexts of poverty. The review of the research in the United States indicates that some of the strategies that are planned to be used in Chile could be ineffective in contexts of poverty, because the reality of teaching in these contexts is more complex than has been considered in the debate. In particular, there is a cultural dimension of poverty that directly affects the task of teaching and it is almost entirely absent from public debate. Hopefully, this literature review will generate some concern about this issue, as well as greater national research focused on this priority situation.

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⁹ Asterisks show the 44 papers included in the literature review.

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