DIGITALEDUCATIONREVIEW

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS FROM EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN PARAGUAY

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ABSTRACT

The student's perspectives, their personal and professional aspirations are key factors that encourage their achievement of learning objectives during the development of the subjects of the educational programs. All this from Hermans' theory of the dialogic self, to understand how the processes of educational change are perceived, from the visions of their self-perception, using their digital narratives as border objects shared in virtual forums, as a reflective activity as a tool for introspection. We address the students' experiences with questions related to their expectations, motivations, uncertainties and support mechanisms throughout their learning processes. The instrument was applied to two groups of Paraguayan students at critical moments of educational change, one starting a postgraduate degree and the other finishing a professional degree (n= 68). The results were analysed from a qualitative approach, making units of significance emerge and categorizing personal narratives through Atlas.ti. The results include Cognitive Development, commitment to Knowledge Transfer, preference for Practical Experiential Learning, professional improvement, self-improvement, family, academic and expert support and accompaniment; how they self-manage the process of uncertainty, self-regulation, innovation, commitment and satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Students, Motivation, Higher Education, Digital Narrative, Self-Understanding

1 INTRODUCTION

Digital Storytelling (DST) has become a relevant educational tool in online courses, especially after the expansion of distance education. Its use ranges from the teaching of science and languages to the development of digital and social skills in various age groups. DST as a technique used by young students through the publication of content in the formal educational context as tools for introspection, allows students to recognize themselves and reflect on their personal experiences (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). DST is an activity methodology that adjusts to the context using storytelling as the main meaning, to explain and give voice to events, combining them with writing techniques that can incorporate multimedia elements, as well as short videos (Fiore et al., 2023). Taking advantage of this tool considering that one of the challenges in Paraguay is university dropout, where only 10% of enrolled young people finish their studies, this has multiple causes: the main one is that students must work to pay for their studies, others refer to the state of the quality of university education (Latitud, 2023). Globally, UNESCO (2023a) reported that there are around 235 million students enrolled in universities around the world, despite demand, only 40% of the world's population is enrolled, reflecting large inequalities between countries and regions.

Montico (2004), Hernández (2005), Rianudo et al. (2006) and Talerie (2023) sought to understand the relationships between student motivations, the teacher-student relationship, and students' self-efficacy in the classroom. Within the scope of Sustainable Development Goal 4 "Quality education", it leads the 2030 Global Education Agenda, from the perspective that education transforms lives, considered a human right for all throughout life (UNESCO, 2023b). In Paraguay, the National Institute of Statistics – INE (2016) report-ed that approximately 789,645 Paraguayan citizens between 15 and 35 years of age are studying, which represents 21.34% of this age group at the national level.

The integration of digital stories into online courses has been shown to increase students' academic performance, motivation, and engagement, facilitating the understanding of complex concepts and promoting active learning (Baim, 2015; Shelton et al., 2016, De Caro-Barek, 2022 Korukluoğlu & Yucel-Toy, 2022; Yuliani & Hartanto, 2022, Malakul &

Sangkawetai, 2024). This analysis included first-semester undergraduate and final semester master's students using virtual learning platforms from Asunción and Canindeyú. It contemplates digital narratives about the self (dialogic theory), its situation from the perspective of the main beneficiary actor, students from their identity and their learning for life (Ligorio, 2010). Seeking to investigate what are the personal and professional motivations of Paraguayan students in an educational community during their processes of change between school and university and undergraduate and graduate studies, considering that on average one in ten young people finishes university (Última Hora, 2012). Also, students improve their technological and social skills by creating and sharing digital stories, which fosters collaboration, communication, and creativity (Schell et al., 2019, Korukluoğlu & Yucel-Toy, 2022; Malakul & Sangkawetai, 2024).

1.1 Trends and visions on students' aspirations

Anderman & Midgley (1999) point out that teachers, coordinators, and academic directors can make suggestions to improve students' motivations and perceptions. These suggestions seek to reinforce the desire to complete their studies, their fulfilment and personal improvement. We have considered the following theories relevant to students and their teachers:

a) Attribution theory emphasizes that students' perceptions of their educational experiences influence their motivation more than the objective reality of those experiences. This theory suggests that, during training, teachers may unknowingly communicate various attitudes about whether the skill is fixed or malleable and can convey their expectations to students on an individual basis.

b) Goal theory focuses on the reasons that students perceive as achievements, orienting itself towards the belief that the purpose of achievement is self-improvement and understanding.

c) Self-determination theory is understood as the energy, direction, persistence, and purpose of behaviours, intentions, and actions (Stover et al., 2017).

According to Self-Determination Theory, teachers' motivations can influence their students (Pygmalion). Ahn et al. (2021) explains that teacher motivation affects students in their practice, especially when they support the sense of autonomy, skill support, and relationship support. These help to meet students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relationships, which in turn supports their autonomous (self-directed) motivation. Conversely, insufficient needs support undermines students' needs, resulting in controlled motivation or demotivation. Self-motivated students and those whose psychological needs are met tend to learn more compared to students with con-trolled motivation or unmet needs. Unmotivated students tend to learn the least (Adams et al., 2017).

Maltais et al. (2021) highlight the influence of parents in fostering students' motivation to become autonomous learners and achieve their goals. This is a chiaroscuro in the nature of the links between student motivation and parents' perception of concern for achievement. Likewise, Valek de Bracho (2007) found that a higher self-esteem index is associated with greater social motivations.

Rodriguez Illera et al. (2023) from GREAV used an analysis methodology as frontier objects, located in contexts of socio-educational change in higher education (Fuertes-Alpiste et al., 2023), through inquiry in different educational communities, with digital narrative instruments, applied to participants from different communities, in different periods of educational change. On the other hand, Pintrich & Zusho (2002) noted that the motivation of high school students is a persistent and persuasive problem for teachers and employees of postsecondary institutions. These professionals indicate the lack of motivation of the students. These problems can be explained in part through a perspective of motivation and lack of self-regulation of student learning in the university classroom.

1.2 Situations and challenges encountered students' aspirations

In Paraguay the aspirations of young people are often frustrated by various difficulties and challenges. Cáceres Morales (2012) argues that many students must work in different fields to cover the costs of their studies. Only 14% of young people in Paraguay can devote themselves fully to their studies. Economic problems, the centralization of education and the lack of opportunities are some of the main challenges they face in the academic field.

For Aguilar Wong (2020) generation X considers that the situation has improved, but it is generation Z in Paraguay that can currently express itself, get involved and fight for academic and labour improvements. Their capacity for participation and leadership must be taken advantage of by educational entities and institutions. But the lack of opportunities is often the reason why many young people migrate to their country in search of better participation and opportunities.

García & Lachi (2018) highlights there is a significant gap between the expectations of young students and their real possibilities of converting these aspirations into opportunities for training, employment and personal and professional growth. In the age range of 15 to 29 years old in Paraguay there is approximately 1,909,947 young people, 46.84% only work, 21.17% only study, 17.30% study and work, and 14.66% neither study nor work.

Considering these challenges, the United Nations in Paraguay (2021) indicates that the country only invests 1.1% of GDP in adolescence and youth. UNESCO recommends a minimum investment of 7% of GDP in education. Since 2006, Paraguay has averaged an investment of 4% of GDP. While the country is known for its fiscal responsibility, it must improve the use of bonds and financial opportunities to invest in the productive and motivating capacity of young people, thus promoting economic and inclusive growth.

1.3 The importance of listening and addressing youth motivation

Young people need to be heard and cared for; The diversity of ideas, perceptions, talents and skills should drive entities and institutions to bet on young talent. Humanes Otero (2017) argues that participation is essential to achieve sustainable and equitable human development.

It is essential to address the needs of young people for their education and to promote inclusion and develop skills for life and work (Butler & Muir, 2017; McGinty et al., 2018 and Kenny et al., 2023). In addition, we must focus on student motivation and rethink the dynamics and proposals to encourage them to study and train. Gómez García et al. (2020) point out that the implementation of ICT in education energizes the teaching and learning process, encouraging initiative and active motivation of students.

It is important to know the students' voice and perspective, including knowledge about job openings in the country to assess their skills and desires for training. Motivation can be influenced by social class, gender, and ethnicity, which must be considered in a motivational strategy. Understand the needs, motives, and interests of higher education applicants, which vary by individual and historical-cultural context. Cardozo Insaurralde & Benítez-Notario (2023) suggest greater interaction with young people to promote dialogue, trust, and communication by using digital technological tools, facilitating these activities and instant interaction, increasing integration and understanding of their needs and potentialities.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2010), based on the personal narratives of students in moments of educational change from the perspective of the dialogic self of Hermans (2013). The objective was to analyze and interpret the students' vision of themselves, during a moment of educational change, and their future expectations regarding their personal and professional lives. The sample included two different groups, one undergraduate (14) and the other postgraduate (54). Both groups represent moments of educational transition (beginning and end of training cycles), which allow us to observe how aspirations and motivations evolve throughout the academic journey. In addition, it has been suggested that differences in age, maturity and professional experience be explicitly recognized, as well as the influence of these variables on the interpretation of the narratives. Data were collected from the narratives of 68 students, one narrative per participant, using digital narrative boundary objects (Fuertes-Alpiste et al., 2023). The data were analyzed with Atlas.ti, using clustering techniques and coding by emerging categories (Sandín Esteban, 2003).

Research questions	Objectives	Dimensions	Question
How are educational change processes perceived in undergraduate and graduate courses at two institutions in Paraguay using boundary object creation activities?	To understand how the processes of educational change are perceived by students in undergraduate and graduate courses at two institutions in Paraguay, using narrative boundary objects.	1. Expectations	What interests and/or expectations do you have before taking the subject?
		2. Support	What and/or who do you think will help you in this process?
		3. Uncertainties	Is there anything that causes you uncertainty and doubt?
		4. Changes	What changes do you think you will experience?
		5. Motivations	How do you feel about this situation of educational change?

Table 1. Semi-structured narrative specifications

Note. Table 1 shows the dimensions and objectives that the interviewees have answered between March and April 2024. Source: Project The Creation of Situated Boundary Objects in Socio-Educational Contexts for Boundary Crossing in Higher Education by Fuertes-Alpiste et al. (2023).

3 RESULTS

During the development of the activities, the participants were asked about their expectations, resulting in the following categories:

3.1 Expectations

This dimension addresses the subjective anticipations of the participants that decisively influence their projection when venturing into a career or postgraduate degree. This category allowed the understanding of the motivations, desires, interests and feelings found in the chosen career. The structure of this dimension is presented below, together with the categories that have emerged and their respective descriptions.

Categories	Descriptions	Frequency
● Cognitive development	Develop the use of cognitive qualities within the framework of a subject.	36
● Transfer	It refers to the application of the knowledge acquired to other professional areas.	26
● Hands-on training	Learning method based on experiential practice	25
● Professional Enhancement	Reference to the increase in skills and abilities in professional practice and improvement in salary or economic income.	20
● Self-Improvement	Desire to achieve self-improvement, personal recognition and conviction to fulfil their mission.	9

Table 2. Categories of the expectations dimension

Note. Table 2 indicates the categories of the expectations dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.2 Cognitive development

It is the application, use and development of cognitive qualities and skills, within the framework of a subject, to successfully complete an activity or task. Thus, cognitive development obtained a total frequency of 36 coincidences, in which important pedagogical concepts such as: "deep learning", "cognitive bridge", "meaningful learning" or "Meta learning" appear. But at the same time, they highlight the importance of the acquisition of new knowledge and the processes of acquiring knowledge in a transversal way. The participants expressed: "I will experience changes in terms of my knowledge, skills and abilities", this highlights the importance of the pedagogical concepts exposed above, for the acquisition of knowledge in a transversal way, but also in a specific way, such as "in relation to the course, mainly, acquiring new knowledge", "expanding my knowledge and skills in project management". Cognitive Development acquires an important place in the lives of students as learners and as future professionals.

3.3 Transfer

It is defined as the transmission, application and adaptation of knowledge and skills. This category obtained 26 coincidences, which refer to different levels of transference such as facts, concepts, methods, conflict resolution and everyday transference. Thus, the participants have shown that it is important to "make decisions", "apply what they have learned in class", "obtain solutions to real problems" among others... that refer to conflict resolution or everyday life. On the other hand, participants recognize the value of trans-fer as a tool to improve knowledge, skills and abilities, for example, "contribute to generating significant learning", "learning by doing", "strengthen technical skills", participants recognize the importance of leadership within the transfer of skills.

3.4 Practical Trainning

Practical experiential learning refers to the "learning cycle" also called the "Kolb cycle" where learning goes through four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experience. The learning cycle allows us to move from the abstract (ideas and reflections, theories) to the pragmatic. Experiential practical learning obtained 25 repetitions. They express the need not only to know tools or techniques, but to be able to put them into practice, "apply basic tools", "develop analytical skills that improve the detection of opportunities". Some participants explain the importance of applying specific techniques; "use technological resources", "perfect skills, rules and concepts". Participants expressed the need to use and practice with digital tools.

3.5 Professional Enhancement

This category implies skills and competencies of the person in relation to quality as a professional individual, there were 20 coincidences. The participants highlight that an improvement as a professional involves "making better decisions", "optimal planning skills", and managing pedagogical competencies such as "Classroom planning, evaluation and management skills" and "leadership skills" as a mark of professional improvement.

3.6 Self-Improvement

It has to do with the constant effort to improve skills, abilities, knowledge and attitudes related to the purpose of advancing in the professional career, 9 coincidences were obtained. The participants' expectations of self-improvement are "Broaden my horizons and achieve goals abroad", on the other hand, in other people, self-improvement is based on the need for a balance "both professional and personal". The participants express that the greatest virtue to achieve self-improvement is "perseverance".

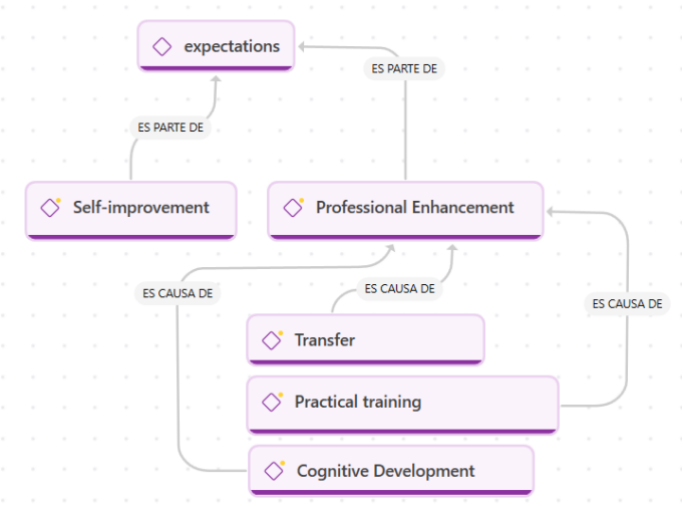

Figure 1. Structuring of the categories related to the "Expectations" dimension.

Note. Figure 1 shows the categories and relationships of the Expectations dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.7 Support

The "support" dimension refers to the connections, resources and networks that sustain participants at decisive moments in the race. This dimension has made it possible to identify the various ways in which each one feels accompanied in the academic training process.

Categories	Descriptions	Frequency
Peer-to-peer learning	El logro de aprendizaje por medio del trabajo colaborativo entre pares (estudiantes) pier to pier	50
Teacher accompaniment	Trust in the support of the teacher as a tutor or mentor in the teaching-learning process.	49
Previous experience	It refers to the conviction that prior knowledge about a subject will facilitate the achievement of teaching and learning of academic training.	13

Convictions	Belief in something that allows their goal to be fulfilled e.g. God, family or higher self, faith or personal conviction	10
Technological tools	Acquisition of knowledge of how to use technologies applicable to the practical management of the subject.	10
Expert Learning	Trust in the expertise of other people with more experience who frequently advise, however, it is not part of the teaching staff.	6

Table 3. Categories of the “Support” dimension

Note. Table 3 indicates the categories of the support dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.8 Peer-to-Peer learning

It is the achievement of learning through work and/or collaborative reinforcement. This category got 50 responses. Participants consider interaction and learning with peers to be essential, "I know I am not alone in this challenge, my peers are a source of learning and collaboration", interaction as a learning tool is essential. Participants are aligned with the idea that working as a team is more beneficial "Together we will face challenges, discuss strategies and support each other." Participants understand that peer-to-peer learning is not only to the class-group, but also to co-workers, even family members who have knowledge on the subject, "my co-workers", "some family members with expert knowledge on the subject". Participants consider peers as a more than valid source of knowledge and help.

3.9 Teacher accompaniment

It is a crucial part in the transmission and consolidation of knowledge since the teacher becomes the expert, which in turn transmits confidence in the teaching-learning process. A frequency of 48 coincidences was obtained, in which three important aspects of the teacher were visualized: "the mentor of the subject", "the teacher as tutor", "the teacher as an ex-pert in the subject".

The participants recognize in the figure of the teacher an anchor for the consolidation of ideas and concepts, "the teacher as a guide, plays a fundamental role in guiding, answering questions and facilitating the explanation of concepts". Participants detect in their teachers "experience and wisdom", "vast knowledge", but they also perceive in their teachers; "Openness and empathy".

3.10 Previous experience

It is the sum of stored memories related to the knowledge that the human being accumulates throughout his life, these memories can be practical, theoretical or experiential. 13 matches were obtained. One of the most valuable previous experiences they express is "work experience", because many perform functions like those of the studies they are studying. They see it as an opportunity to theorize about hands-on learning. Participants recognize the importance and relevance of learning and the experiences of others, as they see it as one more tool for how to nourish oneself with knowledge: "learning from the experience of others".

3.11 Convictions

Beliefs, whether religious, ethical, or political, shape character and influence actions and perceptions. There were 10 coincidences that highlighted the importance of the family as a pillar: "the family is the indisputable support of each person" and "the family is the base". Some considered teachers to be instrumental in achieving their goals, while others attributed their success to a higher power: "God first" and "with God's help".

3.12 Technological tools

ICT was perceived by 10 participants as positive. Another noteworthy aspect is the use of websites to delve into technological tools: "the use of the websites that it provides us". They consider it important to use technological tools as a transversal learning path: "I have integrated ICTs for reading, for research, among others", "ICTs are indispensable in the new times", understanding that they must be introduced into curricula and learning.

3.13 Expert Learning

6 coincidences were obtained stating that "they trust the experience of people who belong to their sector". They consider that it would be important to have the guidance of research experts; "People with experience in the field of research will be of great help." Participants recognize their own peers in the field and work as experts in certain related subjects; "My classmates in my workplace", "My classmates will guide me".

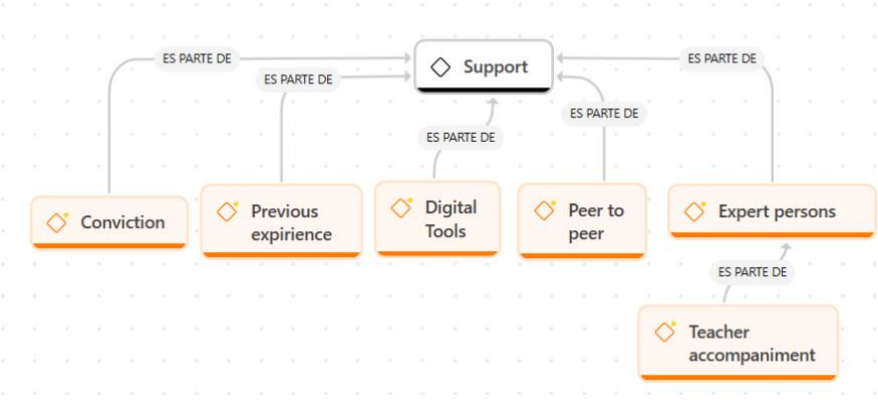

Figure 2. Structuring of the categories related to the "Support" dimension

Note. Figure shows the categories and relationships of the Support dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.14 Uncertainties

This dimension shows the doubts, questions and fears that arise when participants find themselves on an upcoming academic journey. Above all, it allowed us to understand what concerns they were expressing and their way of managing.

Categories	Descriptions	Frequency
Anxiety	A state of agitation, worry, and feelings that generate excessive uneasiness.	18
Insecurity	A state of not feeling safe or confidently convinced to carry out the proposed activities.	18
Fear	Feeling of terror or anguish about a risk, whether real or imagined.	11
Restlessness	Feelings of unease, lack of calm, worry, shock about something.	9

Table 4. Categories of the “Uncertainties” dimension

Note. Table 4 indicates the categories of the uncertainty dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.15 Anxiety

The anxiety caused in students by this situation of educational change was described in 18 repetitions, reflected in the attitude that causes imbalances in the state of calm or predisposition of students to react to uncertainty. It was indicated "we know that they always produce anxiety, worry", "I am anxious to start this new chapter in my educational career!", "anxiety, but the good thing about doubt and uncertainty is the origin of something new" and "vertigo, despair and more when the WhatsApp group was enabled".

3.16 Insecurity

The category obtained 18 mentions, this emotion is linked to anxiety, for example "The fact of not being able to fulfill one hundred percent with the activities due to other commitments generates uncertainty for me", "Doubts arise, how do I do this, is it okay, it is appropriate for me to do it this way, what will the professor say when he reviews my work, etc.", "I have no idea of everything that this new situation is going to entail, and many times I don't know where to start" and "The

lack of security and certainty generates uncertainty and doubts, especially in situations where I do not have control or sufficient information, which causes me restlessness, insecurity and stress".

3.17 Fear

The fear was indicated with 11 repetitions, being in the process of reaching the academic degree and the postgraduate degree, it is also associated with anxiety and insecurities, the fear of whether the task will be fulfilled effectively, is the fear of failure that sometimes sabotages the experience and even manifests itself as an obstacle: "Fears, doubts and uncertainties arise; It is logical because we work in a context that, in many cases, is novel", "then they become clearer, noticing that you managed to overcome your fears and acquired new learning", "and even fear... being a little behind in my professional career because I have many roles that life has" and "generates a kind of uncertainty and fears as if just acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge will be enough, even more so when it comes to the design, elaboration and execution of projects effectively and efficiently".

3.18 Restlessness

It was reflected with 9 repetitions as an almost natural effect before the process: "it generates some concern for me", "Honestly it generates a lot of uncertainty", "for me an uncertainty or doubt that worries students during the PEA", "It should be noted that, within the framework of the teaching-learning process, questions arise that concern us: "what will the tutor be like?" and "I wonder if I will be able to meet the demands of the program".

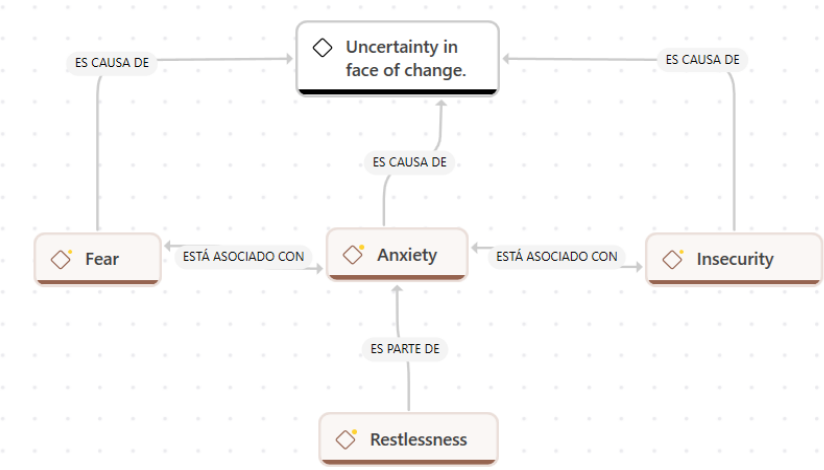

Figure 3. Structuring of the categories related to the "Support" dimension

Note. Figure 3 shows the categories and relationships of dimension Emotions in the face of Change. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.19 Changes

It is important to recognize that change is an inherent part of students' personal and academic lives. In this research, the category "changes" seeks to explore how participants perceive, cope with, and respond to transitions and transformations that may arise along their journey.

Categories	Descriptions	Frequency
Motivation	Curiosity and stimulation that drive to improve and/or develop learning.	25
Aperture	Attitude of opening to new knowledge or changes in current praxis	15
Innovation	Introduce new ways of producing, creating and designing, generating a positive change from what exists	15
Self-regulation	Competence to manage time for the fulfilment of the objectives proposed in teaching-learning	12
Satisfaction	Feeling of happiness, gratitude for fulfilling a wish. Fulfilment of an objective or need that produces tranquillity.	11

Commitment	Responsibility for the opportunity provided and repercussion on their work activities.	7

Table 5. Categories of the “Changes” dimension

Note. Table 5 indicates the categories of the dimension attitudes towards change. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.20 Motivation

With the highest frequency, this category expresses the curiosity and stimulus that drives them to develop learning and training. It was possible to verify that the participants feel motivated and challenged to the changes that are coming and that they can contribute significantly to the improvement. It has been repeated 25 times, making mentions such as: "I feel excited for the opportunity to grow and learn in an area that I am passionate about", "I feel excited because I am someone who likes changes if they are for the better", " Help my institution manage large projects, secure resources, and ensure the work is dynamic and enjoyable", "I am ready to face these challenges and seize the opportunities this educational change offers".

3.21 Aperture

Under this category, expressions of predisposition to take on new challenges, new beliefs, knowledge, practices that are necessary to change the way of interpreting and understanding have been manifested, it was given with 15 repetitions, indicated in explanations such as: "I am not afraid of change, change is fundamental for the development of a person, not to stay in their comfort zone", "one should not resist change", "to embrace the challenges that arise and make the most of this opportunity to expand my horizons" and "willing to learn and share experiences".

3.22 Innovation

It is the sum of stored memories related to the knowledge that the human being accumulates throughout his life, these memories can This category has been repeated with a frequency of 15 responses. Through it, the process of improving learning is interpreted as a new way of carrying out management, activities, and resolution of daily situations and challenges, even from the way in which teachers apply their pedagogy. It was indicated in comments such as: "we will implement it in our professional life and the growth of any professional and personal project will depend on it", "not only in meeting the needs, but in the art of the different, which makes me capable of reinventing myself, of exploring new dimensions that help me to be original and creative", "the desire for all the modules to be developed to be so interactive, with innovative proposals" and "to acquire innovative and updated skills for my daily classroom practices".

3.23 Self-Regulation

This category is linked to the fact of facing the chaos of time management and the activities that students must carry out daily, to cope with their personal, work and academic lives, achieving their objectives. It was seen in a frequency of 12 repetitions, reflected in comments such as: "Honestly, I am very uncertain about the fact that I cannot be one hundred percent connected in the class schedule, due to other commitments assumed previously; and I fear that because of this I may miss some important explanation or the completion of some task of the day.", "From the moment I signed up, it already generated changes in me, starting with organizing my time to participate in the established schedule.", "however, a planned, articulated work, free of discretion helps to dispel these uncertainties and pave the way to reach the goal".

3.24 Satisfaction

This category reflects the desire for personal and professional satisfaction of undergraduate and graduate participants, to achieve new academic goals and continuous improvement. As well as the opinion of the students about the teacher who teaches the classes. That was evidenced with 11 repetitions, through explanations such as: "I appreciate the teacher’s effort and patience in instructing us on this important subject", "I want to finish this master's degree satisfied with my efforts and confident in the quality of my work since the beginning", " With gratitude, hope, and satisfaction in learning a new field, I see great possibilities ahead", " The reward is fulfilling” and “I can’t express my joy in starting this new educational journey".

3.25 Commitment

This category indicated the professional commitment that the participants have with their vocation, with the institution for which they work and with the organization that awarded the master's scholarship. Also, the intention of retribution at the community they belong. It was mentioned by 7 students, in statements such as: " In this situation, I feel a stronger commitment to my tasks at the institution that provided this professional training opportunity", " Ready to lead and make a significant impact in my workspace", "Demonstrate my responsibility and ability to deliver results, and this educational process fosters commitment".

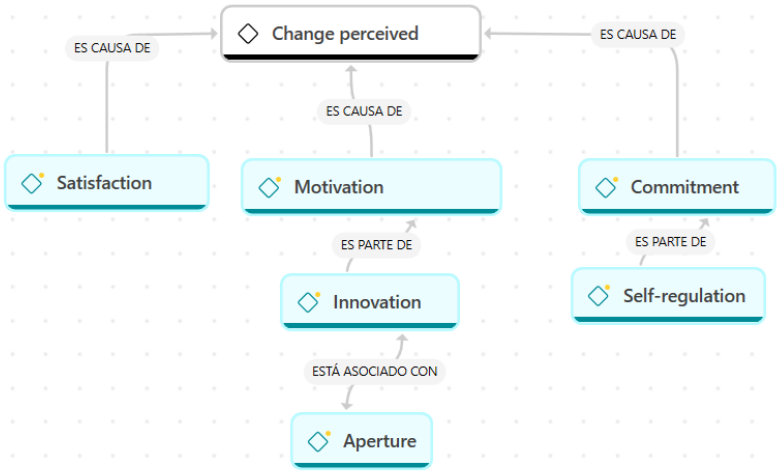

Figure 4. Structuring of the categories related to the "Changes" dimension

Note. Figure 4 shows the categories and relationships of the dimension attitudes towards Change. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.26 Motivation before the change

This dimension captures the motivating attitudes that participants believe they might experience. The categories pertaining to motivation in the face of change are described below.

Categories	Descriptions	Frequency
Strengthening competencies	Favourable positioning and improvement of competencies in professional practice.	31
Professional Development	Growth and progress in the field of the practice of the profession.	19
New insights	Acquisition of new information and knowledge that can contribute in some area of the subject	12

Table 6. Categories of the "Motivation before the change" dimension

Note. Table 6 indicates the categories of the motivations dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

3.27 Strengthening competencies

In relation to the motivations that led the participants to undertake the challenge of academic achievement, 31 of them expressed the desire to strengthen new professional competencies, which allow them to grow at the level of execution of their functions, performances and management. This was reflected in comments such as: "My goal for this module was to gain project management skills to create positive changes professionally and personally", "explore the latest trends in the market, identify opportunities", "Fulfil the module's requirements while enhancing my professional knowledge to improve my teaching practice".

3.28 Professional Development

This category evidenced the desire of students to improve their performance in their professional careers, which allows them to take on new challenges, be recognized with new skills and competencies by their superiors or that allow them to achieve new jobs, including promotions and better salaries. This is identified by statements such as: " Specialized training and postgraduate studies are excellent ways to stand out and add value to my resume", "The module will equip me with skills for future social and investment projects" and " My goal is to master project management, learn best practices, and lead successfully".

3.29 New insights

When developing training in a different area or updating knowledge in the field of professional competence, participants identified that their desire was to acquire new knowledge or update those in which they had a previous practice. This is verified in comments such as: "the opportunity I have is unique, new situations arise and education is advancing and requires more and more trained and updated teachers in different areas of knowledge"; "it will be a change boost, to new innovations" and "now I realize that it makes it possible to discover new knowledge in a perspective of awareness and motivation".

Figure 5. Structuring of the categories related to the "Motivations before the change" dimension

Note. Figure 5 shows the categories and relationships of the Motivations in the face of change dimension. Own elaboration with data from the project in Atlas.ti (2024).

4 DISCUSSION

As Colonessi et al. (2011) indicate, insecure attachment is moderately related to anxiety, with ambivalent attachment showing the strongest association, especially during adolescence (Manning et al., 2017). In this study, the participants' responses to their feelings, emotions and motivators, using reflection with boundary objects, reveal how they interpret the triggers of their fears, concerns and anxiety in times of educational change. Not achieving the objectives of completing the subject or career within the framework of self-regulation generates greater anxiety. They consider that tutors and their peers are the ones who will help them achieve their goal of completing the subject, even something superior (Frías et al., 2014). As Anderman & Midgley (1999) and Stover et al. (2017) explain as Teacher´s we must give confidence to the student, suggest strategies to arrive at goals and encourage their motivators.

The findings of this research reveal a complex network of factors that influence the educational aspirations and trajectories of Paraguayan students in contexts of educational change during the change from school to University, and from grade to post grade. Through the analysis of digital narratives, key dimensions were identified, such as cognitive development, knowledge transfer, experiential learning, teacher and peer support, and emotional management in the face of uncertainty. These results align with the postulates of Hermans' (2013) dialogical self-theory, which allows us to understand how students construct their identity and sense of agency in challenging educational contexts. Younger university students (18-24 years old) expressed greater confidence in their achievements in their subject matter and their careers. They also felt they would receive support, guidance, and learning from teachers, their classmates, and other learning-related agents, as mentioned in the results. On the other hand, older students (25-50 years old) initially expressed some insecurity, emphasizing that they did not feel worthy of being selected to pursue a master's degree. They also felt they would receive more support from external aspects of the educational environment, such as family, God, and beliefs that are more empowering from a subjective perspective. This idea strengthens what Aguilar Wong (2020) maintains in theory, saying that in many cases the most "expert" generation (generation X) considers that there are already improvements, but that the younger generation (Z) affirms that there are resources and aspirations to new dimensions of professional life. Young people showed greater enthusiasm and less insecurity when it came to making their aspirations known for university study. This strengthens the capacity for participation, leadership and the desire to train professionally.

On this regard, from the perspective of self-determination theory (Adams et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2017), students who perceive support for their autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relationships display greater self-directed motivation. In this study, peer-to-peer learning and teacher mentoring emerge as fundamental pillars for meeting these basic psychological needs, reinforcing the importance of educational environments that promote collaboration and mentoring (Ahn et al., 2021). What is striking is that it is clear how self-determination theory (Stover et al., 2017) actively influences young applicants (aged 18-24) due to their objectivity and greater openness in their academic aspirations. Furthermore, it can be observed that they direct most of their support toward teachers. This corroborates Ahn et al.'s (2021) theory, highlighting that teacher motivation affects students' sense of autonomy and support (Pigmalion).

Furthermore, attribution theory (Anderman & Midgley, 1999) helps explain how students' perceptions of their abilities and the educational environment influence their motivation. The narratives reveal that many students internalize their achievements and difficulties as a reflection of their effort and perseverance, which translates into a strong orientation toward personal and professional improvement. This orientation is reinforced by achievement goal theory, which highlights the importance of learning goals focused on understanding and personal growth (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002).

The study also confirms that structural conditions—such as economic constraints, the need to work while studying, and limited state investment in education (Cáceres Morales, 2012; UNESCO, 2023b)—remain significant barriers to educational development in Paraguay. This situation generates high levels of anxiety, insecurity, and fear among students. Emotions, as Colonnesi et al. (2011) and Manning et al. (2017) point out, are closely related to insecure attachment styles and contexts of vulnerability.

However, students also demonstrate a remarkable capacity for resilience and self-regulation, reflected in their willingness to innovate, reorganize their time, and commit to their education. These attitudes are consistent with those suggested by Maltais et al. (2021), who highlight the role of family and personal beliefs as sources of motivation and emotional support.

Finally, the use of digital narratives as a methodological tool not only allowed capturing students' voices in online and blended courses but also fostered processes of introspection and self-understanding (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022; Fiore et al., 2023). This methodological strategy aligns with the recommendations of Rodríguez Illera et al. (2023) and Fuertes-Alpiste et al. (2023), who propose narrative boundary objects as effective devices for crossing boundaries in socio-educational contexts.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The expectations dimension showed that cognitive development (36) is the main driving force for students, followed by knowledge transfer (26) and practical-experiential learning (25). This demonstrates a clear orientation toward meaningful learning, the applicability of knowledge, and professional improvement. Students not only seek to acquire knowledge but also to integrate it into real-life and work-related contexts, reinforcing the need for active and contextualized pedagogical approaches.

Regarding support mechanisms, peer learning (50) and teacher support (49) were the most valued. This strong presence of human support highlights the importance of collaborative relationships and the role of teachers as guides and mentors. Other sources of support, such as prior experience, personal beliefs, and the use of technological tools, are also recognized, suggesting a diverse and multidimensional learning ecosystem.

The uncertainty dimension revealed that anxiety (18) and insecurity (18) are predominant emotions in the face of educational changes. These emotions, although natural, can affect self-confidence and academic performance if not properly managed. The presence of fear (11) and worry (9) reinforces the need for institutional strategies for emotional support and academic guidance.

Regarding attitudes toward change, motivation (25) and openness to learning (15) were the most frequent responses, followed by innovation (15) and self-regulation (12). This indicates that, despite the uncertainties, students display a positive disposition toward change, with a resilient and proactive attitude. Satisfaction (11) and commitment (7) complete this picture, reflecting a positive assessment of the educational process and a clear intention to give back to their communities.

Finally, in the dimension of motivations prior to change, skills strengthening (31) and professional development (19) were the main drivers. This confirms that students view their education as a direct path to improving their job performance, accessing better opportunities, and contributing more effectively to their communities.

In resume, this research offers a critical view of the motivations, aspirations, and challenges faced by students in Paraguayan educational communities during periods of educational change. By analyzing digital narratives through established motivational theories, the study illuminates key factors influencing students' educational experiences, including cognitive development, career improvement, and forms of support such as peer-to-peer learning and technological tools. The research underscores the importance of addressing economic hardships, limited opportunities, and advocating for greater investment in education. The findings emphasize the need for educational institutions and policymakers to foster environments that listen to and support young people's educational trajectories, promoting both

inclusion and the development of relevant skills for life and work. Ultimately, it contributes to understanding how to better engage and motivate Paraguayan students, offering practical insights to improve education policies and practices to achieve sustainable and equitable human development.

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PERSPECTIVES I ASPIRACIONS PERSONALS I PROFESSIONALS D'ESTUDIANTS DE COMUNITATS EDUCATIVES DEL PARAGUAI

Les perspectives i aspiracions personals i professionals dels estudiants incentiven l'assoliment dels objectius d'aprenentatge als programes educatius. Utilitzant la teoria del jo dialògic de Hermans, s'analitzen els processos de canvi educatiu a través de narratives digitals compartides en fòrums virtuals com a eines d'introspecció. Es van abordar les experiències dels estudiants amb preguntes sobre les expectatives, motivacions, incerteses i mecanismes de suport durant el seu aprenentatge. L'instrument es va aplicar a dos grups d'estudiants paraguaians en moments de canvi educatiu: un iniciant un postgrau i un altre finalitzant una carrera de grau (n=68). Els resultats van ser analitzats qualitativament amb Atlas.ti, van revelar unitats de significació i categories com ara desenvolupament cognitiu, transferència de coneixements, preferència per l'aprenentatge experiencial pràctic, millora professional, superació personal, suport familiar i acadèmic, i gestió d'incertesa, autoregulació, innovació, compromís i satisfacció.

PARAULES CLAU: Estudiants, Motivació, Educació Superior, Narrativa Digital, Autocomprensió.

PERSPECTIVAS Y ASPIRACIONES PERSONALES Y PROFESIONALES DE ESTUDIANTES DE COMUNIDADES EDUCATIVAS DE PARAGUAY

Las perspectivas y aspiraciones personales y profesionales de los estudiantes incentivan el logro de los objetivos de aprendizaje en los programas educativos. Utilizando la teoría del yo dialógico de Hermans, se analizan los procesos de cambio educativo a través de narrativas digitales compartidas en foros virtuales como herramientas de introspección. Se abordaron las experiencias de los estudiantes con preguntas sobre sus expectativas, motivaciones, incertidumbres y mecanismos de apoyo durante su aprendizaje. El instrumento se aplicó a dos grupos de estudiantes paraguayos en momentos de cambio educativo: uno iniciando un posgrado y otro finalizando una carrera de grado (n=68). Los resultados fueron analizados cualitativamente con Atlas.ti, revelaron unidades de significancia y categorías como desarrollo cognitivo, transferencia de conocimientos, preferencia por el aprendizaje experiencial práctico, mejora profesional, superación personal, apoyo familiar y académico, y gestión de incertidumbre, autorregulación, innovación, compromiso y satisfacción.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estudiantes, Motivación, Educación Superior, Narrativa Digital, Autocomprensión.