



# The conception of the English teacher trainer's role in Uruguay

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Fourth grade English Teaching Training course

Language IV

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Year 2020

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## **Introduction**

I have chosen to develop the current academic research inquiring the requirements and tests that most trainees face during the four or more years during the English teacher's training course in Uruguay.

I want to deepen my knowledge on this interesting and actual topic and find different sources to inform the reader about the English career's role which involves not only attending to classes and nothing else, but also studying at home.

I feel identified with this research because only students and graduate teachers know how difficult it is to get a degree. Students have to manage their time and sometimes it is very difficult, taking into account that they need to make their lesson plans, looking for materials to engage difficult students and trying to make classes more interesting. In addition to this, obtaining the degree implies a lot of effort and it is a time-consuming career.

There is a lack of knowledge about the trainee's role. Teacher's formation is deeper than obtaining an international exam, it requires time, effort, sacrifice, attending classes while being evaluated by teachers.

## Theoretical framework

English teaching plays an important role within globalization. Uruguay's education policy emphasizes the teaching and learning of English at school, High school and tertiary level. The teacher's role is defined by Kulman (2010) as:

"a thinker, a stimulator, a challenger, a facilitator, a risk taker, at times a lecturer, and often a storyteller too. Teachers are jugglers, timekeepers, and, when necessary, someone who keeps all the ducks in a row. It is that indefinable innerself that has the passion, the commitment, to make a difference in the classroom and wherever else one teaches. A teacher needs to know in order to teach, such as those theories of child and teenager's development, strategies for classroom management and strategies for motivating students. Classroom interaction between students and teachers is at the heart of the teaching/learning process." (pg 109)

In the teaching career, there are specific subjects that are needed. For instance, English language, Phonetics, Literature, Didactics, Culture and some subjects such as Psychology, Pedagogy, Sociology, etc. that are taught for all teaching careers. Those are crucial, and as students are progressing, each year is more challenging and demanding. In the second year students have to deliver some classes during the year with the guidance of the supporting teacher, on the third grade, they have to deliver classes as much as they can, and in fourth grade they are in charge of a group during all the year with no supporting teacher.

During those three years, apart from delivering classes, they have a final exam that is compulsory and if it is failed, the student has to take the course again the following year.

There is a positive aspect of the teaching career in Uruguay, is that teacher appraisal is established. The approach to teacher appraisal has some valuable aspects. First, in both cases, an appraisal conducted by inspectors and school leaders, teachers are given an opportunity to establish a professional dialogue about their practices, which grants them the opportunity to identify areas for improvement and for our teaching career, we have the opportunity to have a supporting teacher that guides them through the teaching career and when they deliver classes. Second, albeit limited, the teacher status provides some

guidance in terms of the aspects teacher appraisal should cover. Third, a key strength of teacher appraisal in Uruguay is that the process typically includes assessing actual teaching practices in the classroom. Fourth, teacher appraisal processes are school-based and therefore take good account of the context faced by each teacher. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD, 2016, Summary).

## Context

There are different places to study a teaching career: “the Educational Council (CFE) manages teacher preparation (teaching career). These include the Normal Institutes (II.NN.) and the English Teaching Institute for English career (IFDs) to prepare teachers for primary schools, the Teacher’s institute Artigas (IPA) and the Regional’s Teaching centres (CERPs) to prepare teachers for secondary schools, and the Normal Institute of Technical Teaching (INET) to prepare teachers for the technical schools. An additional council, the Central Council (CODICEN), is responsible for general oversight of public education and education policy” (Kaisen, 2017)

In spite of the recent efforts by the Uruguayan government to increase the status of teaching through higher teacher salaries, a number of factors limit the professionalism of teachers. The Uruguayan education system lacks a national framework of teacher competencies. The conception of teacher employment in Uruguay, whereby basic compensation is associated essentially to the teacher’s teaching load, is also a source of concern as it does not provide recognition to activities other than teaching. Teacher recruitment is highly inefficient while teacher compensation is unstructured. Teacher In spite of the recent efforts by the Uruguayan government to increase the status of

teaching through higher teacher salaries, a number of factors limit the professionalism of teachers. The Uruguayan education system lacks a national framework of teacher competencies. The conception of teacher employment in Uruguay, whereby basic compensation is associated essentially to the teacher’s teaching load, is also a source of concern as it does not provide recognition to activities other than teaching. Teacher recruitment is highly inefficient while

teacher compensation is unstructured. Teacher appraisal, while established, is limited in its ability to provide teachers with useful feedback for their development. Moreover, participation in professional developments seems to be low. As a result, there is a need to strengthen the professionalism of teachers. This should involve developing a competency framework for the teaching profession, reconceptualising teacher employment to account for all activities performed by teachers, creating a career structure for teachers associated with a teacher certification process, rethinking the system for the recruitment and deployment of teachers. Considering the high level of centralisation of decision-making in Uruguay, the school inspections and the English PADs (articulated teacher, he / she are the facilitators for communication to the inspectors) constitute a crucial link between the councils at the central level and schools and principals across the country. However, the Uruguayan model of school inspection is limited in the extent to which it supports school development. Inspectors tend to focus more on control and evaluations are at individual level rather than covering the school as a whole. A priority for policy development is therefore strengthening the capacity of the school inspection to contribute to school improvement. In the long-run, Uruguay should consider the introduction of a comprehensive school evaluation process. School evaluation will need to contribute towards school improvement and not simply be an exercise in compliancy.

Furthermore, while school leaders benefit from an established employment framework their potential for pedagogical leadership is not sufficiently recognised. As part of its school leadership development strategy, Uruguay should consolidate a competency framework for school leaders; re-evaluate current levels of remuneration; improve the quality of school leader preparation; provide greater opportunities for professional development and broaden the criteria for the selection of school leaders.

The expansion of secondary education faces a range of constraints, particularly in technical-professional programmes. These include lack or inadequate infrastructure, limited equipment and lack of qualified teachers. An additional major constraint is the inadequacy of the diversity of offers in secondary education to accommodate the interests and characteristics of students. Furthermore, the provision of services for special needs students is

underdeveloped in Uruguay. These are mostly provided in special schools, which exist only at the primary education level. There are possibly large numbers of disabled and special needs children who are not in any school, special or mainstream, and receiving little or no useful education in their own homes. Overall, there is a low level capacity of the system to provide inclusive or integrated education.

The Uruguayan education system has a complex and rather inefficient system of teacher recruitment and deployment. First, the fully centralised approach (with no involvement of individual schools) raises concerns about whether schools have the teachers that fit their particular needs. Second, the selection processes might be based in limited criteria that might bear little relationship to the qualities needed to be an effective teacher. Third, the recruitment and deployment of teachers raise equity concerns. As a result of the processes established, teachers with greater seniority and very good records of quality teaching will be best positioned in both the registry of interim teachers (which defines priority access to non-tenured posts/hours) and the competitions to reach tenure. Since they then express their preferences for the schools at which to teach, more experienced and higher quality teachers are more likely to end up teaching at higher prestige, more advantaged and urban schools. Fourth, the teacher allocation system generates a great degree of instability both in schools and among teachers, particularly in secondary schools. For primary teachers the system provides greater stability as once tenured is obtained at a school, the teacher may remain there for as long as he or she chooses to.

However, for secondary teachers the situation is much more complex as they must bid every year for hours available in the school in which they wish to teach. At the same time, each year each school must open its teaching hours for competition through the reallocation system, requiring all of its tenured teachers to reapply. The annual re-opening of the allocation of all teaching hours in secondary education causes instability both for the school, as it faces difficulties in building a stable teaching body, but also for the teachers who find themselves in a continuous state of uncertainty. Fifth, the system involves high administrative costs.

## **Analysis**

A misconception about the teacher's and trainee role is believed in Uruguay, it is thought that an English teacher and a student's trainee only delivers the class and does not prepare anything at home, they think that with only an international exam a person can deliver classes. They do not know that for becoming a teacher there is a four years' preparation career. Teachers need strategies such as classroom management for motivating students apart from getting their English teaching degree and continuous preparation. They may just assume that teachers have taken lots of classes about methods and the content of what they teach it is enough. Although once the English teachers have gotten their degree or while they are studying, their practices and knowledge can be improved by attending different courses over the country virtually or attending to some courses.

A positive aspect of the teaching career in Uruguay is that teacher appraisal is established. The approach to teacher appraisal has some valuable aspects. First, both in the cases of an appraisal conducted by inspectors and school principals, teachers are given an opportunity to establish a professional dialogue about their practices, which grants them the opportunity to identify areas for improvement. Second, albeit limited, the teacher statute provides some guidance in terms of the aspects teacher appraisal should cover. Third, a key strength of teacher appraisal in Uruguay is that the process typically includes assessing actual teaching practices in the classroom. Fourth, teacher appraisal processes are school-based and therefore take good account of the context faced by each teacher. However, teacher performance appraisal is limited in a variety of ways.

First, the appraisal conducted by inspectors, which is a process with high-stakes for teachers (e.g. impacts competitions to obtain tenure), is also expected to achieve a developmental function and inform the improvement of the teacher's practices.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to achieve the developmental function of teacher appraisal through a high-stakes process. Second, it appears that the approach inspectors follow

in the appraisal process is often mechanistic and compliance-based with a focus on assigning a score to each teacher. Appraisal criteria seem to centre on formal aspects such as punctuality rather than on actual teaching competencies. The appraisal criteria used are rather limited in spite of the tradition of classroom observation. This also relates to the lack of a national framework of teaching competencies. Third, the provision of professional development appears not systematically linked to teacher appraisal (OECD, 2016)

On the other hand, according to Bogliaccini, A; Rodriguez, F (2015), the mechanism for assigning teachers to schools leads to the segmentation in the distribution of teachers based on the sociocultural context of the respective schools, which reinforces inequalities of origin among the students. Second, the mechanism for assigning students to schools leads to homogeneity in the student body of schools with favourable conditions, and heterogeneity in the student body of schools with average, unfavourable and very unfavourable conditions.

According to Kuhlman (2010) “some people might even wonder if teachers would be better off just doing their student teaching practicum, or simply taking an examination and not taking coursework at all, since becoming a teacher is much more complicated than that”. This author is at some point in accordance with the previous authors because as Bogliaccini and Rodriguez say, the mechanism of teaching in some parts reinforces inequalities of origin among students. However, she does not mention in her article the teacher appraisal. This aspect is very important in our student’s trainer’s career because when we do an activity and we understand it, accomplish it or make our best effort, our teachers recognise this and they encourage us to continue and we feel proud about our learning.

## **Conclusion**

As I have analysed previously, being an English teacher is an approach totally different from being a doctor because a teacher has a pedagogic and techniques that, for example, a doctor does not have because of the fact that a teacher knows about how to teach, how to know about learning teaching, how to teach from different levels. There is not knowledge about our formation as future English teachers. It is believed that trainees do not study enough. On the other hand, teacher appraisal is one aspect that helps to encourage graduate teachers and trainees to continue studies or acquire new knowledge and actual education theories.

Only trainee students and teachers know how difficult it is to manage our time, taking into account what is needed to make the lesson plans, spend time correcting students' activities at home, looking at materials to engage difficult students and trying to make our classes more interesting. In addition to this, obtaining the degree implies a lot of effort and time-consuming and you have to spend hours studying and money in materials such as photocopies, printed material and Internet connection.

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Webgraphy

[www.ces.edu.uy](http://www.ces.edu.uy)

