Developing self-understanding in pedagogical stances: making explicit the implicit among new lecturers[I]

Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela[II]
Ronald Barnett[III]

Abstract

In their early teaching practice, university lecturers usually experience difficulties related to how to promote learning among students (e.g., how to plan a lesson, how to use pedagogical resources, and how to assess learning). The way in which new lecturers confront and address these difficulties impacts the evolution of their academic careers and how they use diverse frameworks to reflect on their teaching practices. Taking into account that some of these difficulties are not sufficiently understood yet, this paper aims to analyze them using a qualitative approach. This study adopted several data collection techniques and sources (teachers, students, and researcher) during a single academic year. The results underscored explicit difficulties recognized by the lecturers in relation to their teaching. However, this study's data pointed also to difficulties that remained implicit, and the results suggested that these implicit difficulties may be particularly resistant to self-understanding because they are related to lecturers' inner desire for order and predictability in their teaching. The paper concludes by suggesting possible ways of ameliorating such implicit presuppositions.

Keywords

New lecturers — Teaching practices — Implicit/explicit Difficulties — Qualitative research.

I- Acknowledgments: We wish to thank the lecturers who participate in this research.
II- *Universidad de Valparaíso, Valparaíso, Chile.*
Contact: carolina.guzman@uv.cl
III- University of London, London, UK.
Contact: r.barnett@ioe.ac.uk

O desenvolvimento da autocompreensão em posturas pedagógicas: *explicitando o implícito entre os novos docentes*[I]

Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela[II]
Ronald Barnett[III]

Resumo

Em sua prática docente inicial, os professores universitários geralmente vivenciam dificuldades relacionadas a como promover a aprendizagem dos alunos (por exemplo, como planejar uma aula, usar os recursos pedagógicos e avaliar a aprendizagem). A maneira como os novos professores enfrentam e abordam essas dificuldades afeta a evolução de suas carreiras acadêmicas e o modo como eles usam diversos referenciais para refletir sobre suas práticas de ensino. Levando em conta que algumas dessas dificuldades ainda não são suficientemente compreendidas, este trabalho tem por objetivo analisá-las por meio de uma abordagem qualitativa. Para tanto, foram adotadas várias técnicas de coleta de dados e fontes (professores, estudantes e pesquisadora) ao longo de um ano letivo. Os resultados evidenciam as dificuldades explícitas reconhecidas pelos docentes em relação ao seu ensino. Além disso, os dados apontaram também para as dificuldades que permaneceram implícitas, sugerindo que elas podem ser particularmente resistentes à autocompreensão, pois estão relacionadas ao desejo interior dos docentes de ordem e previsibilidade em seu ensino. O artigo conclui sugerindo possíveis formas de melhorar tais pressupostos implícitos.

Palavras-chave

Novos docentes – Práticas de ensino – Dificuldades implícitas e explícitas – Pesquisa qualitativa.

I- *Agradecimentos: gostaríamos de agradecer às docentes que participaram desta pesquisa.*

II- *Universidad de Valparaíso, Valparaíso, Chile.*
Contato: carolina.guzman@uv.cl
III- University of London, Londres, Reino Unido.
Contato: r.barnett@ioe.ac.uk

Teaching at a university is a complex, ambiguous, and – for each lecturer – a somewhat idiosyncratic set of tasks. It is perhaps reasonably straightforward to identify *what* to teach (the knowledge and skills expected of students), but more problematic is *how* to teach to promote deep learning among students with different backgrounds. This set of tasks becomes more difficult when an academic's role involves other time-consuming, demanding tasks, such as researching and publication (KNIGHT, 2006). Furthermore, an academic's work is developed in a balkanized organizational setting (HARGREAVES, 2005), where little collaborative work exists and where academics compete individually for better teaching situations, or for larger salaries or resources to conduct research.

These challenges can trigger anxiety or disorientation and even withdrawal from the academy, especially when new faculty members– with less than five years of teaching experience (BOICE, 2000) – struggle to survive in the university. The way in which new lecturers face and address these difficulties and challenges has an impact on the evolution of their academic careers (MARCELO, 2009), and the construction of their academic identities (FEIXAS, 2002b), and how they use diverse frameworks to reflect on their teaching practices. This paper focuses on the last of these aspects of teaching challenges, namely on comprehending new lecturers' ways of understanding their teaching practices, on the difficulties that they face in teaching, and – in the light of that evidence – on ways of improving teaching practices and thus students' learning.

Theoretical framework

Challenges that new lecturers face affect not only their professional life as academics but also their personal and emotional stability, and may even lead some to leave the profession (FEIXAS, 2002a; TARDIFF, 2004). Some of these difficulties are connected with the development of their academic identity, normative and hierarchical relationships with colleagues, and knowledge of the organizational setting (MARCELO, 1999). Some others are related to unstable work conditions that pressurize lecturers to demonstrate their productivity, for example, generating income through research projects and publishing papers in highly ranked journals (KNIGHT, 2006).

One of the main challenges that new university lecturers face relates to their teaching practices (MAYOR RUIZ, 2008): how to give a lecture or how to prepare a tutorial, how to choose the main aims of a lesson, how to plan and organize the contents, how to choose the best pedagogical resources to teach particular topics, how to motivate students, and how to assess their learning (COLÉN, et al., 2000; FEIXAS, 2002a; ATKINSON, 2002). Following Bernstein (1996), we might term this the pedagogical *recontextualization* of a subject (which is itself a recontextualization of a discipline). This is a set of challenges particular in its intensity and severity for, characteristically, universities enjoy a high degree of autonomy, and so teachers are neither following a prescribed curriculum, nor having to adopt a particular pedagogical approach. Both of these teaching tasks – the design of a curriculum and the determination of the actual ways of teaching a subject – fall on the shoulders of individual teachers.

Not surprisingly, then, lecturers feel insecure when teaching, and often their lectures are characterized by the transmission of large amounts of information that might overwhelm students (for lecturers can find a degree of familiarity and security in their subject's content). They also usually avoid complex questions raised by students and sometimes do not feel confident enough to respond to issues with which they are unfamiliar (KNIGHT, 2006). Feixas (2002a) argues that the main difficulties of new lecturers relate to managing and explaining the contents of lectures and how to motivate students and gain respect from them. In addition, other authors (COLÉN, et al., 2000) refer to problems like managing time in the classroom and taking into account students' prior knowledge as sources of stress and insecurity.

Some other problems experienced by newer lecturers are coordination and collaboration with other colleagues and a lack of institutional support that produces dissatisfaction, frustration, and loneliness. A lack of support and assistance from a department and a university, for example, in not offering professional development courses, contribute to new lecturers' disillusionment (FEIXAS, 2002a).

This period of adjustment and adaptation for new lecturers is vitally important because it constitutes the basis for professional socialization (KNIGHT, 2006). During this period, lecturers acquire certain norms, values, and ways of relating to colleagues. There is an inevitable process of adjustment to an organizational setting that impacts on lecturers' perceptions and behaviors about teaching, students, the university, and their teaching identity (FEIXAS, 2002a). These adjustments and the ways in which newcomers live out their working hours function as interpretive frameworks that give meaning to their teaching experiences.

From these frameworks, new lecturers attempt to solve problems through actions that can reinforce these beliefs and habits, which can subsequently become difficult to change (BULLOUGH, 2000). Thus, lecturers who have a more positive view of their early careers are able to develop *internal* attributions of their professional experiences – sensing their own possibilities for agency – and, hence, achieve more control over responses to institutional demands and external pressures. Those who are less satisfied with their work often make *external* attributions that lead them to be purely subjects of a situation with little power when facing adverse circumstances (KNIGHT, 2006). Consequently, ways of resolving difficulties and the perceptions and attributions that new lecturers form about their job satisfaction have impact on the evolution of their academic careers (MARCELO, 2009) and even on the construction of their academic identity (FEIXAS, 2002b).

To address these problems, many universities around the world (in the United Kingdom, Norway, Finland, Germany, France, Australia, and Spain, among others) have instituted non-compulsory and even compulsory training for new lecturers. Weimer (2001) suggests that the training should not focus only on technical issues or tips to improve teaching practices but also on reflective skills (FEIXAS, 2002a). In addition, mentoring, for example, is identified as crucial by some authors (WEIMER, 2001; FEIXAS, 2002a).

Against this background, this paper explores the main difficulties faced by newer lecturers at a Catalan university during their first five years of teaching, and the ways and extent to which they addressed them.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach, the lecturers identified for this study being intentionally chosen (PATTON, 1990) according to two criteria: they were to be new lecturers with less than five years of teaching experience and were to be from different fields of knowledge.

After contacting several relatively new lecturers who were participating in a non-compulsory course of academic development (2003–2005) at a Spanish university, we selected two. They consented to participating in the research and to being observed throughout an academic semester. They willingly allowed themselves to be interviewed and allowed their students to be interviewed about the teaching environment. Examining the practices of just two lecturers in detail, as case studies (STAKE, 2005), allowed exploration of the particularity and richness of these cases (set in their complex, specific institutional and educational contexts). To achieve this, the data collection (sources and techniques) and fieldwork extended over a comparatively lengthy period of time (one academic year). The two lecturers are here named fictitiously Anna and Blanca to preserve their anonymity:

• Anna was an associate teacher of dentistry with four years of teaching experience. She suggested that the observation should focus on a compulsory course because she was implementing a pedagogical innovation based on analyzing clinical cases (diagnosis and clinical treatment) in small and large student groups. Each teaching session lasted 90 minutes, and 19 sessions were observed.

• Blanca was an associate teacher of Catalan philology with five years of teaching experience. In the university, she taught, among others, several Catalan courses that were open across the university, especially to Erasmus students. The researcher was invited to observe two of these courses. Each teaching session lasted 120 minutes, and 31 sessions were observed.

The data were collected using:

• In-depth interviews with each teacher, both at the beginning and at the end of the course (each interview lasting 70 minutes). One aim of these interviews was to explore the main difficulties each lecturer experienced when teaching.

• Non-participant observations of the 19 (dentistry teacher) and 31 (Catalan teacher) sessions. In this part of the study, narrative registers were used (EVERTON, GREEN, 1989), that is, open systems without predetermined categories, in which meanings are seen as context-specific; they included large segments of text encapsulating teaching events, written by the observer in everyday language. They focused on the potential difficulties experienced by the teachers while conducting their classes. Here, not only the ways in which the teachers instructed were observed but also their relationships with their students. Additionally, the researcher held a series of informal conversations with the students and the teachers separately, both at the beginning and at the end of each lesson. These were registered using field notes.

• Two focus groups with Anna's students that lasted 90 minutes each at the end of the semester. One of the topics discussed related to their perceptions about Anna's teaching.

• Three interviews with Blanca's students at the end of the semester in order to explore their perceptions of Blanca's teaching. Each interview lasted 60 minutes.

The collected data were transcribed, and the two lecturers validated the interviews and observations. The data analysis, supported by Atlas.ti software, consisted of in-depth reading of all these transcriptions and establishing descriptive categories with a low level of inference. From the descriptive categories, two kinds of difficulties emerged (as discussed in the results section).

Terminological note

In presenting and discussing the study results, we make a significant distinction between teachers' *explicit* and *implicit* professional knowledge. In doing so, we are contrasting *explicit* and *implicit* knowledge. Our choice of the term *implicit* is arbitrary because we could just as well employ the term *tacit*. The literature on tacit and implicit knowledge and learning is considerable and fast developing. However, the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* has not been elucidated in the literature on new lecturers.

In the more general literature, the two terms *implicit* and *tacit* are used without clear boundaries between them and, occasionally, are used interchangeably. A paper by Cleeremans (1997) on *Principles for implicit learning* begins the first paragraph by mentioning *implicit learning*, but then immediately begins the second paragraph by referring to *tacit knowledge* without any comment on this apparent slide from *implicit to tacit*. This is a complex and fuzzy conceptual territory in which various dimensions are at work, including contexts of learning, knowledge, communication, embodiment, and professionalism. It could be suggested, for example, that tacitness comes into play in situations of embodied knowledge,

as implied in Polanyi's magisterial work on personal knowledge in the 1960s (1962; 1966) and since used in the literature on professional tacit knowledge.

For our purposes, we do not need to delve into these matters. Our preference would actually be to deploy the term *tacit knowledge*, since we want to draw attention to certain forms of teachers' professional knowledge rather than their knowledge claims (where *implicitness* might have been a particularly helpful term). However, we shall use *implicit knowledge* since it seems, in some quarters, to have become more common and is conventionally set off from the idea of *objective knowledge*. For Dienes and Perner (1999, p. 752), in articulating *A theory of implicit and explicit knowledge*, knowledge can be an object of representation—that is, it can be explicit knowledge – "if participants can metarepresent their representation of the knowledge as having various properties." On the other hand, according to Cleeremans (1997, p. 4), "knowledge is implicit when it can influence processing without possessing in and of itself the properties that would enable it to be an object of representation." Given this predisposition in favor of the term *implicit* rather than *tacit*, we adopt the term *implicit* in this paper.

Results

As noted, while collecting the data and using triangulation of sources (interviews with lecturers, observations and fieldwork in the classroom, and focus groups with students), a distinction emerged between explicit and implicit difficulties. Taking into account the earlier definitions, the following categories were revealed as potent in analyzing the data:

Table 1: key categories in analysing the collected data

Explicit difficulties	Difficulties recognised by the lecturers in an explicit way
Implicit difficulties	Difficulties not identified by the lecturers but identified by the researcher and corroborated by their students.

During the interviews, the lecturers identified the following explicit difficulties:

Table 2: Explicit difficulties mentioned by the lecturers during the interviews

Code	Anna (Dentistry)	Blanca (Catalan)
Difficulties in teaching some contents/ topics	3	-
Difficulties in assessing learning	6	-
Difficulties in explaining a concept or an idea	3	-
Difficulties in planning a lesson	11	3
Difficulties in connecting the contents with the students' daily lives	-	9
Difficulties in managing time during a lesson	-	6

Source: survey data

Through informal conversations with both the lecturers and their students, and from the many observations, the researcher identified some other – and different – difficulties that were then corroborated by the students. These we term *implicit difficulties*, and they took the forms displayed in table 3.

Table 3: Implicit teaching difficulties detected by the researcher and corroborated by the students

Anna		Blanca	
Sub-categories and their frequencies			
Difficulties in dealing with students with special needs	11	Difficulties in perceiving information in the pedagogical setting (students' behavior)	21
Lack of depth in teaching some contents	16	Excessive use of grammar exercises	26

Source: survey data

The following sections refer to both kinds of difficulty, recognized (explicit) and not fully recognized (implicit) by the lecturers. The italicized portions are verbatim excerpts from the diverse techniques of data collection (i.e., interviews, observations, field notes, and focus groups); they have been translated from Spanish and Catalan into English.

Explicit difficulties: Anna (Dentistry)

Anna's explicit concerns were those of both planning a lesson and managing the time during the class, putting into practice a new teaching methodology (based on case analyses), and assessing learning. She also admitted on several occasions that she had problems in balancing content, and in linking theoretical seminars with clinical practice, the latter also entailing the challenge of coordinating with other teachers who supervised such practices.

One of Anna's main concerns lay in lesson planning. She planned lessons in great detail, but often left the planning to a later point (just prior to the teaching itself) and injected too many aims and activities. In a conversation after a class session, she observed:

> I planned the activities today at 6:30 a.m., and that is why it didn't go quite right... too many things to do in short time...

The felt need to plan the lesson in great detail might be analyzed as Anna's need to have the lesson under control – in terms of knowing exactly what and how to teach, a typical difficulty experienced by new lecturers (FEIXAS, 2002b; ATKINSON, 2002).

Another challenge mentioned by Anna was that of explaining certain topics to be understood by the students, as she admitted in an interview:

> I don't express myself well in public, and I feel I'm missing some topics. I do not speak well, I do not know how to explain some ideas or concepts to the students that I know very well. This is a bit hard for me.

This excerpt is particularly interesting because the problem is not only one of knowing about certain topics but also one of explaining them in a way that makes them comprehensible to students. We see here a self-acknowledgement of a felt difficulty in transforming a topic to an understandable set of units of learning, in short, the *know-how* of teaching or, as Shulman (1986) calls it, the teacher's pedagogical content knowledge.

Another difficulty identified by Anna was that she could not be sure whether the analysis of clinical cases (as a pedagogical resource) was favoring independent and meaningful learning among students:

> I know that they try to learn, they try, yes, but I don't know if they reach this goal using this new methodology of analyzing clinical cases. They have to work hard by themselves solving a problem... it is a difficult task for them.

Explicit difficulties: Blanca (Catalan language)

Blanca commented that when she started at the university, she was concerned about her teaching and had doubts about *almost everything*. She felt insecure in planning lessons and managing time. She did not how *to fill* a two-hour lesson with enough activities. Because of this, she used to plan the lessons and timing in great detail. Nevertheless, most of the time she did not follow this planning, because as she said in an interview "each group has its own rhythm". As a result, the activities accomplished with students might differ from one group to another:

> When you start, Jesus, a two-hours lesson! An eternity, right? Afterwards, you realize that a language lesson cannot last less than two hours, but this awareness comes later... I used to sequence everything with time (this activity will take 10 minutes, the other one 15, etc.). But of course, this did not work all the time because each group has its own rhythm, its own way; there are issues that are more difficult for some groups.

Simultaneously, she also experienced difficulty when she prepared a lesson with

so many activities that she was not able to cover all of them in depth. However, her main concern, at the time of the study, had to do with enabling students to see links between their course experience and their daily contexts and lives. Blanca had a long-term learning goal of incorporating the Catalan way of being into the students' personal lives. She felt frustrated when she realized she was not reaching this goal. In conversation after a class session, she exclaimed:

> Just listen to them...the lesson has finished, and they are speaking in Spanish. ... They are losing the opportunity of practising Catalan!

Implicit difficulties: Anna and Blanca

Loughran (2006) suggests that teachers pay attention to what they consider to be problematic. This conception of problems implies that problems are relative: a situation that might be problematic for one teacher might not be for another. In other words, a problem must be self-represented to become an explicit difficulty. Additionally, the perception of a situation considered problematic depends on several factors, such as a teacher's expectations and beliefs, the stage of his/her career, the students and classroom, and institutional contexts.

Several situations during the lessons were interpreted as problematic by the observer, but not fully interpreted as such by either lecturer — a typical occurrence with new teachers according to Berliner (1988). For both teachers, these difficulties showed themselves in different ways but shared common elements.

During Anna's (dentistry) lessons, for example, students' participation was high and permanent. Nevertheless, a foreign student — studying through the European Erasmus scheme — had difficulties following the lessons because she did not sufficiently understand the language (Catalan) although she had mastered Spanish. This problem was mentioned to Anna by one Anna's colleagues. Subsequently, Anna tried to give her class in Spanish, but after some attempts, she failed to speak effectively in Spanish and continued her classes in Catalan. As a result, some students helped the foreign student by translating parts of the lessons, a difficult task since the lessons demanded great attention to resolve the clinical cases. In the after-session discussions between Anna and the researcher, this problem, observed on several occasions, was mentioned to Anna. After the first lesson, Anna actually talked to the student to check whether she had been able to follow. It seemed that the problem had been solved. However, during one of the lessons, the foreign student commented to her classmates that she was still having serious problems. This information was relayed to Anna, who seemed surprised during the discussion afterward:

> I mentioned to Anna that the French student was not following the lesson. Anna seemed upset and she said that she had already asked this student several times if she was understanding the lessons, and she had answered "yes." She added that she would have to talk to the student again about this issue. She seemed upset.

Although Anna had perceived this situation as problematic from the beginning of the semester and had tried different approaches, she reached a point when she did nothing else to address it. She did not invest more attention and energy after a couple of lessons because, according to her, she "had done everything humanly possible to solve the problem." She also commented that she had noticed a lack of interest from the student. Thus, Anna represented the matter to herself as no longer her problem. In the end, the student began missing sessions and did not finish the semester.

According to Knowles, Cole, and Presswood (1994), many novice teachers are not trained to deal with a diversity of

students. Some are unable to meet students' multiple needs in a way that encourages students' interest–even though the teachers could recognize and identify the individual differences (BULLOUGH, 2000). Anna knew she had to consider the foreign students' needs, but she seemed unsure how to deal with them. The ability to make decisions in a particular learning context and with specific students depends on practical wisdom or an intuitive knowledge rooted in experience (ATKINSON, 2002). Dealing with problematic situations is possible if the teacher has developed timely, useful frameworks for understanding what is happening in the classroom and for knowing how to address a problematic context-specific situation. New lecturers like Anna often lack such practical wisdom.

In the case of Blanca (the philology teacher), the researcher detected a problematic situation connected to the interactions between the teacher and her students. Although the classroom atmosphere was characterized by both a cordial and respectful treatment, it was also characterized by little student participation. A student explained that the excessive amount of grammar exercises were failing to engage the students:

> I think the lessons, sometimes, were a bit boring, so many grammar exercises. If I was the teacher, I would notice that nobody was participating.

Additionally, the relationship between the teacher and her students was a bit distant. In some ways, Blanca seemed emotionally disconnected from some students, especially the quieter ones who did not participate during the lesson and who did not seem motivated by the subject. During the observations, some "awkward and long silences" were detected by the observer, but these seemed not to be perceived by Blanca.

Among the elements that disturbed the lessons were several students arriving late or leaving early. These facts visibly affected the continuity of the lesson, causing Blanca discouragement and irritation. This situation was corroborated by one of the students in an interview:

> Oh, it is like saying "Hello, I have arrived but I don't want to be here." I really think that there were some classmates who didn't want to be in there.

However, low participation seemed to dissipate when Blanca orchestrated activities such as a discussion of the news, of students' countries of origin, or of tourism. This included activities that required students' involvement because of the novelty of the activities, of small-group assignments, or interactive methods (e.g., competitions, quizzes, preparation of written material).

These situations raised the issue of whether Blanca could read the signs of students' behavior that might guide her teaching performance. This situation could be explained in two ways: either she did not notice these signs because she was focused on the content of the lessons and how to organize it, or she *did* notice, but did not know how to address the problem. During an interview, Blanca's words supported the hypothesis that while she saw the classroom atmosphere and her interaction with students as relevant, it was not important enough for her to modify her performance; in other words, there was a gap between the lecturers' self-disclosure (what they told the researcher) and their action in the classroom (so offering an example of Schön's distinction between *espoused theory* and *theory-in-action* (1983)):

> Most of the time what disturbs me is the relationship with the students, right? Sometimes I see I'm not being interactive... and if a student is shy, that is a problem for me... because s/he will be lost... but to be honest, I am not very focused on this although I know it is essential.

Knowles, Cole, and Presswood (1994) indicate that, in general, lessons have their own rules and teachers need to comprehend these rules and possibly redirect their performance according to students' behavior and reactions. Blanca's lessons were highly structured and determined by the contents, and it appeared she was paying insufficient attention to students' low participation.

Atkinson (2002) explains this behavior as a lack of intuitive knowledge that might allow a teacher to detect certain patterns, such as the mood of the class. Also, Berliner (1988) and Knight (2006) refer to proficient and expert teachers as those who master the *know how*; they are intuitive in the sense that they have acquired large pools of experience and they are able *to read* classroom events in a holistic way that helps guide their performance. They can also predict and face situations of conflict in an effective way. Other lecturers, however, tended to ignore disruptive classroom elements (SWANSON et al., *apud* HOGAN, RABINOWITZ, CRAVEN, 2003).

Routines and their limitations

In the classroom observations, it was possible to detect a stable pattern in the way that Anna and Blanca each conducted their lessons. Anna (in dentistry) devoted much of her attention to preparing detailed lesson plans. These had several activities, to be completed in 90 minutes, that would resolve the proposed clinical case. Nevertheless, there was occasionally not enough time to reach the resolution. Some cases were especially complex according to the students who commented to Anna after the lesson and during the focus groups. The following is an excerpt from one focus group:

> Sometimes the time wasn't enough to analyze the case in depth; we need more time to do this... It is a good idea to analyze a case each lesson, but some cases are so complex that more lessons are needed... and that is why we have to literally run all the time.'

Anna seemed more focused on keeping to the schedule (the various activities with their execution times in small and large groups) without noticing whether an adjustment was needed. Despite having a detailed plan, Anna often faced situations that were not possible to anticipate, and she was unable to address them (LOUGHRAN, 2006). Therefore, a teaching plan seems appropriate in the abstract, but in the classroom, it might need some adjustment to meet students' learning needs.

On the other hand, Blanca (in philology) based lessons on completing large numbers of grammatical exercises, so forming routinized and monotonous lessons that did not always motivate students. Despite this, Blanca hardly changed these exercise routines. This situation was pointed out during an interview; she commented that although she was aware some activities motivated more students (conversations in groups, for example), from her point of view, the grammar exercises were essential to promote learning. This pedagogical behavior can be understood by taking into account the needs to control a lesson and to structure a task: the more structured a lesson, the easier to run it and keep it under control. Spontaneous dialogue among students is less easy to moderate. Here, indeed, completing grammar exercises had a clear goal, a fixed time for completion, and clear, correct answers.

Thus, despite the students' needs or rhythms, both teachers conducted their lessons in a highly routinized way without room for changes. These routines helped the teachers to control their classes and reduce the unpredictability that a classroom with potentially unexpected interactions with students can present (KNIGHT, 2006).

Since routines normally appear after a considerable amount of experience, and since a limited teaching experience hardly allows the

development of routines, the routinization of teaching practices might be seen as especially problematic in new lecturers. However, as Kreber (2002) indicated, university teachers learn how to teach through trial and error, so strategies that work are stored and integrated into a developing repertoire felt to be effective without much self-reflection. Such a repertoire enables the teacher to run a lesson relatively easily through procedures implemented and tested in the past with good results. In both cases studied here, the incipient development of teaching routines offered an anchor, allowing the two teachers some stability for forestalling classroom unpredictability. However, these routines appeared to hinder deep learning among students on the one hand, and students' motivation on the other. In other words, routines might provide the teacher with boundaries in an otherwise unbounded situation, but not necessarily contribute to students' learning. The new lecturers in this study did not fully appreciate the effects that their highly bounded teaching practices had on students.

Explicit and implicit: fuzzy relationships

From this study's results, it seems that in their pedagogical situations, higher education teachers possess several understandings of their qualities and capabilities. One dimension at play is the degree of self-understanding a teacher possesses: To what degree does a teacher have a conscious, self-examined awareness of her own presuppositions, attitudes, and values that shape her pedagogical approaches, pedagogical behaviors, and responses in the classroom setting and in encounters with her students? We have observed that a teacher may well be influenced by understandings and attitudes not immediately present in the mind; such pre-conscious understandings may simply not have been brought to the surface by a process of self-reflection. We too observed that a teacher may be aware of certain pedagogical aspirations and values, but may accord them a rather low priority in relation to other values (for instance, wanting to maintain pedagogical order or psychic stability in the context of a potential overload in the pedagogical situation). Such a teacher may repress such sentiments, and their non-realization may in turn cause some distress.

Apparently, therefore, not just are there explicit and implicit components of a teacher's self-understandings of her capabilities in the classroom but – perhaps particularly in higher education – these explicit and implicit components may exhibit a variety of relationships. Some such relationships have been glimpsed in the empirical data from this study. They include self-understandings that

- Are explicitly recognized and are purposely carried forward
- Are recognized but are downplayed or placed in a kind of inner drawer, hidden away from scrutiny
- Present difficulties so severe that they remain unaddressed or at least unresolved (even if partially addressed)
- Go unrecognized, but influence a teacher's pedagogical repertoire and so remain implicit
- Have emerged over time as part of a skilled practitioner's repertoire. Probably, at one time, these did become explicit, but have since receded in visibility, their pedagogical efficacy having been demonstrated and so coming to form tested elements of an internalized pedagogical repertoire.

Emerging from this analysis are two immediate general considerations. First, the explicit-implicit distinction points to a complex of possible relationships. Simply to suggest that explicit and implicit components exist in a teacher's repertoire is rather unhelpful, for some implicit components may be advantageous to effective teaching and others injurious. Therefore, a further distinction is required. We propose a distinction as to whether a practitioner has a disposition of *openness* or *closure* toward his/her pedagogical repertoire. It was evident here that our

two subjects had degrees of closure toward their pedagogical repertoires, and so certain elements of their repertoire – even if tacitly acknowledged – remained unaddressed. In other words, their self-examination was truncated. On the other hand, skilled practitioners' understandings may be implicit, but they either have been or always are liable to searching, self-critical scrutiny. Thus, openness–closure has to be placed with *explicit–implicit* in any examination of a teacher's repertoire. (As a construct for theoretical framing, these two distinctions could be seen as two axes forming a grid, opening spaces of pedagogical stances. We lack the space here to pursue that theoretical path.)

Second, the search for order may be very significant in the early framing of a teacher's pedagogical repertoire and also be much more significant than has been recognized in the literature. Given conditions of inherent complexity in the pedagogical situation, not to mention the *supercomplexity* of the very concepts and responsibilities of what it is to be a teacher in higher education – a condition utterly open and contestable (BARNETT, 2000) – it is hardly surprising when the newer lecturer searches for some means of stability. Holding firm to a curriculum-in-practice framed heavily on knowledge and the contents of their subject, and eschewing actions and considerations that fall outside of such pedagogical intentions is an understandable and even rational approach to the teaching role. A pedagogy of risk is deferred in favour of a pedagogy of safety.

It follows from these two general considerations that, for the beginning or early stage teacher, certain components of the pedagogical repertoire may be almost beyond self-understanding. The *almost* here is crucial. It appears that often elements of closure in a teacher's approaches reveal a degree of resistance even to self-examination. Such self-examination, after all, could reveal tension with a teacher's espoused values. Such a tension would either have to become exposed to the self, or elements of the teacher's repertoire providing stability might have to be abandoned, potentially opening the way to further inner turmoil.

Conclusions

From this study, some questions arise: Can teachers by themselves reach an awareness of their difficulties when teaching? Are they conscious of the effects their teaching has on their students? To what degree might they be aware – or become aware – of their presuppositions shaping their orchestration of the teaching situations for which they are responsible? In what ways might teachers be enabled to work through the many inner tensions that they may be feeling?

Effective teaching is a context-specific activity, varying according to the discipline, the students, the institution, the micro-systems and, last but not least, the teacher's own pedagogical presuppositions and values. This commonplace observation has two implications. On one hand, problematic situations cannot be seen as standard difficulties with fixed formulas that can be applied to solve them. On the other hand, not only new lecturers but also experienced university teachers might face conflicting situations that, under certain circumstances, can develop and generate tension in the classroom.

The lecturers who participated in this study experienced problems that have been well documented by the literature (COLÉN, et al., 2000; KNIGHT, 2006): difficulties in planning, managing time, assessing learning, explaining a topic, and so on. Nevertheless, both these teachers had reached a stage of stabilization in their teaching practices (MARCELO, 2009) where they felt that they knew what worked (KREBER, 2002).

However, this study revealed problematic situations that, apparently, of which the lecturers were not fully aware or which they did not conceptualize in any serious way. The difficulties detected were linked to the lecturers' lack of capacity to read clues from teaching situations and the students' learning needs

as they emerged *in situ*. The lecturers seemed more focused on their teaching scripts than on their students' learning. These scripts acted as routines, enabling the teachers to negotiate the conflicting demands they were facing as teachers — making progress with the subject and enabling students to accomplish various tasks and to acquire a range of skills — but not necessarily suited to the students' individual needs. These two lecturers were often unaware of not only their difficulties when teaching but also the effects their teaching practices had on their students. Elements of their teaching remain not just hidden from their self-scrutiny, but had been placed in a kind of closed inner drawer, the opening of which might prove problematic for them.

The matter arises then as to whether and how a teaching awareness and orientation might be developed that focuses more on students' learning positions. One response might be to use systematic reflective processes on teaching practices and self-evaluation (ERAUT, 1999; KREBER, 2002). Deliberative and continuous reflections on teaching practices seem to be the key to learning from experience and overcoming difficulties, and furthermore making explicit the implicit in teachers' pedagogical stances. However, this strategy cannot happen only individually; individual reflection should be complemented by two other sources: students (through reliable feedback systems) and colleagues (through collaborative work). Colleagues, according to the literature (KNIGHT, 2006), play an important role in the socialization of new lecturers in universities characterized by balkanized cultures and isolated work. These systematic collaborative activities can provide opportunities to share teaching experiences in non-threatening ways, especially given the rationality that may accompany such pedagogical self-disclosure. Formal and institutional mechanisms developed by departments and faculties in supporting new lecturers through collaborative work might therefore be crucial (FEIXAS 2002a; ZABALZA, 2004; KNIGHT, 2006). Disciplines and departments could surely play a central role since they can offer guidance and counseling on pedagogical issues in ways that carry legitimacy with the colleagues concerned. A teacher's professional presuppositions need not be beyond all self-understanding, but their emergence into consciously intentional pedagogy calls for some care and understanding on the part of institutions. From this kind of support, it might be possible to attain what Kreber (2002) calls the *wisdom of teaching.*

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Dr. Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela is Head of the Department of Educational Psychology at the School of Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Valparaiso, Chile. Her interests lie in learning and teaching processes in universities and in academic identity. Currently, she teaches in programs for graduate and post-graduate students on qualitative research in Education.

Professor Dr. Ronald Barnett is Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, Institute of Education, University of London, United Kingdom. Over the past 30 years, he has been developing a social philosophy of the university and of higher education. His latest book (2013) is *Imagining the University* (published by Routledge).