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Perceptions of the Teaching Profession and Its Professionalisation in Spain

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ABSTRACT

The article is based on a novel theoretical framework for studying the teaching profession and its professionalisation from a broad view of Education as a common field in which many different actors take part. The way the field of Education is (re)produced is rarely researched. Rather, its current order is assumed as valid, ignoring the infighting between different actors to control and legitimise particular areas of knowledge, know-how and practices that comprise it as a field. The article presents a survey-based study with the following objectives: (1) identify how the teaching faculty perceive the structural and structuring aspects of the teaching profession in the field of education and (2) analyse how those aspects affect the development of a horizontally, democratically and collaboratively articulated profession and its professionalisation with all the other fields in education. The survey was taken by 7145 preschool, primary and secondary teachers at schools in Spain. The results show the structural and structuring features of a field of education, in tatters, differentiated and hierarchical, characterised by an uneven distribution of opportunities for its actors to ‘say’, ‘do’ and ‘decide’. At the same time, the results offer a chance to explore a more horizontal articulation of the teaching profession and its professionalisation within the field of education.

1 | Introduction

The article draws on general theoretical underpinnings from Bourdieu (2000, 2002, 2014) on the field, *habitus* and cultural capital. It also draws on studies specifically on professions and professionalisation that understand them as a complex process through which they are endowed with or take on certain traits, statuses and positions regarding how some functions deemed socially relevant are carried out (Densmore 2018; Freidson 1986; Labaree 1999; Monarca 2017). One of the studies highlighted here is Abbot’s landmark (1988) paper, the System of Profession, that defined professionalisation as

a process characterised by the fight between different actors to control and legitimise particular domains of knowledge, know-how and practices.

In this framework, compared with any other profession, the teaching profession as such has had major limitations ever since its origin associated with the emergence of the nation-state, its bureaucracy and the functions assigned to the school of the masses¹ in regard to the new social order (Smaller 2015) both in Spain and in other countries (Suasnábar 2013; Westberg 2019), although with some differences among them (Moore 2019).

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Spain is taken as the reference in this paper, although similarities with other countries in Europe and America abound. The emergence of a state bureaucracy associated with the development of the so-called school of masses configured a field of education within which different practices and actors become profiled in areas having varying degrees of differentiation and hierarchy (Bourdieu 2000, 2002, 2014; Monarca 2021; Ozga and Lawn 1981; Popkewitz 2018). From this historical perspective, one can identify at least four structural domains of the field of education. The first two are configured more or less simultaneously: (1) the political-administrative domain, which took on the function of regulating and supervising the newly emerging education system; (2) the domain of school and faculty as a collective body exclusively assigned the practice of education; (3) later came the domain of teacher training, which emerged in principle as its own entity (Gabriel 2015; Ortega 1987); and (4) lastly, the theoretical and disciplinary domain of education sciences and their institutionalisation at universities (Suasnábar 2013, 1288).

In Spain, as in many other countries, the school and faculty domain are the target of prescriptions, regulations, research and training in which the other three domains are often the protagonists and promoters, while teachers are excluded from academic discussion and relevant decision-making about the educational system and its policies in general as well as on other school matters and even their own profession (Escolano 1982; Ortega 1987). It is here, in this dynamic and under this structural and structuring rationality of the educational field, that we place the study of the teaching profession and its professionalisation (Bourdieu 2014), coupled with the possibility of becoming more horizontally articulated with the other educational domains mentioned above.

The proposed approach offers the novelty of considering the teaching profession and its professionalism from a broader framework that places these actors and their scope of action in relation to other actors, knowledge and practices that structure the field of education (Bourdieu 2000, 2002, 2014). Instead, the teaching profession should be defined beyond the exclusive domain of the school, from a common place that allows the horizontality mentioned above in relation to practices and knowledge that structure the educational field and the chance to partake in their production and distribution.

However, this is not the trend that defines and regulates the teaching profession and its professionalisation. Teachers still have a few chances to link with other domains of the educational field and to participate in the features that have historically been attributed to them. In this sense, the discourses, policies and practices of teacher professionalisation are weak, paradoxical and contradictory insofar as those structural features of the educational field that give rise to a tutored, guarded and bureaucratised profession remain untouchable, even invisibilised (Bourdieu 2014; Loughran 2019; Molla and Nolan 2019; Monarca 2021).

Along this line, both the current configuration of the educational field and certain predominant tendencies to don the cloak of professionalism in discourses, policies and practices have contributed or may be contributing to generating or reinforcing

various types of fragmentation that reproduce the historical structural features of the educational field that affect the profession and that are not usually treated as such in most theoretical or empirical approaches (Monarca 2024):

1. Fragmentation of education as a practice of social construction, between technical and instrumental aspects and educational meanings and purposes. In this way, the teleological-political dimension is kept outside the school and away from the teachers (Monarca 2021).
2. Fragmentation of education as a pedagogical, social and political practice into isolated elements, creating the illusion of the existence of certain independent domains: the curriculum, teaching, learning, training and research and that different actors, as experts, must assume them. Teachers are limited to educational practice and are seldom given access to participation in educational debates, research, peer training, curriculum definition and other educational policies (Elliott 1994; Popkewitz 2018; Westberg 2019).
3. Separation between theory and practice, between educational research and practice, between academics, intellectuals and practitioners in the field, between expert knowledge and other knowledge (Bourdieu 2002, 2014; Kostoulas et al. 2019; Molla and Nolan 2019).

According to research conducted on professions in general and on the teaching profession in particular (Aldrich and Ruef 2006; Densmore 2018; Evans 2019; Kostoulas et al. 2019; Shirrell, Hopkins, and Spillane 2019), it can be stated that this fragmentation is associated with certain characteristics attributed to professions that are either absent as far as teachers are concerned or their presence is clearly weaker than in other professions: (1) prolonged, systematic initial training grounded on a major theoretical base, (2) a relevant part of its training base is common to all members of the field, (3) selection systems for initial training, (4) high academic-professional requirements for certification, (5) participation in debates, policies and other issues that define the field and the profession, (6) direct participation in the production and dissemination of knowledge related to their field, (7) participation in the initial and ongoing training actions of professionals in the field, (8) high social status, based in part on the knowledge they wield and (9) a high degree of autonomy in carrying out their functions.

The absence or scarce presence of these traits regarding the teaching profession is related to the socio-historical process of the educational field that was configured, its hierarchisation and the differentiated distribution of the cultural capital needed to assume functions-tasks-positions. This leaves teachers in a subordinate position that makes it difficult for them to be considered as professionals, as they are left out of some essential domains, tasks and characteristics linked to education and their own work. At this point, in line with specific approaches that have been carried out, although in more or less isolated and poorly articulated ways, it is suggested to move toward an approach and conceptualisation of an expanded teaching professionalism, with a horizontal articulation in the educational field that clearly and evidently contemplates:

- The processes of debate and decision-making regarding the educational field in general and schooling and teaching in particular (Azorín, Harris, and Jones 2020; Monarca 2021).
- The definition and development of educational policies and programmes (Pagès and Prieto 2020).
- The processes of curriculum definition and development (Elliott 1994).
- A prolonged initial training of great theoretical and practical depth, with a considerable part in common for all teachers and other education professionals and with stringent requirements for certification (Loughran 2019).
- A clear connection of research with initial and continuing education, educational practice and teachers' opportunities to participate in knowledge production–research processes (Evans 2019; Lambirth, Cabral, and McDonald 2019).
- Participation in the initial and continuing education of its professional body (Shirrell, Hopkins, and Spillane 2019).

The need for a global paradigm shift has not been raised with sufficient theoretical force or systematicity to address the issue of the teaching profession and its professionalisation from a broader approach that can overcome the limitations of most approaches taken so far. Continuous relationships need to be formed between the areas of the field that have been described and the actors and institutions that produce professionalising discourses, policies and practices, with a view to overcoming the conditioning factors that fragment the field of education and make it internally hierarchical, thereby leading to the top-down approaches and interventions as most are currently (Lewis and Hogan 2019; Molla and Nolan 2019).

The goal, then, is twofold: to overcome the approaches that naturalise the current fragmented, differentiated and hierarchical structure of the educational field in which certain actors—mostly not the teachers—prescribe, design the curriculum, research and train, and to give the teachers a real chance at participating in these practices. This approach, however, requires overhauling the current structure of the educational field by rethinking the division between experts, technical-politicians, academics and faculty (Piazza 2019; Reimer 2019), thus contributing to its democratisation. This is covered by means of two research questions: (1) What are the structural and structuring aspects of the teaching profession perceived by teachers in Spain? and (2) How does the current structure of the field of education affect the development of a more horizontally and democratic articulation of the profession and its professionalisation?

2 | Objective

Taking into account this framework on the teaching profession and its professionalisation as part of how status and privilege are defined for the different actors in the field and their possibilities of 'doing', 'saying' and 'deciding' (Evans 2019; Monarca 2021,

2024; Popkewitz, 1997; Smaller 2015), a survey study was conducted and is presented here. Its objectives were:

1. To identify teachers' perceptions of the structural and structuring aspects of the teaching profession in the field of education.

Then, based on that identification:

2. To analyse how these aspects act as barriers and conditioning factors hindering the articulation of the profession and its professionalisation in a way so as to be more horizontal, democratic and collaborative with other domains of the educational field.

3 | Methodology

The study is part of a broader multidimensional and multi-method project (Blanco and Pirela 2022) that seeks to describe and understand the teaching profession and its professionalisation in the terms explained above. The design proposes a quantitative approach of a synchronic and basic nature (Martínez and March 2015), through an ad hoc survey for the present study, validated and given to teachers.

3.1 | Sample

A total of 7145 preschool, primary and secondary school teachers participated in the survey. They came from public schools and private-subsidised schools² from the 17 Autonomous Communities of Spain and its two autonomous cities: Ceuta and Melilla. Non-probabilistic sampling was used as it was deemed the most suitable (López-Roldán and Fachelli 2015). This use of non-probabilistic techniques in making up the sample entails limitations that may introduce biases that may affect its representativity, as the questionnaire was distributed via the 'official' email addresses of the schools, with the request that it be forwarded to the rest of the teaching faculty. Nevertheless, the procedure explained below has contributed to obtaining a broad sample with characteristics similar to the total universe of teachers in Spain in regard to, for instance, distribution by sex and age.

The average age of the participants is 46.7 years, and the median age is 47 years old, which allows for a normal distribution. Of them, 70.4% are female, 52.8% work in secondary education, 26.7% work in primary, 11.6% work in preschool and 8.9% of the respondents selected the option 'other' as the educational stage where they perform their main job.

The sample represents 0.93% of all teachers in Spain at the educational levels covered in our research, according to the latest official data available (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deporte 2024). Similarly, the distribution of the sample by sex and age agrees with the data from the Ministry. Thus, in the official statistics, the modal range of the age of teachers in Spain is in the 40–49 year bracket and 72.3% of all teachers are women.

3.2 | Instrument

The survey delves into the tasks–functions, expectations and cultural capital of teachers and their relationship with the other domains of the educational field explained in the introduction.

Accordingly, the survey is structured in two large blocks of questions or issues: (1) a block referring to the independent variables of the study (age, gender, teaching seniority, educational stage, teaching position, location and type of school, level of training acquired); (2) another block with the items of inquiry directly associated with the objectives. In turn, the items in this block are organised into three groups that address the theoretical assumptions and the objectives of the study: (I) functions and tasks, (II) expectations and (III) cultural capital (Table 1).

The items corresponding to each of the three groups are structured on the basis of the four domains outlined in the introduction: (1) school-teaching staff (e.g., ‘preparing classes’), (2) technical–political–bureaucratic (e.g., ‘advising other professionals outside the school’), (3) teacher training (e.g., ‘training future teachers in the Teacher’s College degree’), (4) scientific–academic (e.g., ‘researching with other institutions outside the school’).

In addition, given that the survey inquired about possible zones, tasks and functions that are not at all common for teachers in the current way the educational field operates, in addition to the four-point Likert scale, a ‘not applicable’ option was enabled for each item. In this way, efforts are made to avoid the central tendency bias and social desirability bias, without forcing a positioning that may not be real (Nadler, Weston, and Voyles 2015). Thus, in contrast to other options, such as using seven-point scales and reverse-coded items, the decision was made to use a design that would be easy to navigate on mobile devices such as smartphones and would be less likely to cause fatigue when answering.

The complete questionnaire—in Spanish—can be found at <https://forms.gle/7dNS5GsSy5R3NSJ48>, and the items used in the present study are also listed in Tables 2–4 of the Results section.

3.3 | Procedure

The instrument was validated by calculating its validity and reliability. Content validity was assessed using expert judgement

(De Souza, Costa Alexandre, and De Brito Guirardello 2017). To that end, eight experts in the field were asked to assess the relevance and clarity of the items on the questionnaire and Lawshe’s Content Validity Index (CVI) for the two parameters assessed (Lawshe 1975; Tristán 2008). The CVI of relevance for all the items that make up the questionnaire is 0.90. As for clarity, there is only one item with a content validity ratio (CVR) <0.58. Its wording was subsequently revised, with the CVI value of this parameter finally being 0.80. With these results, a preliminary version of the survey was proposed for piloting. Secondly, based on the results from the pilot study, the reliability of each group was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha. All the cases yielded high levels of reliability. The scores from group II (Expectations) and group III (Cultural capital) are greater than 0.9 (0.923 and 0.941, respectively), whereas for group I (Functions and tasks and positions), it is 0.877.

The final version of the survey, in addition to Spanish, was translated into the four co-official languages in Spain: Catalan, Galician, Basque and Valencian. All versions were designed to be submitted electronically through the free software *Google Forms*. In all cases, the mailing included a description of the research (i.e., its objectives, the rights of the participants), the guarantee of anonymous data processing and a statement of consent to participate voluntarily in the survey, after which the participants could access four sections.

Once a favourable report had been obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, the survey was sent to the institutional e-mail addresses of all the preschool, primary and secondary schools in Spain, requesting, in the body of the e-mail, that the instrument be distributed among the school’s teaching staff.

4 | Results

4.1 | Functions and Tasks (Group I)

As can be seen in Table 2, the responses to the first group *Functions and tasks* show important differences according to the different domains of the activities.

The area *School-faculty* has the lowest number of ‘not applicable’ responses and the highest scores of the amount of time spent. Among the different activities that make up this domain, items 1, 2 and 3 have the lowest rates of ‘not applicable’ responses (less than 2%). Most teachers spend the maximum amount of time on

TABLE 1 | Categories for grouping variables.

Grouping	Description of the type of items
I- Functions and tasks	This is made up of questions on the time spent on the functions, tasks, offices or positions of the teaching staff that define the ‘allowed’ and ‘not allowed’ zones as per the four domains of the educational field
II- Expectations	This features questions about the teachers’ expectations and raises issues inherent to what they expect and desire with respect to how the educational field operates in the four different domains
III- Cultural capital	Questions are posed to identify the degree and/or level of knowledge-competencies that teachers have in order to be able to take on different tasks–functions in the educational field per each domain

TABLE 2 | Time spent on tasks and functions.

Domains	Items	Not applicable	Time spent				
			1. Minimum	2. Minimum-Medium	3. Medium-Maximum	4. Maximum	Median
School-faculty	Direct tasks with students	1.5%	2.3%	6.3%	17.3%	72.7%	4.00
	Preparing classes	1.6%	2.8%	10.1%	24.0%	61.6%	4.00
Technical-political-bureaucratic	Meetings with other colleagues for coordination, advice, discussion, training, etc.	0.7%	3.8%	17.3%	34.7%	43.4%	3.00
	Meetings with pupils' families	6.7%	16.7%	21.6%	27.0%	28.0%	3.00
Teacher training	Research inside the school-classroom	7.6%	33.7%	28.6%	19.7%	10.4%	2.00
	Advising other professionals outside the school	12.8%	47.5%	24.0%	13.3%	8.2%	1.00
Teacher training	Participating in socio-educational discussions with other actors-external professionals	10.7%	48.3%	23.9%	11.5%	5.6%	1.00
	Participating in the development of educational regulations/educational policies	16.0%	62.4%	10.5%	6.3%	4.9%	1.00
Teacher training	Advising and/or collaborating on educational issues with foundations/associations, unions, international organisations, etc.	14.3%	58.9%	15.4%	7.2%	4.3%	1.00
	Participating with opinions, knowledge and/or materials on social media	10.7%	52.9%	20.0%	10.6%	5.8%	1.00
Teacher training	Training future teachers in the teacher training degree in preschool or primary education	20.8%	60.7%	8.0%	5.4%	5.0%	1.00
	Training future teachers in the Master's Degree in Secondary Education	21.0%	60.1%	8.3%	5.5%	5.2%	1.00
Teacher training	Providing continuing education courses to other teachers	17.1%	62.1%	10.1%	5.9%	4.8%	1.00
	Developing teacher training materials	15.2%	55.4%	14.4%	8.8%	6.1%	1.00
Scientific-academic	Performing research with other institutions outside the school	17.1%	61.4%	11.2%	6.0%	4.3%	1.00
	Giving papers at conferences	17.0%	65.2%	10.0%	4.8%	2.9%	1.00
Scientific-academic	Developing textbooks and/or teaching materials for students/teachers	17.6%	63.7%	8.4%	5.5%	4.8%	1.00
	Writing books or book chapters, articles in magazines or newspapers	17.8%	67.6%	8.0%	3.5%	3.0%	1.00

TABLE 3 | Degree of interest in tasks and functions.

Domains	Items	Not applicable	Degree of interest				
			1. Minimum	2. Minimum-Medium	3. Medium-Maximum	4. Maximum	
School-faculty	Direct tasks with students	1.2%	1.4%	3.1%	14.8%	79.4%	4.00
	Preparing classes	1.2%	1.3%	5.0%	19.8%	72.7%	4.00
Technical-political-bureaucratic	Meetings with other colleagues for coordination, advice, discussion, training, etc.	0.8%	2.4%	9.0%	29.6%	58.2%	4.00
	Meetings with pupils' families	5.3%	10.2%	16.6%	28.8%	39.0%	3.00
Teacher training	Research inside the school-classroom	4.3%	12.1%	20.0%	32.0%	31.7%	3.00
	Advising other professionals outside the school	8.2%	29.2%	24.7%	21.3%	16.6%	2.00
Scientific-academic	Participating in socio-educational discussions with other actors-external professionals	7.0%	26.1%	22.4%	24.5%	20.0%	2.00
	Participating in the development of educational regulations/educational policies	9.0%	35.5%	19.3%	17.5%	18.7%	2.00
Teacher training	Advising and/or collaborating on educational issues with foundations/associations, unions, international organisations, etc.	8.5%	31.1%	21.8%	20.6%	17.1%	2.00
	Participating with opinions, knowledge and/or materials on social media	7.3%	40.1%	22.6%	17.2%	12.8%	2.00
Teacher training	Training future teachers in the teacher training degree in preschool or primary education	17.3%	37.9%	13.4%	14.3%	17.1%	2.00
	Training future teachers in the Master's degree in secondary education	15.8%	37.8%	14.3%	14.5%	17.6%	2.00
Scientific-academic	Providing continuing education courses to other teachers	9.8%	35.6%	17.8%	18.4%	18.5%	2.00
	Developing teacher training materials	8.5%	31.4%	19.4%	21.5%	19.2%	2.00
Scientific-academic	Performing research with other institutions outside the school	9.3%	32.5%	18.6%	18.9%	20.6%	2.00
	Giving papers at conferences	9.9%	43.5%	19.4%	13.7%	13.4%	2.00
Scientific-academic	Developing textbooks and/or teaching materials for students/teachers	9.6%	39.3%	18.6%	16.4%	16.2%	2.00
	Writing books or book chapters, articles in magazines or newspapers	9.8%	43.5%	18.2%	13.6%	14.9%	2.00

TABLE 4 | Level of knowledge-competencies associated with various functions—tasks.

Domains	Items	Not applicable	Level of knowledge-competencies				
			1. Minimum	2. Minimum-Medium	3. Medium-Maximum	4. Maximum	Median
School-faculty	Direct tasks with students	1.1%	0.5%	2.4%	28.2%	67.7%	4.0
	Preparing classes	1.1%	0.4%	3.3%	30.0%	65.1%	4.0
Technical–political–bureaucratic	Meetings with other colleagues for coordination, advice, discussion, training, etc.	1.0%	1.0%	6.9%	34.7%	56.4%	4.0
	Meetings with pupils' families	4.8%	4.4%	11.2%	32.1%	47.5%	3.0
	Research inside the school–classroom	4.2%	13.4%	25.5%	34.4%	22.6%	3.0
	Advising other professionals outside the school	6.5%	22.1%	26.5%	28.7%	16.3%	2.0
Teacher training	Participating in socio-educational discussions with other actors–external professionals	6.2%	21.4%	26.5%	29.8%	16.1%	2.0
	Participating in the development of educational regulations/educational policies	7.6%	31.9%	26.0%	21.9%	12.5%	2.0
	Advising and/or collaborating on educational issues with foundations/associations, unions, international organisations, etc.	7.3%	27.6%	26.1%	25.2%	13.8%	2.0
	Participating with opinions, knowledge and/or materials on social media	7.3%	29.7%	25.5%	24.0%	13.5%	2.0
Teacher training	Training future teachers in the teacher training degree in preschool or primary education	16.9%	31.1%	17.1%	19.0%	15.8%	2.0
	Training future teachers in the Master's degree in secondary education	14.7%	31.3%	16.2%	19.5%	18.4%	2.0
Scientific-academic	Providing continuing education courses to other teachers	8.4%	25.3%	22.1%	25.6%	18.6%	2.0
	Developing teacher training materials	7.4%	22.0%	23.5%	27.9%	19.2%	3.0
	Performing research with other institutions outside the school	8.5%	27.9%	24.4%	24.1%	15.1%	2.0
	Giving papers at conferences	8.8%	32.4%	23.5%	21.5%	13.8%	2.0
Scientific-academic	Developing textbooks and/or teaching materials for students/teachers	8.4%	30.4%	22.4%	22.5%	16.2%	2.0
	Writing books or book chapters, articles in magazines or newspapers	8.9%	33.8%	22.5%	20.2%	14.6%	2.0

direct tasks with students (72.7%) and preparing classes (61.6%). Only a small percentage (less than 3%) have a minimal dedication to these two activities (items 1 and 2). The data reflect that direct teaching with students and class preparation are a fundamental part of the teaching job and most teachers are intensely involved in these responsibilities.

In items 3 (Meetings with other colleagues to coordinate, advise, debate, train, etc.) and 4 (Meetings with pupils' families), the medians were at level 3 (medium-maximum dedication); however, a higher proportion of teachers spend the maximum amount of time meeting with other colleagues versus meeting with families (43.4% vs. 28%). In addition, the percentage of responses at the minimum level (minimum dedication) for item 4 Meeting with families is higher than for item 3 Meeting with colleagues (16.7% and 3.8%, respectively). The findings show the importance the participating teachers give to interaction with other colleagues and meetings with families, ranking them third and fourth, respectively, by the degree of dedication provided.

In the first domain, the item teachers spend the least amount of time on is item 5, Research inside the school–classroom, where the median was level 2 (medium-minimum dedication). This is also the task with the highest number of 'not applicable' responses in the domain (7.6%).

The items in the remaining domains have 'not applicable' response rates above 10%, and the medians are at the lowest level of the scale (minimum dedication). However, the differences in the responses show certain distinctions within and between these three domains. Among the low scores in the levels of dedication and the high percentages of 'not applicable' responses to the activities in these areas, three tasks in the domain *Technical–political–bureaucratic* receive somewhat more positive ratings. In the items Advising other professionals external to the school, Participating in socio-educational discussion with other external actors–professionals and Participating with opinions, knowledge and/or materials on social media, the 'not applicable' responses remain under 13% and at least 16% indicate medium-maximum and maximum levels of dedication.

It is worth noting that the item Participating in the development of educational regulations/educational policies receives the highest number of 'not applicable' responses (16%) from the technical–political–bureaucratic domain. This task, moreover, receives the lowest degree of dedication in the field (62.4%), followed by advising and/or collaborating on educational issues with foundations/associations, unions, international organisations, etc. (58.9%).

Among the activities of the *Teacher training* domain, developing materials for teacher training is the function–task with the greatest dedication. 15.2% of the participants indicate that the activity is 'not applicable' to them, while 14.4% have a minimum-medium dedication. In addition, 8.8% of the teachers expressed a medium-maximum dedication and 6.1% expressed a maximum dedication to this activity.

The functions–tasks with the least dedication are found in the items Training future teachers in the preschool or primary

teacher training degree and training future teachers in the secondary Master's degree, where around 21% of the participants state that the activities are 'not applicable' and around 60% give them minimal dedication. These results can be attributed to the educational stages in which the participants work.

The four activities that make up the *Scientific-Academic* domain feature 'not applicable' responses of nearly 17%. In addition, the three tasks with the lowest response rates were in this domain: giving papers at conferences, Writing textbooks and/or teaching materials for students/teaching staff, and writing books or book chapters, articles in magazines or journals. Likewise, the percentage of participants assigning maximum dedication does not reach 5% in any of the items in this area.

4.2 | Professional Expectations and Interests (Group II)

As is the case in Group I, differences in task scores by domain are observed at *Expectations-interests*. The faculty shows a higher degree of interest in the tasks of the area *School-faculty* than in the activities of the other domains. The percentage of 'not applicable' responses also follows this trend as well. For all variables, levels of interest are higher than levels of dedication.

Of the five items that make up the first domain, three activities were given the highest score (maximum interest). Of note here is the maximum interest shown by the vast majority of respondents in the items Direct tasks with students (reaching almost 80%) and Preparing classes (72.7%). For the other two items, Meeting with pupils' families and Research in the classroom, the median is at level 3 (medium-maximum interest).

For all other items in the other domains, the medians are located at value 2 (minimum-medium interest); however, the frequencies of responses show certain particularities. In the *Technical–political–bureaucratic* domain, participating in socio-educational discussions with other external actors–professionals arouses somewhat more interest than the rest of the activities in the domain (44.5% of the respondents score this item in the two highest values on the scale). On the other hand, in the item Participating with opinions, knowledge and/or materials on social media, approximately 63% of the participants place their interest in the minimum and medium-minimum levels. It is worth noting that the item Participating in the development of educational regulations/educational policies receives the highest number of 'not applicable' responses (9%) from the domain.

In the *Teacher training* domain, as is to be expected due to the characteristics of the sample, the items Training future teachers in the Teacher Training Degree in preschool or primary education and training future teachers in the Master's degree in secondary education have the highest response rates of 'not applicable' and of minimum interest in the area. In contrast, developing materials for teacher training is the activity in the field that arouses the interest (medium-maximum and maximum) of the greatest number of respondents (just over 40%).

On the other hand, three activities of the *Scientific-Academic* domain receive the lowest interest of the whole group from

respondents. Fewer than 29% of the participants show medium-maximum or maximum interest in presenting papers at conferences or writing books or book chapters. Developing textbooks and/or teaching materials for students/teachers arouses interest in a slightly higher percentage of the sample but without exceeding 33%.

4.3 | Cultural Capital (Group III)

In *Cultural capital*, scores differ according to domains similar to those seen in Groups I and II; the *School-faculty* domain receives the highest scores and the fewest ‘not applicable’ responses.

However, clear similarities are found between responses regarding knowledge-competencies and the degree of perceived *Interest-expectations* for each activity. Except for developing teacher training materials, the medians coincide on every item in both groups and the ‘not applicable’ responses are similar as well, albeit slightly lower on items in the *Cultural capital* group.

For the activities in the first domain (School-faculty), the teachers perceive a high level of knowledge-competency on direct tasks with students and on preparing classes (over 65% scored it as maximum on both items), followed by meetings with colleagues (over 56%). The items Meetings with pupils’ families and Research inside the school-classroom receive the lowest median scores (medium-maximum) and the highest percentage of ‘not applicable’ answers (4.8% and 4.2%, respectively). Worth noting is that the last item in the Research inside the school-classroom domain received the lowest scores on knowledge-competency (38.9% of the respondents scored it as minimum or medium-minimum).

In the Technical-political-bureaucratic domain, the medians of all the items were at level 2 (medium-minimum knowledge). However, the items *Advising other professionals outside the school* and *Participating in socio-educational discussions with other actors-external professionals* stand out for having the most responses in the two highest scores compared to all the other activities in the area (roughly 45% of the respondents fall within the medium-maximum or maximum level of knowledge on both items). In contrast, participating in the development of educational regulations/educational policies garnered the least favourable scores (58% perceive having a minimum or medium-minimum knowledge-competency and 7.6% of the participants stated that the question was ‘not applicable’).

In the *Teacher training* domain, the median is in the level 2 range (medium-minimum knowledge) on all the items except on developing teacher training materials, which received a medium-high level of knowledge-competency.

In the *Scientific-academic* domain, more than half of the respondents perceived having a minimum or minimum-medium level of knowledge-competency for functions-tasks on all the items. In contrast, 30%–40% perceive having a medium-maximum or maximum level of knowledge-competencies. Finally, 8%–9% of the participants responded ‘not applicable’.

5 | Discussion and Conclusion

The ad hoc survey of preschool, primary and secondary education teachers in Spain was used to identify their perceptions of the structural features of the teaching profession and in turn analyse possibilities for developing a horizontally articulated professionalisation of teaching.

Overall, the perceptions collected in the three groups in the survey are in line with conclusions from prior socio-historical studies (Escolano 1982; Ortega 1987; Smaller 2015; Suasnabar 2013) and provide empirical support in concert with the theoretical assumptions formulated in the introduction (Densmore 2018; Labaree 1999; Monarca 2017). They describe a fragmented, differentiated and hierarchical field of education (Bourdieu 2000, 2002, 2014), which define the structural features of the field of education characterised by an uneven distribution of its actors’ opportunities to ‘say’, ‘do’ and ‘decide’ (Monarca 2021).

Thus, the data in Group I show a teacher, at least in Spain, spends most of his/her time at work—almost exclusively—on *functions-tasks* inside the classroom or school, spending almost no time on tasks-functions that have become configured as ‘not allowed’ or ‘seldom transited’ by teachers (Bourdieu 2014; Loughran 2019).

In line with the literature (Molla and Nolan 2019; Popkewitz 2018; Westberg 2019), teachers corroborate their having little or no participation in tasks-functions from the other domains in the field of education, just as the results show. This differs sharply with what happens in the so-called liberal professions (Aldrich and Ruef 2006; Kostoulas et al. 2019).

As regards the teachers’ perceptions in terms of their *expectations-interests* (Group II) in the tasks-functions from the other domains of the field of education, although most are not in the maximum or medium-maximum range of interest, the teachers’ interest in them is nevertheless greater than the amount of time they spend on them. Here, then, is where one might explore a potential path toward broadening the scope of the teaching profession and its professionalisation (Evans 2019; Monarca 2021).

Regarding their level of *knowledge-competencies*, the teachers perceive having the most in association with the tasks-functions they spend the most time on: the ones inside the classroom and school. In contrast, coinciding with previous research (Aldrich and Ruef 2006; Piazza 2019; Reimer 2019; Shirrell, Hopkins, and Spillane 2019), 49%–60% of the teachers see themselves as having a minimum or minimum-medium level for carrying out tasks-functions in the other domains.

Along those lines, what stands out sharply is the percentage of respondents who chose the ‘not applicable’ option in answer to the items referring to the three domains other than school-faculty. Although the datum does not lend itself to making any conclusive judgement, it does offer grounds on which to formulate a possible explanation within the framework of our research. As usually happens, teachers, like other professionals, naturalise—take for granted—the ‘status quo in force in the

field of education' (Bourdieu 2000, 2002, 2014), which is why they do not notice a priori any anomaly in terms of its configuration. This may be why teachers find it odd to be asked about certain tasks that they do not consider as being part of their role. Although not an aim of this study directly, it may also be assumed that the professionals from the other domains of the field of education also perceive it the same way, thereby (re)producing its current fragmented, differentiated and hierarchical structure. As Bourdieu (2000) states, the actors are socialised in a particular *habitus*, a dialectic process in which structure of the field shapes the *habitus* while also being shaped by it.

In short, the survey shows that teachers, at least in Spain, perceive that there are some fairly well-delimited zones or areas in the field of education in which they spend most if not all of their work time (Bourdieu 2014; Lewis and Hogan 2019; Reimer 2019). These zones and their borders are what stake out the functions–tasks of each domain and have become naturalised, normalised, assumed by teachers and the other actors in the field of education in accordance with the *habitus* of each (Bourdieu 2002). The teachers' chances of transiting among the different domains are conditioned by their own interests–expectations. And although these interests and expectations are shown to extend somewhat beyond what they do habitually, the data are not overwhelming. However, according to the perceptions collected, the main conditioning factor would be the level of knowledge-competencies they say they have for performing certain tasks. This holds especially true for the ones that, perhaps in their imaginary—the regime of truth in which the field itself socialises (Monarca 2024; Popkewitz 2018), the *habitus* (Bourdieu 2002)—are attributed to the 'expert' (Kostoulas et al. 2019; Molla and Nolan 2019; Piazza 2019; Reimer 2019; Westberg 2019).

Lastly, although the article has some limitations noted earlier regarding the makeup of the sample and others regarding the study being only synchronic rather than diachronic, and that the data refer exclusively to Spain, we believe it offers a useful new critical framework for studying the teaching profession and its professionalisation from a broader view of the field of education as a common ground for taking action. The way the field is (re)produced is rarely researched. Rather, its current order is naturalised, assumed as valid, ignoring the historical infighting among different actors to control and legitimise particular areas of knowledge, know-hows and practices (Abbot 1988) that have structured it as a field (Bourdieu 2000). Thus, attending to the regimes of truth underlying the order of things (Bourdieu 2014; Monarca 2024; Popkewitz 2018) constitutes a critical exercise that reinforces the democratic processes of contemporary societies. This is the direction our research here has sought to take. Although located in Spain, it may nonetheless prove useful in analysing what happens in many other countries that have had a similar background—and a present—in the configuration of its teaching profession and its professionalisation (Moore 2019; Smaller 2015; Suasnabar 2013; Westberg 2019).

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Ethics Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles approved by the Ethics Committee of Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this work will be available in the "e-ciencialDatos repository" (<https://edatos.consorciomadrono.es/dataverse/UAM>) after an embargo from the date of publication until the end of the project (September 2025).

Endnotes

¹'During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nation states constructed school systems for the masses, which eventually included their entire populations of children' (Ramirez and Boli 1987).

²In Spain, the Constitution recognises the freedom to create schools, thereby allowing the coexistence of public and private schools. Within the latter, there are subsidised private schools that receive public funding through the so-called educational concerts, provided that they comply with the legal requirements (Spain 1985, Organic Law 8/1985, article 50).

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