

# The teaching identity of the university professors. An approach from the pedagogy of alterity<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:**<sup>1</sup> The teaching identity of the university professor has been a topic widely studied and treated from different theoretical positions and approaches, highlighting specific dimensions in each case that influence its construction and definition. The novel element of this article is its approach from the philosophy of education and with a markedly Levinasian orientation. It is a theoretical study that is based on a review of the most relevant and current literature on the subject matter. The authors adopt a relational and situational approach to teaching identity and defend a responsive and unique ethics against classical professional ethics (deontology). This work delves into some formulations of Levinas' thought related to teaching, such as his own conception of teaching and the notions of subjectivity, transcendence, heteronomy, and singularity. It then reflects on the influence that some of the main values derived from Levinasian ethics can exert on teaching identity, such as responsibility, acceptance, recognition, donation, and testimony. The article concludes by presenting the pedagogy of alterity as an alternative proposal that accentuates the ethical-affective dimension as an inherent and consubstantial element in the construction of professor identity. From this model, some of the most appreciated attributes for teaching are humanism, love and the passionate commitment of the professor.

**Keywords:** identity, teaching profession, university, ethics, pedagogy of alterity

## **ES** La identidad docente del profesorado universitario. Una aproximación desde la pedagogía de la alteridad

**Resumen:** La identidad docente del profesor<sup>2</sup> universitario ha sido un tema ampliamente estudiado y tratado desde diferentes posturas y enfoques teóricos, acentuando, en cada caso, una u otras de las dimensiones que influyen en su construcción y definición. El elemento novedoso de este artículo es su abordaje desde la filosofía de la educación y con una orientación marcadamente levinasiana. Se trata, por tanto, de un estudio de carácter teórico que se encuentra fundamentado en una revisión de la literatura más relevante y actual de la temática tratada. Los autores parten de un enfoque relacional y situacional de la identidad docente y defienden una ética responsiva y de la singularidad frente a la ética profesional clásica (deontología). El trabajo profundiza en algunas formulaciones del pensamiento de Levinas relacionadas con el quehacer docente como son su propia concepción de la enseñanza y las nociones de subjetividad, transcendencia, heteronomía, y singularidad. Seguidamente se reflexiona sobre la influencia que pueden ejercer en la identidad docente algunos de los principales valores que se derivan de la ética levinasiana como son la responsabilidad, la acogida, el reconocimiento, la donación, y el testimonio. Se concluye con la pedagogía de la alteridad como propuesta alternativa que acentúa la dimensión ético-afectiva como un elemento inherente y consustancial en la construcción de la identidad docente. Desde este modelo, algunos de los atributos más apreciados para el ejercicio de la docencia son: el humanismo, el amor y el compromiso apasionado del docente.

**Palabras clave:** identidad, profesión docente, universidad, ética, pedagogía de la alteridad

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2 For the purposes of this article, masculine generic forms have been used exclusively to avoid excessive repetition that might compromise readability; this usage should not be interpreted as discriminatory or as an omission of other genders.

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"What makes teaching a moral endeavor is that it is a human action carried out in relation to other human beings. [...] For this very reason, teaching is a profoundly moral activity" (Fenstermacher, 1990, p.133).

## 1. Introduction

The teaching identity of the university professor has been widely studied (Alcalá del Olmo, 2019; Bain, 2007; Caballero & Bolívar, 2015; Cuadra-Martínez, Castro-Carrasco, Oyanadel, González-Palma, 2021; Falcón & Arraiz, 2020; Gewerc, 2001; Martín-Gutiérrez, 2014; Martínez, Quijano & Guillermo, 2022; Monereo & Domínguez, 2014; and Zabalza, Zabalza & de Corte, 2018). The novel element of this article is addressing the issue of teaching identity through a philosophical lens and with a distinctly Levinasian orientation.

To that end, the teaching identity of university faculty is linked to the pedagogy of alterity, highlighting the ethical dimension as an inherent and consubstantial element in the construction of such identity. Without this dimension, the professor's self-recognition cannot occur. Ethical values help structure and bind professional identity, and they represent a determining factor in the identity and training processes of faculty. "Moral identity is the foundation and cornerstone of a professor's professional identity, as values imbue both the being and the practice of teaching with meaning and significance." (Cordero, 2018, p.52).

It is not an easy task to match the professional and teaching status of university faculty (their personal biography, the profession that shapes them, the group they belong to, their working conditions...) with the essential features of the pedagogy of alterity. Its discursive basis and theoretical foundation are clear: the educational relationship is an ethical commitment to another way of educating. What is not so clear is who university faculty are today, nor what their level of ethical commitment and passion in performing their work is. It is also unclear whether the responsibility inherent to the profession's essence is manifested in an education of hospitality and service, an education that should be permitted and encouraged by institutions themselves and carried out by faculty (Ortega & Romero, 2024).

This article aims to foster reflection and discussion about the influence exerted on the professors' identity by some of the main values derived from Levinasian ethics, such as the sense of responsibility, hospitality, donation, testimony, and compassion. The idea is to consider university faculty's teaching practice through the lens imposed by the pedagogy of alterity.

## 2. The University and Its Professors in Times of Change

Several authors throughout history have reflected, from a philosophical perspective, on the mission of the university and the place it occupies as a social and cultural institution (Ortega & Gasset, 1982; Morin, 1998; Llano, 2003; and Ortega, 2012). In shaping teaching identity, the context in which faculty carry out their professional work plays a decisive role. In this sense, the influence of politics, institutional ideologies, and the socioeconomic environment is clear.

"Universities are immersed in profound and unstoppable processes of change, generating new demands on these institutions and, evidently, on university faculty" (Mas-Torelló, 2011, p.197). These transformations include: the shift toward new educational models centered more on learning and the student than on teaching and the professor; substantive changes related to redefining learning objectives in terms of competencies; changes in the teaching conception, and the abandonment of certain long-standing professional cultures; the revision of methodologies and assessment models used and the development of innovation processes clearly aligned with the expansion of new technologies; and, finally, structural changes linked to the implementation of educational policies reflected in curriculum design and in new faculty evaluation and accreditation programs.

These changes have had a clear impact on the internal dynamics of universities and are strongly conditioned by a capitalist and globalized environment. Various authors (Amigot & Martínez, 2013; Carrasco, 2021; Posca-Cohen, 2024) have agreed that this context is characterized by a Higher Education system subjected to the demands of a neoliberal society. The result is the implementation of national and regional educational policies that deepen the commodification and privatization of public universities. Issues such as measuring and evidencing educational outcomes; pursuing quality based on international standards; achieving excellence in scientific and technological research; and competency-based training, become the only important goals, clearly displacing other aims that could be formulated in ethical, political, or democratic terms.

These neoliberal educational policies are having serious consequences on the identity and training of faculty. We are witnessing a worrying process of regulation and "uniformization of pedagogical practices, increasingly subordinated to homogenizing categories that end up straining modern ethical principles" (Moscoso & Castro, 2023, p.295).

In this scenario, university faculty build their own identity by striving to demonstrate their capabilities and skills through achievements and certifications that guarantee their permanence and advancement within the institution. This has clear implications for how they conceive teaching and for the time they devote to their teaching responsibilities and to their students. The authors of this article advocate for the need to deeply

reconstruct the identity of university faculty, in a way that responds to the inherent functions of the profession, rather than the market-driven demands of the context in which it is embedded.

In the teaching trajectories of university faculty in the late 20th century, an indisputable feature of teaching identity always appears: the professor orchestrating knowledge, organizing it, and bringing it to students through two almost monopolistic instruments: oral language (the lecture supported by oratory) and books. The most emblematic space for this encounter, varied in intent, was always the classroom. This was the legacy of a university tradition that understood teaching as a profession-craft-art that endured for more than eight centuries without altering that sacred triad: a professor, their voice, and their books; a student, their notebook, and their questions oriented toward learning; and a classroom with the library as its extension.

However, accumulating knowledge to transmit it is no longer the basic task of university faculty. Mastering disciplinary knowledge and being able to convey it to students is no longer considered their only function, not even the most important one. When we talk about university faculty, we must also talk about other roles or duties that have recently been assigned to them, in addition to teaching. Today's professor, besides teaching their classes, must also conduct research (Caballero & Bolívar, 2015), perform educational management and administrative duties, as well as transfer the knowledge generated to their closest social environment.

In recent years, university teaching has become more complex pedagogically (Cantón & Tardif, 2018; Cuadra-Martínez *et al.*, 2021; Zabalza, Cid & Trillo, 2014), with the professor shifting from a mere instructor to a facilitator, from a guardian of knowledge to a professional embedded in techniques and technicalities. This complexity is reflected in the new roles attributed to faculty as part of the demands and requirements associated with academic career development.

Larrosa (2020), when addressing teaching as a kind of profession-art-craft, offers a critical view of the university and its faculty grounded in a series of elements: a cognitive capitalism concerned only with the discourse of quality and competencies; the transformation of the university into a sort of talent-seeking company for the productive world with little concern for citizenship or social responsibility; the conversion of professors into mere learning facilitators and classroom entertainers; the proletarianization and precarization of the profession; and, on top of that, the gradual loss of symbolic authority and social esteem for the profession.

Nevertheless, the most intimidating or disruptive change is anticipated by Agamben (2020, May 23, p.3), who, with a prediction lacking optimism, states that "part of the technological barbarism we are experiencing is the erasure of every sensory experience and the loss of the gaze, permanently imprisoned in a spectral screen." In his view, professors have seemingly accepted uncritically the new telematic dictatorship, and the pandemic has served as the perfect excuse for an increasingly widespread and totalizing inclusion of digital technologies in teaching practice. What is most concerning is that with the unstoppable rise of technology and its implications, various asynchronous modalities and artificial intelligence, a debate has emerged concerning the replacement of physical presence and even the very existence and purpose of the professor.

### 3. Philosophical notes on the concept of identity from a relational perspective

The notions of sameness and alterity are closely tied to the very concept of identity. Paradoxically, these same notions occupy a central place in the thought and work of the Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, although in a very different, even nearly opposite, sense.

Identity refers to how individuals answer the question of who they are. And the answer is formed from a system of shared meanings. It is, therefore, the self-definition or self-referential idea one has of oneself, constructed on the basis of qualities, values, characteristics, and traits that one recognizes as one's own. "Every process of identity construction begins with the need for self-reflection, sameness, which refers to the image or representation of a self that allows us to say 'I am this'" (Guerrero, 2002, p.101). This condition is essential for developing a sense of belonging and affiliation. However, to understand the ultimate and complete meaning of identity, it is indispensable to transcend from sameness to alterity. Self-recognition inevitably requires the existence of an *alter ego*, an Other who recognizes you as such.

Identity is not constructed in a vacuum, but in a relational situation, in a continuous dialectic of alterity (...) Just like sameness, otherness is consubstantial to the construction of identity, since identity is only possible in alterity. (Guerrero, 2002, p.102).

Levinas makes a very particular use and interpretation of the term identity:

To be oneself is [...] to have identity as content. The self is not a being that always remains the same, but the being whose very existence consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity through all that happens to it. It is identity par excellence, the original work of identification [...] The I remains identical even in its alterations. (Levinas, 1977, p.60).

From the Levinasian perspective, the alterity of the Other has primacy in the constitution of the self. Therefore, between the Self and the Other there is always a subordination of the former to the latter. "Ipseity within passive identity without *arche* is hostage. The term Self means *here I am*, answering for everything and everyone" (Levinas, 2011, p.183). Thus, he establishes a frontal contradiction between the self and the Other and creates an irreconcilable tension between identity and alterity. For him, "the identity of the self presents no dialectic with alterity, for the self is unalterable, closed in on itself, incapable of communicating with what is other" (García-Ruiz, 2013, p.117).

The issue of identity, and by extension teaching identity, has been addressed from different positions and theoretical approaches, each emphasizing particular dimensions that influence its construction and definition. In this work, we adopt a relational and ethical approach. From a relational orientation, identities are understood "not as immutable and ahistorical essences, but as social and dialectical constructions, because identities change, constantly transform, and are loaded with historicity" (Guerrero, 2002, p.101). Identity can never be unique nor imposed. On the contrary, identities are always multiple, differentiated, and subject at all times to change, contingency, and transience. Along similar lines, Morin (2003) states: "Each individual lives and experiences themselves as a singular subject, and this singular subjectivity is what makes each person different from the other. This difference is common to all" (p.66). At the opposite end of this proposal lies an essentialist perspective, in which identity is conceived as a supra-historical, metaphysical essence, a kind of inexorable and immovable destiny that we are obliged to remain faithful to.

Teaching is an endeavor necessarily carried out in time and space. What we are, both as human beings and as professors, can only be understood from the sociohistorical reality we have lived, which inevitably shapes our lives and our teaching practice. The concrete and situational reality of individuals is an indispensable condition for discussing the pedagogy of alterity (Ortega & Romero, 2022). Teaching identity cannot be understood without turning to one's life history; a personal history not predetermined but constructed over time through the experiences we have lived.

Throughout our life trajectory, identity is shaped, reshaped, and can even be transformed. If a professor had an identity that characterized them at the beginning of their teaching career, it is very likely to have little to do with the teacher they become after several decades of professional activity. Personal identity, as part of human existence, cannot be understood outside of time and space. The unavoidable passage of time is a consubstantial condition in the shaping of history and becomes a determining element of both personal and professional identities. At this point, it is relevant to mention Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity. For him, we constitute ourselves as persons thanks to our narrative capacity. In this sense, narration is part of our human condition, and the stories we live and tell shape and transform us. In his work *Oneself as Another* (1996), he makes an interesting distinction "between *idem* and *ipse*. *Idem* refers to fixed identity, whereas *ipse* refers to a changing identity mediated by the dynamism of narration" (Moreno & Vila, 2022, p.129).

#### 4. From Universal Professional Ethics to Responsive and Singular Ethics

From an ethics understood as professional deontology, values establish how professors ought to be and how they should behave morally in their professional performance and as members of a particular collective. It is a prescriptive morality that dictates the code of what must be done in order to be a good professional. For deontological moralities, inspired by Kantian ethics, "being professionally ethical implies assuming an institutional and social commitment, fulfilling contractual obligations, and being fair in one's assessment of others" (Rodríguez, 2003, p.83).

Some theoretical proposals (Cortina, 2013; Hirsch & Pérez-Castro, 2019) have sought to define the *intrinsic good* of teaching as a profession and the social function it must fulfill. Ethics understood in this way serves only as a form of moral legitimization that validates a criterion of practical rationality based on utility and efficiency. However, ethics cannot be reduced to a normative morality or a manual of good practices. A responsible attitude is more than the mere fulfillment of a code. What is interesting is not external obligation, but the internal response expressed as a sincere and honest predisposition of the individual to act in accordance with the good. Thus, ethics with a stronger humanistic foundation and less technical-legal emphasis.

Responsibility should not be understood only as the public expression of the consequences or effects of our actions and omissions for ourselves and for others. It also demands, as its own, the close-range stance of the person who takes charge of what they have carried out (González-Arnaiz, 2021, p.83).

We therefore distance ourselves from that notion of universal identity in which professional ethics plays the leading role, in order to promote a different ethics, an ethics of singularities that should guide the discourses and educational practices in which situations occur that are, by definition, unique, and interventions that are, by definition, unrepeatable. It is essential to recognize the role played by the profession as a space in which a responsible attitude is developed. "To educate, also at the university level, requires, first, *stepping outside oneself*, seeing the world from the experience of the Other. And second, it requires a responsible response to the demands of the Other" (Ortega, 2012, p.64). University professors have tended to pay more attention to what they must teach than to the person of the student in front of them, the one they must teach.

University professors must acknowledge the context, often contradictory and ambiguous, in which their professional action occurs, and exercise critique and denunciation of what ought not to be. However, most of the time, far from being an instrument of vigilance and resistance, they become legitimizers of arbitrary power (Ortega & Romero, 2019). By acting in this way, faculty deny the political and ethical projection inherent in all educational action and betray the very essence of their social mandate. The result is the existence of a university that is blind and mute, indifferent to what is happening around it and unmoved in the face of current events and the injustices that surround it.

#### 5. Theoretical Formulations of Levinas Related to Teaching Practice

Although Levinas never intended to make education a subject of study, his thought represents an inexhaustible vein for deepening education from a novel perspective. This explains why, in recent years, his work has received considerable and growing attention from educators and philosophers of education. Within Levinas's

theoretical formulations, it is possible to extract some reflections specifically related to the pedagogical work of the professor. His idea of "Teacher," especially in his work *Totality and Infinity* (1977), deserves particular attention. However, despite the growing interest aroused by Levinas's thought and work in educational theory and practice, little attention has been paid to the fact that he was, for more than thirty years, the director of a teacher training school, the École Normale Israélite, where he also taught classes for more than forty years. Ann Chinnery (2010) has examined in depth what his teaching practice and interactions with students were like.

Levinas helps us understand that who I am is always already the result of a teaching (Strhan, 2007). His conception of teaching carries with it the idea of transcendence and revelation, understood as something that comes from outside and is always exercised without manipulation or violence. Teaching comes from the exterior, and the Other "brings me more than I contain" (Levinas, 1977, p.75). In this same sense, Joldersma (2016) uses the metaphors of exteriority and light to explain this Levinasian idea of the teacher as transcendent.

Another distinctly Levinasian notion with significant educational resonance is *subjectivity* understood as infinite responsibility. "The face of the Other signifies for me an irrecusable responsibility that precedes any free consent, any pact, any contract" (Levinas, 2011, p.150). The teacher must ensure that the student assumes, in practice, this "ethical tension" implied in having to take responsibility for the Other, not as an idea of the good but as a way of life expressed in unconditional hospitality and care (Castillo-López, 2024). This is the true meaning of ethical conduct: having to answer for the Other and doing so through compassion. The professor takes responsibility for the Other through listening and respect as forms of *proximity and recognition*. "The educational process begins with the mutual acceptance of teacher and student. Without recognition of the Other and commitment to them, there is no education" (Ortega, 2004, pp.11-12).

Levinas defends the priority of *heteronomy* over autonomy, that is, the dependence and subjection of the Self to the Other. This idea calls into question the notion of freedom in education derived from autonomy. Kantian freedom versus Levinasian responsibility (Strhan, 2009). Teaching must be understood more as an act of responsibility toward the Other than as a technical and instrumental act based on the rationality of knowledge. Strangely, most professors do not seem to perceive how difficult their work as educators becomes within a paradigm that turns them into mere executors of decisions made by authorities far removed from the reality of each student, nor do they show signs of discomfort in the face of such a situation.

In recent decades, approaches such as constructivism have shifted education toward a more student- and learning-centered understanding, advocating for the disappearance of teaching and undervaluing the role of the teacher. However, the valid alternative is not the elimination of teaching in favor of learning. "It is necessary to opt for a different conception of teaching, a non-egological approach to education whose objective is to make the student's subjectivity possible" (Biesta, 2016, p.374). From this perspective, the teacher must help the student become a subject in their own right, respecting their uniqueness.

For Levinas, every person is a unique *singularity*, and we are irreplaceable in our responsibility for the Other (Winter, 2011). For him, "the educational relationship is understood as an unrepeatable intersubjective relationship in which the student is the unique Other for the teacher, and the teacher is the unique Other for the student" (Romero & Ortega, 2024, p.175). Levinasian education is opposed to any possible generalization, because it cannot evade singularity as an essential characteristic. From this perspective, education is always a risky and uncertain adventure, because where there is education, there is risk (Biesta, 2017). However, there currently exists an almost pathological obsession with reducing the uncertainty inherent in educational action through the "supposed control" of variables that influence educational processes (Biesta, 2009). "Not knowing" is a constitutive act of alterity. It is necessary "to rethink the need for the educational value of not knowing and to create spaces that make possible learning from the unexpected" (Zembylas, 2005, p.139). Professors must stop hiding behind their mastery of knowledge and assume the risk and unpredictability involved in taking responsibility for the Other from a place of vulnerability.

For Levinas, interhuman relationships must be grounded in encounter and gratuity. Thus, education understood as *donation and offering* is another pedagogical derivation of Levinasian ethics. The experience of being taught by someone, of receiving the gift of teaching, is a unique experience. Educational *giving* is a gratuitous and selfless *gift*. "It involves understanding and 'doing' education as an ethical act of recognition and hospitality, a taking responsibility for the Other with everything" (Ortega, 2004, p.26). And this necessarily entails the rejection of any form of power. "Between educator and learner there is no power. Power turns asymmetry into possession and oppression, the educator into master, and the learner into slave" (Mèlich, 1998, p.149).

True education fosters the encounter not between the one who knows and the one who does not know, in a mere exercise of knowledge transfer, but the encounter of one who knows and feels responsible for the Other due to their situation of particular vulnerability and alterity. This other way of understanding teaching is based on a direct critique of metaphysical approaches that treat students as objects of knowledge and reinforce the ego of the teacher (Säfström, 2003).

The pedagogical experience of encounter requires the establishment of a genuine educational dialogue that respects the alterity of the Other. Levinasian dialogue develops according to the ethics of responsibility. The first requirement for this dialogue is absolute respect for the subjectivity of the Other, exemplified in the expression "Thou shalt not kill," which means not reducing the Other to a totality. The second requirement of dialogue, for Levinas, is responsibility toward the Other. While for Buber dialogue is based on the "I-Thou" relationship and seeks inclusion, for Levinas the essential element is difference and alterity as the basis of dialogue.

Moreover, *testimony* is an unavoidable part of being a professor and another pedagogical derivation that can be found in Levinas. In the Jewish tradition (Rosenzweig, Levinas, Levi, Grossman), testimony occupies a central place as proof of the truth of an event, having been witnessed firsthand. The importance of testimony and of learning through direct experience has been addressed by several authors (González, 2023; Joldersma, 2011; Standish, 2020; Suissa, 2016). The educational task consists in making the unimaginable imaginable so that the testimony of victims acquires truth and legitimacy. The teacher is the one who bears witness, and the student is the one who receives it. For testimony to be sincere, there must be a respectful relationship and an atmosphere of trust. The teacher is not an automaton limited to transmitting knowledge but someone who, from their life experience, conveys a concrete and unique way of being and relating to others. The professor's testimony is an indispensable resource for teaching ethical values. "The best teaching is our testimony, and our way of teaching brings our lifestyle into the classroom" (Ortega & Romero, 2019, p.29).

## 6. Teaching in a Different Way: Pedagogy of Alterity and Professor Identity

This work is based on Levinasian ethics and anthropology as inspiring sources for a new pedagogical discourse and educational praxis in the field of moral education, which we have termed the *pedagogy of alterity*. This new pedagogy is inspired by a relational (non-metaphysical) anthropology and by a material ethics, represented by Schopenhauer, the philosophers of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, and specifically Levinas. The pedagogy of alterity emerges as a critical response against that ontological education characteristic of Platonic idealism and Kantian rationalism. "Proximity, response, vulnerability, face, and alterity are only some of the terms that replace the good, virtue, reason, and moral reasoning as conditions of the ethical" (Todd, 2003, p.1). This new pedagogy represents an ethical commitment to a different way of teaching that involves the entire educational community and, especially, the faculty.

A series of questions arise when attempting to directly apply Levinas's ethics to teaching practice: Can professors do something meaningful with Levinas's thought without falling into the temptation of turning his ethics into a recipe manual for practice? What knowledge, skills, and values would professors need in order to learn to enact Levinasian pedagogy? What experiences do we need to incorporate into training programs so that faculty may truly educate from responsibility and compassion, not in the Abstract, but in their daily interactions with students? The pedagogy of alterity is opposed to any kind of prescription or regulation. Ethical response always occurs in an unforeseen way, and this is precisely what explains why it cannot be planned in detail. The most to which the professor can aspire is to "promote an ethical climate that fosters openness to the Other, feelings of affection, and sensitivity and proximity among students" (Ortega and Romero, 2022, p.246).

Although theoretical models of teacher identity centered on the *cognitive* dimension (theories) and on the *technical* dimension (didactics and curricular organization) seek to cultivate theoretical-instructional-instrumental dimensions that are unquestionably valuable and necessary, there is a clear deficit in faculty training programs regarding the *affective-attitudinal-ethical* dimension. This dimension conceives education as an act of love, commitment, respect, acceptance, dialogue, and encounter with the Other. Thus, the relationship between professor and student is an ethical relationship, not only an instructional-technical one. For Esquirol, "every teacher carries within himself a purpose: to accompany the student in the discovery of the things of the world" (2024, p.45). And for such an endeavor, the teacher must possess at least three conditions: the ability to educate with the heart and from the soul; a concern for cultivating the goodness and beauty of others and of the world; and ensuring that all his actions are directed toward non-indifference.

From the pedagogy of alterity, a series of appreciable characteristics are proposed for teaching performance. These are not only attributes related to what the teacher does inside the classroom but also qualities referring to his personal disposition. For example, for Gárate and Ortega (2013), the profile of a good teacher includes being "an expert in humanity, a lover of life" (p.23). This more humanistic conception of teacher identity advocates for better preparing teachers in the emotional, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions. In the same sense, Jordán's (2011) work on the ethical-pedagogical attitudes that characterize good teachers in their daily interactions with students is particularly relevant.

For his part, Pennac (2008) argues that "a good teacher is not shaped solely by a good method but must be complemented by 'love'" (p.250). Students learn from those professors whom they love. Schools, and universities as well, have traditionally been the realm of the cognitive and not the affective. We must work to eliminate from universities all forms of pedagogy of irresponsibility and rigidity (insensitivity, massification, indifference to suffering, ...) and replace them with a pedagogy of love. A good professor is one who is capable of creatively and intelligently integrating head and heart into his pedagogical practices.

Several authors (Carboneau, Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008; Day, 2006; Fried, 2001; Jordan & Codana, 2019) have emphasized the importance of passionate commitment as part of the professors' professional identity. Passion is related to devotion, enthusiasm, and hope. "Teachers exhibit, through who they are and how they act, a passionate commitment to their work. In such circumstances and in the face of such challenges, it is vital that they maintain their passion for teaching" (Day, 2006, pp.20-21). From this it follows that good teaching can never be reduced to a matter of pure pedagogical technique or simple scientific competence.

## 7. Final Considerations

This work has evidenced the identity crisis experienced by university professors and the real possibility of redirecting their discourses and teaching practices by taking the pedagogy of alterity as a reference. It concludes by offering some suggestions that may help reposition certain features of the university professor's identity:

1. In today's world, it is imperative to practice a pedagogy of *time* and *space*. This means helping to form professors who recognize the era in which they live, interpret it, are able to bring it into the classroom, and seek to transform it regardless of whether they teach accounting, history, or quantum physics.
2. A primary requirement of the pedagogy of alterity is to center educational action on a concrete subject, in a specific *circumstance*, because each educational proposal and response necessarily takes place within the singularity of each individual and in a likewise singular circumstance. This implies that professors must seek ways to know their students; beyond the subject they teach, they must develop "strategies," modes, and actions to enter the world of the Other, and, once they achieve this, modify or incorporate that knowledge into what they had planned to do in the classroom.
3. The pedagogy of alterity adds a highly complex component when it maintains that openness to the Other is the very source of *ethical responsibility*. In an educational context, ethical responsibility is like peeling an onion: one moves from the outer layers to the center—meeting an academic calendar; preparing a course syllabus; evaluating with transparency and fairness. While fulfilling these academic duties, one moves to another plane, the relational one: university professors become responsible for the Other when they take charge of their students; when they know who they are and what their circumstances are; when they help them, welcome them, and feel compassion for him, for her, for them.
4. To educate in a university classroom is to understand that the classroom is a place of encounter, a space of dialogue. A *sacred* place, in Levinas's words, where a climate of trust makes the *recognition* of Others possible. Professors can create an environment that privileges tolerance, acceptance, and empathy through conversation. In this sense, dialogue becomes a pedagogical tool, and at the same time, the best vehicle for recognizing the Other is narrative, the story that captures testimony, personal history, and family and contextual trajectory.

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