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Teacher Uneasiness and Workplace Learning in Social Sciences: Towards a Critical Inquiry from Teachers' Voices

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Abstract: The educational parameters of neoliberal schools have transformed traditional social expectations about teachers. As some authors have suggested, "teacher uneasiness" is an appropriate category of analysis to understand and interpret the effects that such expectations can have on teachers' professional identity. In this research, autoethnography was specifically chosen as an investigative and, at the same time, formative modality, ideal for determining the way in which a Social Sciences teacher in Spanish secondary education experiences his own uneasiness. According to the information in the teacher/researcher's diary, collected during fieldwork carried out over two years, and processed by content analysis, this phenomenon can be generated by causes that are still unnoticed in the existing literature. Specifically, we could identify up to four subcategories from the data itself: *the weight of tradition; daily overexertion; no time;* and *resignation after wear and tear.* We conclude with vindications both of the theoretical category used, and of the usefulness of autoethnography in this type of empirical project. In any case, we also recommend new research that allows us to compare and expand the results and conclusions obtained herein.

Keywords: teacher uneasiness; teaching; Social Sciences; workplace learning; narrative methodologies; research experience

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1. Introduction

> *"What can be expected from teachers? Are they in a position to assume the responsibility of leading the process of change that is demanded in education today, in the face of a society that is taking on a different configuration in such a dizzying and worrying way?"* [1] (p. 173).

School funding has a direct impact on the teaching profession and, in times of economic crisis, there is an increase in the precariousness of teachers' jobs [1–5]. In parallel with this, the educational practices that currently have the greatest impact on the way teaching is approached are specifically those encompassed under the phenomenon of *"accountability"* [6,7], which *"de-professionalise and technicalise the teaching profession"* [8] (p. 135). This educational phenomenon involves compliance with a series of new standards and competencies, which *"distracts teachers and distorts notions about their profession"* [9] (p. 185). We are talking about a characteristic symptom of neoliberal schools [10–13].

Within the new school parameters, teachers have to assume a series of unprecedented roles: *"social worker, psychologist, police officer, doctor, priest, caregiver, judge, mediator, substitute parent, etc."* [1] (p. 176). Together with these roles, we must mention other essential functions, such as ensuring inclusive education [14]. This overload of expectations is especially harmful when there is a strong professional commitment [15], or special care is required in the performance of these functions, whether innovative or not, because, as Jiménez Abad commented, just as vocation *"can be a source of motivation, it is also a source of*

possible frustration when there is some kind of serious setback or when the illusion invested in the task is not appreciated or does not correspond to it. The more involved you are, the more vulnerable you are" [1] (p. 178). To make the situation even worse, we find an *"evident crisis of the figure of the teacher as an existential reference of meaning"* [16] (pp. 99–100) in a socio-cultural context, in which the resolution of many problems not solved by other social actors (bad hygiene and eating habits, drug addiction, alcohol consumption, lack of manners, lack of social commitment, sex education, etc.) is automatically assigned to teachers [1] (pp. 176–177).

One of the most interesting categories to describe the status of teachers in recent decades is that of *"teacher well-being,"* reflecting a supposedly harmonious, rewarding, and stimulating relationship between personal aspects, including family demands [17], and the circumstances around teaching [18–24]. However, the experience of undesirable situations, such as job insecurity or accountability, is a compelling reason to develop research focusing on its opposite concept: *teacher uneasiness*.

According to the literature [25–31], *teacher uneasiness* represents the experience or suffering of a set of negative effects by teachers, produced by circumstances of a very different nature (work-related, psychological, social, cultural, etc.) and beyond their control. Among these circumstances, Esteve highlighted, in particular, *"the problems related to the social consideration of their work, the radical criticism of their teaching models and the climate surrounding the school institution, particularly with regard to their relations with administrators,"* while the main consequence of all this would correspond to *"a real identity crisis in which teachers question the meaning of their own work, and even themselves"* [27] (p. 35).

Within this general result, however, a fairly broad symptomatology can develop [27] (pp. 80–81): feelings of bewilderment and dissatisfaction with the real problems of teaching practice, in open contradiction with the ideal image of teaching that teachers would like to create; development of inhibition as a way of cutting personal involvement in the work being done; requests for transfers as a way of escaping from conflictive situations; desire to leave teaching (realised or not); absenteeism from work as a way of escaping from conflictive situations; desire to leave teaching (realised or not); absenteeism as a mechanism to cut accumulated tension; exhaustion or permanent physical tiredness; anxiety as a trait or anxiety of expectation; depreciation of the self and self-blame for the inability to improve teaching; stress; reactive neurosis; and depressions, etc.

The studies collected in issue 2 of the Italian journal *Psicologia della Salute* [32] reflect the number of tensions from which teacher distress can be analysed: teachers' personality traits and burnout [33]; professional demands and teaching commitment [34,35]; family behaviour and teacher satisfaction [36]; or, in general, the various contextual factors that can condition the development of this professional activity [37]. In any case, works such as Berger's [38] show that some of these concerns existed long before the triumph of neoliberalism.

The need to continue working in this thematic line today coincides, methodologically speaking, with the rise of narrative research, understood as any type of study that integrates a narrative and self-training component [39]. Works such as those by Rivera García [40] or Monetti [41], in which the authors used autoethnography to reflect on their respective teaching careers, are good examples of the potential of this type of methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of the practice of teaching today. In the same way, the study by Leal da Costa and Sarmento [42] showed the usefulness of this type of approach to explore the interactions between teachers and students, in order to understand the processes of identity reconfiguration.

In recent years, a group of American authors have coalesced in the defence of the autoethnographic method—in their case, from research on the experiences of pre-service teachers [43–45]. Within this field, these researchers have directly opted for *"self-study"* as a platform on which to build *"co/autoethnographic self-study"* processes [46,47].

In contrast to the variety of these types of contributions, however, there is a scarcity of narrative research focusing specifically on the problems that active and innovative teachers encounter when carrying out their work and which, in some way, may contribute to the

emergence of teacher uneasiness [48,49]. Precisely for this reason, the main objective of this paper, which is part of a broader research project, was to explore the concept of *teacher uneasiness*, in relation to both its causes and its impact on professional identity, based on the direct experience of one of the authors as a secondary school teacher. This direct and in-depth look at current teaching practices constitutes an original and unique component with regards to many others' research on educational innovation [50–54], which are mainly focused on the external analysis of very specific innovative experiences and their effects on learning outcomes. Specifically, the research questions were as follows:

- What are the reasons for teacher discomfort in our case study?
- Do the necessary working conditions exist in our case study for teachers to be able to cope with the educational changes required today?
- What effects does innovative teaching have on the identity of the participating teacher?

2. Methodology

2.1. General Characterisation

In order to carry out the PhD project from which this report derives, a case study was chosen as the overall methodological design, where, opting for a verbal discursive approach, the case was made up of all of the converging discourses in the Geography and History classes, in Spanish secondary education, of one of the authors of this work. This structure is ideal for the deconstruction of didactic processes and, in general, for any *"research that teachers do for themselves"* [55] (p. 4).

The choice of this case study was due to several reasons, mainly the following: (1) It was set in a discursive and practical context—in this case, a private school in the city of Seville, whose predominant school culture itself required in-depth analysis; (2) It was undergoing a strong epistemological crisis as a result of the didactic transformations developed in recent years; (3) It was a professional environment with plenty of difficulties and contradictions, which had to be understood before it could be subjected to any kind of proposal for improvement.

The corpus compiled during the fieldwork brought together a total of 12 texts from four different discursive fields: the legislative framework, the school, the Social Sciences Department, and the classroom (see Table 1). The participants in the research belonged to the last of these contexts, a teacher/researcher together with 44 students from the four years of ESO, forming a convenience sample. All of them were conceived as educational agents—not only passive, receivers, and reproducers of certain pro-innovation discourses, but also active and capable, directly or indirectly, of interpreting and generating changes in the way teaching/learning processes are approached [56], through the production of their own discourses.

Table 1. Composition and organisation of the research corpus.

Sub-Corpora	Text
Spanish and Andalusian education policies	(1) Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre.
	(2) Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre.
	(3) Orden ECD/65/2015, de 21 de enero.
	(4) Decreto 111/2016, de 14 de junio.
School	(5) Orden de 14 de julio de 2016.
	(6) School Educational Project.
	(7) School Regulation on Organisation and Operation.
Department of Social Sciences	(8) Compilation of materials on the School's methodology.
	(9) Geography and History subject guides for students.
	(10) Annual reports for the academic years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019.
Geography and History classes	(11) Interviews with 44 students (11–15 years old).
	(12) Teacher/researcher's diary.

2.2. Methods, Techniques, and Instruments

To develop this case study, the methods of data collection and analysis chosen were autoethnography and (auto)critical discourse analysis, both applied in line with the parameters of Grounded Theory [57]. Autoethnography, on which we focus here, was conceived, at the same time, as an adequate procedure to overcome some of the theoretical-methodological shortcomings detected in the literature, thanks to its great narrative-reflexive potential [58–62]; a research strategy that was perfectly compatible with the structure of the case study and with the method of critical discourse analysis; and, finally, a didactic strategy that would ultimately allow for a pedagogical awareness of a reality for which the autoethnographer himself was partly responsible.

On the other hand, critical discourse analysis would determine the nature of several key aspects of the research: an eminently discursive theoretical–methodological positioning, contrary to any attempt to dissociate discourses and practices [63], or texts and contexts; a predominant interest in the use of verbal language, understood as the main means of interaction and construction of people's reality and their corresponding intentions [64–66]; the deconstructive and *glocal* perspective of the research, centred on the possibility of understanding the existing regimes of meaning based on a very specific case study; the structure of the overall analytical procedure itself [67], as will be seen in the following subsection; and, finally, constituting one of the main contributions of the research, a stance that is not only critical of socio-cultural reality, but also self-critical reality, insofar as part of the critically analysed discourses was produced by one of the researchers himself.

This methodological approach was directly inspired by previous research and teaching experiences. In particular, it is worth highlighting the use of techniques applicable to both quantitative and qualitative data, both deductive and inductive in nature, always taking into account the demands of the object of study and its particular discursive-verbal approach (see Table 2). The combination of all these methodological elements was key to knowing and understanding the way in which the participants experienced the school reality, as well as the interactions that they have established among themselves.

Table 2. Relationship between the methods, techniques, and instruments used in this research.

Methods	Data Collection Techniques	Analysis Techniques	Instruments
Autoethnography	Participant observation		Teacher/researcher's diary
	Structured interview		Interview script
(Self)critical discourse analysis		Pre-analysis	
		Lexicometric analysis	MAXQDA and Sketch Engine
		Content analysis	Mixed category system
		Linguistic analysis	

2.3. The Teacher/Researcher's Diary

Among all of the methodological elements of this research, we must highlight, on this occasion, the use of the teacher/researcher's diary, an instrument conceived as a self-report [68] (p. 54) or *"narrative documentation"* [69,70]. We are talking about a descriptive, reflective, continuous, and systematic record of observations, perceptions, and personal analyses, always referring to the facts, attitudes, and resources present or intervening in the Geography and History classes. Thus, for example, the diary collected eventual comments on a series of school productions (exams, blogs, notebooks, projects, etc.) and everyday tools: teaching resources (digital book, interactive tools, presentations, videos, etc.); monthly activity circulars; social networks; homework diary; and timetables, etc.

All of this justifies the suitability of the diary format as an instrument for reflecting a discourse of its own in the face of all the other discourses that converged in the Geography and History classes. In fact, the document represents a reflective exercise that not only accompanied the actions carried out during the very moment they took place, but also proposed them and gave them meaning. In fact, many of the discursive practices developed in the classroom have their origin in this same exercise. Certain comments even suggest a cathartic or, at the very least, therapeutic purpose of this research instrument.

Like the fieldwork, the diary began in October 2017, after the teacher/researcher had completed his first year of work at the school, and ended in June 2019, when he resigned from his post. The thoughts, memories, observations, intentions, and feelings collected during this time are abundant and varied. This makes the discursive topics of the diary the main source of information for deconstructing the case study, and thus answering the research questions: methodology, school protocols, leadership, curriculum, and teaching collaboration, etc.

There was no criterion for the organisation of the comments in the diary. The order in which they appear is based solely and exclusively on the sequence of events as they occurred. In this sense, the notes taken respond to events set out in turn in different sources: the school calendars for the 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 school years; the school's monthly agenda of activities drawn up by the Management Team; and the teacher/researcher's own classroom programmes (with different variations over the two school years). Taken together, all of the perceptions recorded form an account of what happened, while remaining only a partial and subjective view of a school reality in which the teacher/researcher actively participated.

2.4. Analysis Procedure

The analysis procedure, inspired by the proposals of several authors [53,54], although specifically designed for this research, comprised four complementary phases:

1. Pre-analysis, where the texts of the corpus were characterised in order to discover their heuristic potential in relation to the research objectives;
2. Lexicometric analysis, using techniques based on textual statistics (word count, identification of key segments, recognition of co-texts, etc.), which made it possible to extract previously unnoticed information on frequencies and associations;
3. Content analysis, materialised in a system combining both deductive categories (identified in the theoretical framework) and inductive categories (from the data analysed);
4. Linguistic–interpretative analysis, focusing on the discovery of the semantic networks, conceptual schemes, cultural models, and ideologies present in the texts, based on the identification of the linguistic resources and procedures used.

This paper focuses specifically on the third of these phases, the content analysis, an intermediate moment between the lexicometric exploration and the linguistic–interpretative deconstruction of the different levels of meaning present in the discourses under study. Using Pardo Abril's terms, we can say that the results of this third analytical moment correspond to the textual material necessary to move from *"quantitative salience"* to *"cultural salience"* [54] (p. 122).

In this way, content analysis offered the most appropriate response to the challenge of managing and organising a large and diverse corpus, providing a more complete and elaborated vision of the themes, topics, contexts, and discursive connections than that offered in the pre-analysis phase. To this end, we opted for the construction of a mixed system of categories, defined by the confluence of a series of deductive categories, derived from the theoretical framework of the research, with others of an inductive nature, that is to say, inspired by the meanings contained in the texts analysed.

In practice, this strategy involved the progressive transformation of a first version of the system made up of exclusively theoretical categories (T), passing through another derived from the first readings of the corpus texts, until reaching a definitive version where

some of the original categories were abandoned or replaced by new emerging categories (E), according to the results from the data (see Table 3). In this way, the maintenance of certain theoretical categories was justified on the basis of the verification, in the case study, of the same assumptions identified in the theoretical framework. On the contrary, the emergence of the categories was due to the appearance of a series of attributes specific to the case study, not previously identified in the existing theory.

Table 3. Section of the general category system on which this work is focused.

Category	Code	Subcategory	Code
Teacher uneasiness (T)	TEUN	The weight of tradition (E)	WETRA
		Daily overexertion (E)	DAOV
		No time (E)	NOTI
		Resignation after wear and tear (E)	REWE

As the table above shows, the system of categories developed contemplates two main dimensions or levels: the categories themselves and their corresponding subcategories. On the one hand, the categories represent large thematic constructions that connect the different discursive topics dealt with in each subcategory. On the other hand, the subcategories find their raison d'être in the existence of a set of attributes that, although dispersed in the texts of the corpus, allow each of these topics to be characterised. When developing these topics, one of the most commonly employed strategies is to contrast the different treatments of the same aspect according to the discursive field from which the analysed text fragment originates.

Following the above logic, the denomination of each category basically responds to the thematic grouping of various subcategories, while the titles of each subcategory attempt to represent, as faithfully as possible, the grouping of the respective attributes that make them up. For this purpose, in some cases, expressions are taken from the theoretical framework; in others, from the terms that exist in the analysed texts themselves; and in others, from neologisms formed by the variation of textual terms.

In the following, the results corresponding to the specific objective of this work are presented in two different sections: the first one is dedicated to the central theoretical category, while the following one is dedicated to the three subcategories that emerged from the texts that made up the corpus.

3. Results

The four subcategories identified allowed us to understand the close correspondence between the theoretical category *"teacher uneasiness"*, already defined in the introductory section of this paper, and the practical dimension of our case study. Each of them represents a source or cause of this phenomenon, thanks to a series of topics that are characteristic, although probably not exclusive, to our case.

3.1. The Weight of Tradition

The first subcategory represents the great importance given, in the context of our case study, to certain didactic elements that can be considered traditional, as they are formulas or resources that have been in common use in the school since its origins. The following are the most representative examples of each type of element addressed in the teacher/researcher's diary: contents, materials, and assessment systems. All of them are related to the two main subjects that, within the particular approach of the secondary education stage at our school, are linked to the area of Social Sciences: Geography and History, on the one hand, and History of Art and Music, on the other.

The first example is particularly illustrative of the type of content that abounds in the subjects of Geography and History:

> *"For several weeks, the teachers in the Department have been reworking biographies. We have divided them in such a way that two teachers are doing each historical age. I have had to do the Contemporary Age biographies, with a colleague. The aim is to produce a document with the biographies for each year (although I then divide them up and incorporate them into each topic of the digital book). The Head of Department has asked us to include at least one anecdote in each biography. The problem is that they ask us to include so many things that the sum of the biographies ends up being kilometres long no matter how hard we try to summarise. To make it easier for the kids, I always underline them before putting them in the digital book. Another problem is that each teacher does it in a different way and, when I don't like the way a colleague has written it, I have to redo it..."* (WETRA-12).

As we can see, the request to work on the biographies of historical figures, from a purely conceptual perspective, actually involves three different tasks: (1) The fact of preparing new theoretical content and integrating it into existing content; (2) The need to create strategies to facilitate the memorised study of this new content by students; (3) The responsibility to redo some of the work done by other teachers, when this work lacks sufficient quality. The sum of all these factors makes tradition a source of teacher uneasiness, not necessarily because of the type of learning it represents, but because of the overload of work it imposes when combined with the official curriculum content.

Something similar can be found regarding to the didactic resources that the teacher must use in the same subject. Traditional content and a traditional assessment system (by theoretical exams) require the use of traditional teaching materials. This is shown in the following fragment, where the teacher, from a claim for the own elaboration of resources, expresses his rejection, not only of the type of content he has to work on, but also of the way in which these are presented in the materials he is obliged to use:

> *"The History schemes are prehistoric. They were written years ago, long before I came to the school. However, I am obliged to follow them because they are the source of many exam questions. They are not bad, but they are too aseptic, boring, and overloaded from my point of view. Besides, I think that any technique or resource to summarise or synthesise information is a very subjective thing (...) since I haven't prepared them myself, I don't feel that they are mine. I don't know where they have come from, what the source was, nor what relationship some sections have with others, so it is sometimes difficult for me to find the common thread followed by the person who did them, who, by the way, left the school to go to the public school"* (WETRA-12).

Third, one of the most obvious symptoms of the strong persistence of tradition in our case study, which has already been mentioned, is the assessment system applied in all subjects associated with the Department of Social Sciences. As the following excerpt reveals, there is a clear conflict between the teacher's evaluation culture, consistent with the parameters of personalised and diversity-focused learning, and that of the Department, characterised by a strong emphasis on the examination as an assessment tool: *"The Department's assessment system is too focused on conceptual knowledge and everything revolves around the exam as the main instrument. Personally, I try to assess every effort within the learning process prior to the exam, diversifying the assessment instruments as much as I can"* (WETRA-12).

In any case, the question of assessment seems to have a number of implications that go far beyond the mere design of the system by which its components are regulated. By far the most striking of these have to do with what happens with Geography maps: *"I read, in my notes from yesterday's Department meeting: 'all maps go in. Always cumulatively. The map test has to be done this week. Every month you have to do the art elements. I get sick and I don't want to work in this place anymore"* (WETRA-12). In a little more detail, we found this uneasiness is shared with the students: *"With the Geography maps, the students become hysterical, almost without exception, and so do I inside, because, after all morning handing in and collecting exam*

papers, I have a week of marking ahead of me which takes forever. Without a doubt, the best day of the month is when I finish correcting them" (WETRA-12).

Finally, it is worth noting the criticism made of the overall approach to the subject of History of Art and Music:

> *"Evidently, I could not disagree more with the way the subject of History of Art and Music is taught. As a graduate in Art History and an amateur musician, I am totally frustrated with the methodology I am forced to follow in order to fulfil the objective I am required to achieve: that my students acquire a general culture that can be demonstrated in a purely memorised exam. I have neither the time to approach the subject as I would like to, nor the opportunity, as I am obliged to use the Department's materials and, on the other hand, with one hour a week it is not possible to dwell on anything at all"* (WETRA-12).

In a way, what is happening in this new subject synthesises what we have seen above about content, materials, and assessment system. The described situation perfectly reflects the general consequences of the "weight of tradition" on the professional identity of our teacher (disagreement, frustration, pressure). This time, one of the keys to recognising the teaching model that the school imposes on teachers is the classical concept of "general culture" that is used, around which teaching and learning must be organised.

3.2. Daily Overexertion

The second subcategory focuses specifically on the dedication or commitment that the teacher/researcher must put into his or her work in order to be able to meet the pace and demands imposed by the school's Management Team. In this respect, it is interesting to see how the efforts related to the teaching work from a traditional didactic model, suggested in the previous subcategory, must now be increased in order to face the implementation of innovative measures. By way of example, the teaching vision of one of the innovative practices to be established at the school level is shown below:

> *"I think gamification by force is nonsense. And not only to me. It is one thing to set up a playful dynamic in class, launching, for example, a Kahoot! game, in a punctual and justified way to work on certain content, and another to market the points that teachers are asked to control. For outstanding attitudes, both academic and attitudinal, we have to give points to students, signing pieces of paper that are then exchanged by the School Principal for certain privileges: coming one day without uniform, being able to look at the notes for the first 10 minutes of an exam, a free breakfast, etc. Without having received strict guidelines on the conditions under which points are to be given and the amount in each case, my colleagues and I think that we have enough to do without having to be on the lookout for this new occurrence"* (DAOV-12).

As we can observe, there are certain innovative proposals which, according to the interpretation made by the Management Team, should be applied at any time or in any daily situation. Those responsible for this are, however, the teachers, who, in order to motivate pupils, must be aware of the new rules and decide whether or not to apply them. In the case described above, the proposed commercial vision of gamification integrates a notion of reward that seems to turn what, in theory, should be basic student attitudes and behaviours, into motives for obtaining a prize.

With regard to the use of new teaching resources, one of the main causes of teacher uneasiness in our case study was the development of own digital resources. The way in which this new task is promoted and managed by the teaching staff at the school generates tension, such as the following:

> *"As at the beginning of every school year, the Management Team has asked us this afternoon to start preparing our own videos to put the flipped classroom into practice without having to rely on the videos that other people upload to YouTube. I understand the request and, in fact, I would agree with it, except that we don't have a single minute in our respective timetables dedicated to the development of materials. The hours of*

> *'dedication to the school' are for tutorials, breaks or meetings. This means that everything we have always been preparing, which is no small thing, is done in our own free time. Making videos, as much as I would like to, is not in my plans at the moment, nor in those of my colleagues"* (DAOV-12).

As we can see, we are talking about a new task for which there is no time foreseen in the timetable of the school's teaching staff, neither in the official nor in the personal timetable, but which, nevertheless, teachers must assume as part of their responsibilities. To this, we must add certain aggravating factors that generate a critical and direct reaction from our teacher: *"The Management Team has warned us that all the resources we create while we are working in this school are the property of the school. I have pretended that has nothing to do with me because, precisely for this reason, I always use my personal account to access any educational application"* (DAOV-12).

In addition to the strictly innovative measures and their impact on teaching morale, the diary reflects information on other methodological aspects that complete the methodological pillars of the school. One of these is the cultural outings organised every Wednesday: *"Yesterday's full day trip to Ronda was a real ordeal. (. . .) we found ourselves two teachers and a trainee girl with more than a hundred students. I don't even know how we did it, but we survived without losing anyone. It was very stressful because we didn't even have a guide and I had to explain almost everything"* (DAOV-12). This excerpt demonstrates the stress that can be caused by teachers' overexertion in situations where there are not enough human resources to deal with the students. In any case, the following excerpt shows that the issue of outings is just one of the many reasons why teachers have to spend a significant number of extra hours at the school each week:

> *"There is overtime everywhere: every free slot is an hour on duty because there are always teachers missing to cover absences (even if they are in other educational stages); the full day outings on Wednesdays, as they are never paid for even half the real hours; the school's evening parties, of which there are quite a few during the year, from which we usually leave after 23:00, after all the shit has been cleared up. Marathon days of more than 12 hours at the school are commonplace for a thousand different reasons (meetings, outings, events, etc.)"* (DAOV-12).

By way of summary, the following excerpts reflect some of the main consequences of all of the extra demands placed on teachers: *"the common feeling is that we are moonlighting, despite working in a single company"* (DAOV-12); *"everything is done at the expense of the overexertion of teachers and non-teaching staff"* (DAOV-12); *"all teachers work beyond their means, although some of us have more uncomfortable positions than others. The comparative disadvantage is inevitable"* (DAOV-12). These and the previous perceptions we reproduced coincide in the denunciation of the labour abuse to which teachers are subjected in our school. This seems to be a direct consequence, although often invisible, of the transformation of the classic paradigm of *education as a right* to that of *education as a service* that certain private companies sell to family-clients. These companies' savings in manpower, despite offering a service where personal attention is fundamental, have a direct impact on the increase in economic benefits.

3.3. No Time

This subcategory brings together a group of fragments that coincide in expressing the lack of time of the teacher/researcher to carry out all of the work entrusted to him. A clear example has to do with the introduction of a new subject of History of Art and Music for the whole of ESO (secondary education): *"(. . .) instead of having more time to prepare my History of Art classes, I now have less, because, out of nowhere, I have to prepare a new and quite demanding subject (with numerous works of art and auditions at Baccalaureate level) and make it comprehensible, in my case, for students in 1st and 3rd ESO"* (NOTI-12). This excerpt not only illustrates the lack of time we are now dealing with, but also, with several repercussions

on the rest of the teaching tasks, on the increase in overexertion that we have seen in the previous subcategory.

In the same vein, we must begin by underlining that lack of time also negatively affected the type of use made of the new didactic resources in our case study. What the following extract reveals is that, however good the intentions of the teaching staff may be, the only person in the school who has the necessary conditions to truly exploit the potential of the new resources is, paradoxically, the one in charge of promoting them: *"I would like to take more advantage of the supposed interactivity offered by Aula Planeta activities, but right now I don't have the time to research this topic. As far as I know, there is only one person in the whole school who really knows how to use these tools: the Pedagogical Director, who is in charge of promoting their use among teachers"* (NOTI-12).

In any case, we are not talking about a situation that affects only novel resources, but also materials that could be considered traditional: *"I have been using works of art as historical sources to support my explanations and activities for a long time. I would love to have more time to delve into them, but I only have three modules a week to work on all the elements of the curriculum (including those that, like the damned maps or the endless historical biographies, are added by the Department)"* (NOTI-12). As we can see, this last fragment takes up the criticism collected in the first subcategory, about the obligation to work on extra traditional content, to relate it this time to the problem of the lack of time to deal with the basic elements of the curriculum. We can imagine that the option of incorporating a fourth module of the subject and, therefore, an extra hour of work in the teacher's contract, was not a viable option for the Management Team.

Beyond the resources used, it is interesting to note how, due to the appearance of certain specific assignments, parallel to the conventional development of the subjects, new and unforeseen teaching responsibilities arose that entailed an even greater dedication than usual: *"Sessions dedicated to the entrepreneurship fair project. Unproductivity, demotivation, lack of understanding. In the end, we teachers will have to do half of the project in order to meet the deadlines. Even so (or precisely because of the latter) we are selected"* (NOTI-12); *"In the case of the Department of Social Sciences, I take the opportunity to prepare for our participation in the History Festival and other external events. Each student is supposed to do his or her own research, but the reality is that we always have a group project on the go and there is no time for anything else"* (NOTI-12). These two cases represent two different strategies for dealing with project overload: the first is basically the teacher's assimilation of projects; the second is the prioritisation of what is most urgent.

On the other hand, from the educational model that the school offers, personalisation is not only implemented in the teaching and learning processes, but also in the type of treatment given to families/clients. The following extract summarises this problem, the responsibility for which once again falls on the teachers, denouncing, in particular, the impossibility of calling each of the families due to lack of time: *"In this school, it is no longer enough to write a little message to the parents, but for any nonsense, you have to call them on the phone. They want that more personalised attention. What happens is that we teachers are going to explode. Let us see where we can find the time to call. We have to call to tell each family what their children have to make up and recommend a personalised study calendar. What a laziness"* (NOTI-12).

With regard to the above facts, several reports in the newspaper point to the existence of a fundamental aggravating circumstance: *Improvisation*. On the one hand, the teacher/researcher claimed that: *"It's all improvisation. Half of the time because things are not planned, for example, which teacher is going to be in charge of which outing; the other half because, even if they are planned, they are not communicated in time to the teaching staff"* (NOTI-12). Improvisation also manifested itself in: *"an excessively late and hasty final revision of exams (scheduled on the same day as the exam, even causing the exam to be postponed until the last modules of the day). All this with the consequent unnecessary stress generated"* (NOTI-12). From this perspective, we can say that improvisation is the main consequence of the lack of time to properly organise a series of daily tasks which, paradoxically, do not depend on teachers.

Finally, there are many fragments that denounce the constant loss of classes for reasons unrelated to the subjects themselves, or to the teaching staff. Some of them are due to certain holidays: *"No classes (Christmas activities: Christmas parade, carol competition, invisible friends, etc.)"* (NOTI-12). Other reasons have to do with the examination timetable imposed by the Management Team: *"Missed class for maths exam (internal test, no warning)"* (NOTI-12). Likewise, other classes appear to be hijacked by members of the Management Team with impunity: *"Class taken by the Head of Studies to talk about the 4th ESO trip"* (NOTI-12). In a way, the loss of classes represents one of the main causes of the lack of time characteristic of the school functioning, but also, as the fragments quoted above reflect, one of the main reasons for teacher uneasiness.

3.4. Resignation after Wear and Tear

Finally, the last subcategory brings together all of those fragments of the diary that allow us to understand the reasons for the teacher/researcher's resignation from his job at the school within the framework of the research. It is, therefore, a question of approaching our case study from the details implicit in the most extreme consequence that can result from teacher uneasiness: the abandonment of teaching. Going back to the previous subcategories, the verification of the emotional impact of all of the aspects described thus far allows us to better understand what we could consider the teacher/researcher's awareness of the apparent precariousness of his work situation. The complexity of this process is described in the following excerpt: *"It's funny, because you really feel bad for your students and your colleagues when you stop helping out. It is a feeling of guilt for not performing as well as they demand of you, or as well as you think your students deserve –who are just as exploited as you are– and, at the same time, of fear, for the possibility of being fired for not being up to the task. It is a perverse spiral in which you enter as soon as you arrive at the school"* (REWE-12).

As we can see, we are talking about a sum of very diverse factors that are directly related to the strong sense of community that characterises the school. Moving forward chronologically in the diary, it is particularly interesting to see the evolution, from the previous diagnosis, of the feelings of the teacher/researcher, with respect to the position he occupied in his work context:

> *"When I started working here, my fear was mainly to do with losing my job if I didn't do well, as I knew that the vast majority of my fellow students in my degree (History of Art) had not yet found a permanent job and, if they had, it had nothing to do with the degree. Progressively, this kind of fear has been disappearing, replacing other fears. It is curious that, after two and a bit years, after having managed to get a permanent job, I am beginning to accept that I will not be able to stay here for the rest of my life, as I notice how this job is consuming me and souring my character. Right now, my main fear is that I will regret it in the long run if I leave this job"* (REWE-12).

It is interesting to note that the emotional control exercised by the Management Team over the school's educational community has a lot to do with socio-economic circumstances. However, it is even more interesting to see how the teacher's position, with regard to this control, is gradually changing. Within this complex process (professional, psychological, emotional, etc.), we must highlight certain attempts, on the part of our subject, to seek solutions or to halt the drift of his situation. One of them was simply the adoption of certain attitudes or strategies that could be considered *survival strategies*: *"The best thing is to go unnoticed, although the real possibilities of achieving this depend a lot on your role in the machinery. Mine is one of the most difficult because of the weight of Social Sciences in the School. People remind me of that all the time, with equal parts pity and joking"* (REWE-12). Another fact that reflects the intention of the teacher/researcher to improve his situation, in a much more explicit way than before, is the request for a new teacher with whom to share the workload:

> *"After much reflection, this morning I asked the school's Principal for a reduction in working hours (with a consequent reduction in salary). I said straight out that this was it or else I would have to start thinking about leaving because I was feeling so overwhelmed.*

She said it was the first time she had been asked to do something like this, but I got what I wanted. Now it's time to try candidates and find someone that the school likes and, if I'm lucky, that I like as well" (REWE-12).

The importance of work overload in our case study, understood as one of the sources of the teacher uneasiness experienced there, is confirmed by the peculiar outcome of the above situation:

"The Social Sciences colleague who joined in February called today to say that he does not intend to come back to the school, as he has been called from a replacement pool for the public sector. He has lasted three months. The boy was not my favourite, as he was very naif and talked too much. In the end, I had to spend my free time trying to get him to wake up. Back to the start of the search for candidates" (REWE-12).

As expressed in the following excerpt, which, because of its synthetic nature, is worth reproducing in its entirety, the teacher/researcher's tolerance of his own uneasiness could not continue much longer after the previous episode:

"I am in the final stretch of my third year at the school and I can't take it anymore. I recognise that I have learnt a lot (another thing is that, from now on, I will have to unlearn some of it...), but I have to give up, for my own mental health. I have felt squeezed out since I first set foot here; the difference now is that I can no longer find any incentive or novelty to keep renewing my enthusiasm. From my perspective, the situation is increasingly tense and chaotic in the organisation. Apart from the increasing demands on me from all sides and the lack of leisure time, the straw that has broken the camel's back has been the transformation of my own personality for the worse. Psychologically, I don't recognise myself, or rather, I don't want to recognise myself in an unpleasant and irritable character, such as the one that I have become more and more as this academic year has progressed. I have come to the conclusion that, when work starts to negatively affect relationships with the people around you, it is time to make a clean break. I don't have a plan B right now, but it is an emergency and my people understand that. I have been hinting at my possible departure among my colleagues for some months now, so I hope no one should be upset, nor should this come as a surprise, as I know how badly, and unfairly, they have reacted in the past when a colleague has decided to leave the school. I understand that, when we rely so much on each other to survive under pressure from the bosses, someone's departure inevitably feels like a kind of betrayal" (REWE-12).

The above words represent the precise moment when teaching uneasiness becomes unbearable. The clash between tradition and innovation, the daily overexertion and the lack of time to cope with all the tasks entrusted to them lead, after three years, to a problem with only one solution. To justify leaving the job, such important elements as *"mental health"*, one of the most relevant topics of recent times, or, directly, *"the transformation of my own personality for the worse"* are mentioned. It is very significant how, despite this, there is still a certain feeling of guilt for betraying fellow teachers who will remain at the school.

The last comment of the diary describes the moment of final communication of the resignation to the school Principal, as follows. As we can see, the response received, although somewhat enigmatic, is perfectly in line with the type of neoliberal leadership: *"I will never forget the response I received today, 13 June 2019, from the school Principal when I submitted my letter of voluntary resignation: 'Fine. That's fine. Nowadays it is normal for people to change jobs a lot'. I don't know how to interpret these words, nor do I feel like doing so, but I did feel sadness in general"* (REWE-12).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

As the results of the research confirm, teacher uneasiness is a phenomenon that encompasses many of the keys to understanding the way in which teachers really experience the educational changes promoted in recent times. Returning to Jiménez Abad's question with which we began this paper, the answer could be that, according to the case study addressed,

teachers lack the optimal tools and working conditions to assume the responsibility for change assigned to them by current educational discourses.

According to the information extracted from the teacher/researcher's diary, the main circumstances that determined the appearance of teacher uneasiness in our case study were not directly related either to the social consideration of the teaching profession, or to a family situation [5,17], or to the socio-cultural climate surrounding the school in which the research was carried out. Although presenting a symptomatology similar to that indicated by Esteve [27], the causes of this suffering, as indicated by the four subcategories that emerged from the data, were related to the following aspects:

1. The maintenance of a traditional teaching model (exemplified by the use of certain content, methods, resources, and assessment systems) that, although does not meet the real expectations and needs of teachers and their students, does respond to the parameters of the new neoliberal model. In fact, this didactic approach is perfectly compatible with what Pascual Medina characterised as *"a model of defining performance standards that teachers should follow to demonstrate 'being good teachers' and compete within a highly marketised education system"* [9] (p. 185). As Jiménez Abad denounced, the situation of neoliberal economic adjustments, *"which translates into more demanding conditions for the practice of teaching, is undoubtedly an important demotivating factor"* [1] (p. 173).
2. The extra effort and extra work hours involved in implementing an innovative project, in a context where the teacher must limit him/herself to complying with the instructions of the Management Team. As stated by Rivas, Egea, and Prats, *"the educational authorities choose to subject the teacher to the dictates of the apparently neutral technique. This decision highlights the depersonalising function of the technique,"* as they make the teacher *"a specialist who applies innovations designed from epistemological and methodological frameworks that are alien to the school"* [54] (p. 140). From this perspective, the current innovative fashion would generate a process of loss of creativity and impoverishment of didactic strategies, through which teachers are turned into *"'task performers' that others have designed"* [10] (p. 111)—that is, into mere instruments to apply canned innovations in the classroom.
3. The impossibility of being able to meet all of the demands imposed due to lack of time, which prevents reflections on practice, especially necessary when considering effective technological integration [50,52,53], and guarantees the survival of a traditional working system based on improvisation. As was observed, innovative teaching brings with it multiple over exertions, including the obligation to be permanently trained in innovative methods and techniques, *"which can contribute to generate a certain anxiety"* [1] (p. 176). An aspect that, far from being analysed in depth, is often defended, consciously or unconsciously, is *"that certain active learning projects are dysfunctional (due to lack of teacher mastery) may be understandable, but not justifiable"* [51] (p. 71). All of this reflects the true essence of a series of transformative measures, usually more ideological than pedagogical and more superficial than profound, which *"make many teachers feel that they lack time, training, security and strength"* [1] (pp. 176–177).
4. Finally, all of those psychological and emotional challenges that, due to their accumulation over time, generate an exhaustion that is difficult to curb by means of specific actions or survival strategies. These results are perfectly in line with the symptoms of teacher uneasiness and the burnout syndrome [19,33,37]. As we saw (e.g., *"the best thing is to go unnoticed"*), this type of circumstance causes a partial or total distancing of the teacher from their duties [27]. Pascual Medina explained another possible consequence as follows: *"In order to survive, agencies have understood that they do not need to be competent, but only to demonstrate that they are, which evidently has negative effects in that they use more energy in camouflage processes (...) than in real processes of innovation and sustainable improvement that ensure a real improvement in the quality of teaching-learning processes. Unfortunately, this mimicry can even reach the point where teachers cheat –intentionally or not– to ensure their permanence in the system"* [9] (p. 185).

In addition to the sources of teacher uneasiness identified in our case study, there are many others. One of them is classroom management or governance itself, one of the many traditional challenges that the innovative teacher must continue to face. In an extreme sense, the so-called *"school disruption,"* as Jiménez Abad commented, *"means that teachers have to devote the best of their energies to maintaining order in the classroom, to preventing and resolving conflicts, or to suffering from lack of consideration or even humiliation. This generates obvious emotional exhaustion and burnout"* [1] (p. 176).

In any case, the multiple causes of teacher uneasiness have to do with the combination of previously existing problems with new problems intrinsic to the way innovative teaching is understood and practised today. This combination places the teacher in an uncertain, contradictory, and disconcerting position. Teachers are still primarily responsible for what happens in the classroom and for the quality of education, but at the same time, they must cede their role to the students and to new standardised strategies, the objectives of which are often alien to the real needs of the students. This is, the only way to turn the teacher into an easily interchangeable piece, *"which can be replaced without affecting the system as a whole"* [51] (p. 140), a society that prioritises economic flows over the emotional stability of individuals.

In this sense, we can confirm that teacher uneasiness is a clear symptom of an educational model, such as the neoliberal one, based on *"distrust towards teachers"* [13] (p. 141). As we have seen, the effects of this model range from the loss of the former status of authority and leadership capacity of teachers, to a profound identity crisis through the disappearance of attributes such as real autonomy, academic freedom, empathy with students and families, and even usefulness. All of this inevitably generates feelings of guilt, demotivation, and disaffection.

The loss of well-being and the increase in teacher uneasiness represent two symptoms perfectly compatible with the parameters of neoliberal education [10–13]. This perspective allows us to connect the different answers offered to our research questions, through the observation of a close correlation between teacher uneasiness, the current working conditions of teachers, and the requirement to develop innovative teaching. These last two factors are, in fact, the main causes of the teaching uneasiness experienced by our participating teacher, paradoxically, an association that, until now, has remained completely unnoticed in the scientific literature.

On the methodological level, we must highlight the great usefulness of autoethnography, as a method of observation and analysis from the teaching practice itself, facilitating the in-depth look that was intended. Its extreme fidelity in the collection of information through narrative documentation [69,70], and the possibility it offers of linking subject and object [59], encourage us to claim that it is an important tool both for the understanding of educational realities and for teacher training [70].

However, it should be noted that, as can happen in other autoethnographic research, working with a single source of information inevitably leads to very limited results and conclusions. In addition to having a triangulation of researchers, such as the one carried out here, it will be advisable, in the future, to also seek a triangulation of sources that will enable the work to be enriched. In this line, we also consider it necessary to complement the research presented with the use of other methods and, in general, with new studies, perhaps focusing on other cases, teachers, areas of knowledge, fields, or educational levels. Supported by long-term fieldwork and with a detailed justification of each of the steps taken, these new studies will help to discuss and contextualise our findings in a more complete way.

In any case, we must conclude by highlighting the multiple theoretical and methodological horizons opened up by our work. On the one hand, its results allow us to broaden our knowledge of the professional challenges that future teachers may face, thus confirming the importance of offering new tools to trainee teachers in higher education, as well as instilling a critical and self-critical perspective in this group. On the other hand, the richness of the results obtained, clear examples of the importance of listening to the

protagonists' voices, justifies the application of narrative methodologies to other research on teacher uneasiness and, in general, on all kinds of educational phenomena conditioned by neoliberal ideology.

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