

Implicações da pandemia do coronavírus na relação pedagógica entre professores e estudantes na universidade¹

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RESUMO

O presente artigo busca compreender aspectos inerentes à relação professor e estudante vivenciada no isolamento físico, causado pela pandemia do coronavírus. O estudo é de natureza qualitativa, do tipo, pesquisa de campo, tendo como dispositivo de recolha de informações a entrevista semiestruturada. A pesquisa foi desenvolvida com estudantes e professores do curso de Filosofia de uma instituição pública. O estudo traz à baila reflexões em torno do uso das tecnologias, a relação pedagógica e a afetividade. O estudo permitiu concluir que diálogo e acolhimento são necessários para a construção da relação pedagógica que possibilite o desenvolvimento de ensino e de aprendizagem. Evidenciou, também, a necessidade de haver compreensão sobre o corpo e seus limites, bem como sobre o ambiente em que estudantes e professores estão, e por fim, a importância do afeto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Afetividade. Ensino e aprendizagem. Relação pedagógica. Tecnologia.

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Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to understand aspects inherent to the teacher-student relationship experienced during physical isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is qualitative in nature, specifically field research, using semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. The research was conducted with students and professors from a Philosophy course at a public institution. The study brings forth reflections about technology use, pedagogical relationships, and affectivity. The research concluded that dialogue and support are necessary for building pedagogical relationships that enable teaching and learning development. It also highlighted the need for understanding both the body and its limits, as well as the environment where students and teachers are situated, and finally, the importance of affection.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogical relationship. Teaching and learning. Technology. Affectivity.

Implicaciones de la pandemia de coronavirus en la relación pedagógica entre profesores y estudiantes en la universidad

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RESUMEN

Este artículo busca comprender aspectos inherentes a la relación docente y estudiantil vivida en el aislamiento físico, provocado por la pandemia COVID 19. El estudio se basó en la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo enfrentaron docentes y estudiantes el aislamiento físico provocado por la pandemia COVID-19? El estudio es de carácter cualitativo, utilizándose una entrevista semiestructurada como dispositivo de recolección de información. La investigación se desarrolló con estudiantes y profesores de la carrera de Filosofía de una institución pública. El estudio pone en primer plano reflexiones en torno al uso de las tecnologías, la relación pedagógica y la afectividad. El estudio permitió concluir que el diálogo y la aceptación son necesarios para construir una relación pedagógica que posibilite el desarrollo de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. También resaltó la necesidad de comprender el cuerpo y sus límites, así como el entorno en el que se encuentran estudiantes y profesores, y finalmente, la importancia del afecto.

PALABRAS CHAVE: Relación pedagógica. Enseñanza y aprendizaje. Tecnología. Afectividad.

Introduction

To educate is a profoundly human endeavor. We build societies and technologies because we are capable of producing and mobilizing others to access information. But it goes beyond that when considering the educational aspects of humanity, we are also capable of transforming information into knowledge, encouraging others to learn and to produce new knowledge. The very concept of being human is a result of this educational movement: the ability to teach and to learn. In other words, it is impossible to conceive of education as an isolated phenomenon, detached from the social conditions in which humanity lives. As emphasized by Candau et al. (2017), the problems we face today such as economic, environmental, political crises, among others make inequality not only more visible but also more acute.

In other words, to educate requires not only the ability to recognize the diversity that shapes our society. At its core, the educational process demands the capacity to reinvent itself in order to overcome such differences. An education that does not move in this direction significantly contributes to the deepening of inequalities. In this context, education in the year 2020 was confronted with a major challenge: the pandemic caused by the coronavirus. This phenomenon affected bodies in different ways, altering the pedagogical relationship between teaching and learning. The philosopher Baruch Spinoza, in reflecting on the various ways in which bodies are affected, tells us that:

The human body is affected by external bodies in many different ways. Two men, therefore, can be affected at the same time in different ways. Consequently, they can be affected differently by one and the same object. Furthermore, the human body may be affected now in one way, now in another, and thus, at different moments, it may be affected differently by one and the same object (Espinoza, 2022. p.131).

In this sense, the pandemic affected teachers and students in multiple ways. Spinoza (2022) also points out that the more we are affected, the greater the power of the mind. In other words, the more we are able to perceive the world around us, the greater our capacity to reflect and act. But how can such a challenging moment for everyone contribute to reflections on education? Since it was a phenomenon experienced collectively, and as each individual is affected differently by one and the same object, it is possible to derive a wide range of reflections from this period.

We can identify several issues in which bodies in education were directly impacted. One such issue was the speed at which a new reality was imposed on everyone, leading to the implementation

of remote teaching due to physical isolation, without the necessary training for teachers to prepare for such abrupt changes. All of this occurred amid the rapid onset of COVID-19, which disrupted lesson planning and execution, access to technology, and the physical school environment previously considered an adequate space for planning, delivering, and attending classes among many other aspects.

Overcoming these challenges could not be achieved by denying the existence of the other and the conditions in which that other lived. More than ever, it became necessary to understand the limits of the pedagogical relationship and its implications for the teaching and learning process. In addressing this issue, we must remember that the pedagogical relationship is only possible because it involves two beings who, before being teachers or students, men or women, employed or unemployed, are first and foremost human beings. Therefore, to point to the limitations of the pedagogical relationship is to point to the limitations of human relationships and, at the same time, to the limitations of the human being as such as a being in the world, not a passive entity merely affected by the environment, but one who acts upon affections and transforms the world.

Santos (2020) argues that, in the face of a permanent crisis, one can interpret everything through its lens. However, in this case, we faced an atypical scenario, in which the crisis physical isolation was temporary, yet it exposed the roots of numerous problems.

Thus, the objective here is to understand the challenges that teachers and students faced in a new pedagogical relationship shaped by COVID-19. Over the course of this study, three main areas were mapped: a) the pedagogical relationship, considering not only the dialogue between teacher and student but also the individual conflicts of each and how these could either positively or negatively influence the learning process; b) the use of technology, taking into account the dynamics between individuals and machines, and how personal relationships with technology affected the pedagogical relationship; and finally, c) learning processes, with a focus on understanding what lessons teachers and students drew from their personal and collective experiences.

Methodological Approach

In order to focus on the issue of the teacher-student relationship within the university context, it was necessary to define the type of approach to be adopted. It was thus decided that the research would rely on autobiographical accounts, thereby assuming a qualitative character. According to Silva et al. (2023), the qualitative approach prioritizes the valorization and production of meaning, aiming to emphasize aspects of singularity, often found in field research, particularly of an

Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university autobiographical nature.

Thus, characterized as field research, the qualitative approach focused primarily on valuing the meanings produced by the study participants based on their lived experiences during the pandemic period. As stated by Minayo (2008):

Qualitative research addresses very specific questions. In the social sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot be quantified. In other words, it works within the universe of meanings, motivations, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes corresponding to a deeper dimension of relationships, processes, and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the operationalization of variables. (Minayo, 2008. p. 21).

This approach was chosen based on two main considerations. First, the individuality of each person demanded a closer engagement with each participant's unique experience—singular narratives that, nonetheless, intersect at various points. Second, care was taken to avoid mere reductionism or a solely historical description. Instead, the goal was to connect these individual narratives to a broader context, allowing for a more precise and in-depth analysis of the pedagogical implications caused by physical isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, the study was conducted with five participants, including two teachers and three students who had taken classes with the participating teachers. This criterion aimed to explore the pedagogical relationship and the challenges faced by these individuals during physical isolation. The interviews were conducted individually and lasted between 22 and 46 minutes on average. Recordings were made using a mobile phone. The interviews were transcribed and categorized based on thematic nuclei that emerged from the narratives themselves. It is important to note that, for ethical reasons and in compliance with the guidelines of the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) that approved the study from which this research originated, the participants' names are fictitious..

To carry out the analytical process, we drew on Ricoeur's (2000) comprehensive and interpretive paradigm. Thus, the categorization process was constructed based on thematic nuclei that emerged from each participant's narrative, and these were grouped according to the similarity of meanings that were gradually developed. In this sense, the aim was not to interpret the narratives from the researchers' perspective, but rather to uncover the meanings that the participants themselves produced in the act of narrating.

In the following sections, we address the thematic nuclei that emerged from each narrative. Following this logic, the themes were grouped into three categories: the pedagogical relationship, the use of technologies, and the teaching and learning processes.

Pedagogical Relationship

In order to understand the pedagogical implications caused by physical isolation in the context of the pedagogical relationship, it is first necessary to define what we mean by "pedagogical relationship." It refers to the relationship established between teachers and students throughout educational trajectories. We begin with the assumption that this relationship is not homogeneous. On the contrary, it is a relationship characterized by heterogeneity in various aspects.

Nature as a whole is marked by pluralities distinct species of plants and animals, different climate types; and among human societies, we encounter territorial differences, varying concepts of temporality, and diverse cultural practices a vast field defined by difference. Thus, the pedagogical relationship encompasses a heterogeneity that is inherent to human nature itself. Freire (2011) states that "it is not possible to reflect on what education is without reflecting on what it means to be human" (Freire, 2011, p. 29). It is the plurality of existences that shapes human formation. The human being is not merely a being in the world, but also a being with the world, for it is through these pluralities of existence that we constitute ourselves as subjects individuals capable of transforming the world. It is through being that one learns to become. Considering human nature in its educational aspects, Ribeiro (2010) argues that:

Today, the role of the teacher has become much broader and more complex, as they have ceased to be merely transmitters of information and knowledge, and are increasingly recognized as partners in the student's knowledge construction—a partnership that requires new knowledge and attitudes, enabling students to integrate both cognitive and affective dimensions, as well as attitude formation, into the learning process of academic subjects (Ribeiro, 2010. p. 405).

In this sense, the coronavirus pandemic emerged as a phenomenon that challenged the various ways of being in the world and with the world, profoundly shaking notions of individuality, interaction, and corporeality. Teachers and students found themselves facing a great enigma posed by the sphinx⁴, how to adapt so quickly to an entirely new environment that had been imposed with such abruptness?

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic was extremely chaotic and traumatic—an event that impacted all layers of human society. The "wounds" of society were laid bare, and the various flaws in our system became more visible. In addition to exposing these vulnerabilities, COVID-19 also contributed to the worsening of such problems.

⁴ An ancient myth, in which those who failed to solve the riddle would be devoured..

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It has been stated that, in order to discuss the pedagogical relationship, one must speak about the human being and their interaction with others and with the world. It thus seems appropriate to describe the human environment that is, the fragility surrounding this topic as experienced by teachers and students of the Philosophy program at the State University of Feira de Santana (UEFS). Student Qiyana reports:

During the first three months, I faced great difficulty with that (referring to the challenges of remote classes). Here at home we live on a minimum wage, so there was no way to get internet access (...) I would go to my aunt's house every day to attend classes, and on the way back, she would take me halfway home, because by then the streets were empty due to the time, and I couldn't sleep there every night because of my grandmother, who's 85 years old. There was one time she got sick during the night, and I had to take her to the hospital. It's one thing to be away for a week it's another to be away every single day. I even received that internet assistance, but I returned the money because I realized it wouldn't be enough to buy the router and pay for installation. They gave us the money to pay for an already installed service, and since I had to submit proof of payment, I gave it back. (Qiyana, Entrevista, 2023)

Students in economically vulnerable situations experienced greater difficulty keeping up with remote classes during physical isolation. Teachers had to contend with the marked diversity of learning environments, teaching methodologies, and learning processes that were not adapted to this new context. Moreover, the pedagogical relationship itself was shaped by the constant threat of infection and potential health complications, generating ongoing fear and insecurity.

Professor Nasus reports: *"Regarding the students, what I noticed is that they were attending classes under the most diverse conditions imaginable (...) The students who come and travel to the university meet in a classroom there, they have a prepared environment."* (NASUS, Interview, 2023). In other words, during remote classes, the professor realized that his students lacked a suitable environment for studying. He observed that when students turned on their cameras or microphones, family members and friends were often present during class time, televisions could be heard in the background, or people were talking nearby. *"I had a lesson plan, and it was completely frustrated not entirely, but it was compromised by the dynamics of the virtual class, and I had to revise it, often shorten presentations, and in some cases, make them more visual,"* Nasus explains. (NASUS, Interview, 2023):

People including we, the teachers became more tired. The delivery of the lessons, the presentation itself... The way we direct our attention to the class, and the fact that in virtual classes we cannot, for example, monitor students' reactions. So I don't know how what I say is received. In face-to-face classes, it's much easier to perceive that because we're eye to eye with the student. It's much easier to tell whether the

theoretical phrase or gesture you're using in class is being followed by the students—whether it has sparked interest or not” (Nasus, Interview).

Issues such as these led both teachers and students to feel emotionally exhausted. How can one assess whether a student understands what is being taught when the teacher is not physically present? Is it possible to establish a meaningful pedagogical relationship under conditions of physical isolation?

We observe, therefore, that the very notion of space was profoundly disrupted. The classrooms we were used to environments carefully prepared for the teaching and learning process, with rows of desks, doors, and windows gave way to a computer or cellphone screen. In the virtual environment, the notion of space changes; it becomes broader. The dynamics of interaction take on a new form. The technological network that connected teachers and students and made classes possible was also the very network that created distance. In other words, being connected was not synonymous with being present. And education requires presence, as Freire (2022) emphasizes:

And these conditions imply or require the presence of educators and learners who are creative, provocative, inquisitive, rigorously curious, humble, and persistent. (...) Only then can we truly speak of knowledge being taught, in which the object being taught is grasped in its essence and, therefore, learned by the students (Freire, 2022. p. 28).

At this point, our inquiry turns to understanding how this process unfolded how did students and teachers respond with concern and restlessness to what was happening? Professor Marina emphasizes:

The classroom space is very rich; it fosters discussion. But during the pandemic, I sensed a certain fragility in the students I felt as if they were reaching out for help, and that we were there... because we, too, were asking for help. I think we were all asking together (Marina, Entrevista, 2023).

The act of educating requires care, and such care within education proved to be essential for overcoming the obstacles that emerged. In other words, how could a teacher conduct their classes while disregarding the realities faced by students? The direct transposition of the in-person class model to remote classes proved to be ineffective. What methodologies could students develop to ensure meaningful learning? How were such questions addressed by both teachers and students? On this point, student Belchior shares:

As for dialogue, I would say I had no difficulty; on the contrary, I found the teachers more available to listen and more understanding. I believe the pandemic affected everyone, and because of that, I noticed a shift toward greater closeness and stronger

Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university bonds between teachers and students during the transition to remote learning (Belchior, Entrevista, 2023).

In other words, these challenges could not have been overcome without the strengthening of bonds. Education is built through dialogue and the affective connection constructed jointly between teachers and students.

Affective relationships, in this context, take on a non-trivial role, as affection is understood as something profound of great importance in the teaching and learning process. The philosopher Spinoza (2022) defines affection as anything capable of increasing or diminishing our power to act. The more we are affected and the more we are able to perceive the things that affect us, the greater our capacity for action. Joyful affections arise, therefore, from an adequate understanding of the affections. Affections related to sadness, on the other hand, result from an inadequate understanding of them.

In other words, a lack of understanding of affections and of the ways in which teachers and students were being affected led to feelings of exhaustion and difficulty in engaging actively in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, as they were affected by these phenomena namely, physical isolation, remote classes, and the transformed learning environment teachers and students, through the pedagogical relationship, began to develop a form of knowledge about these affections. As this knowledge became more adequate, enhancing the ability to act, it enabled the development of strategies by both parties. In this regard, Ribeiro (2010) emphasizes that:

Affectivity can either stimulate or inhibit the students' learning process: from a negative standpoint, the absence of this factor appears as the main source of learning difficulties; conversely, from a positive standpoint, its presence enhances the student's relationship with curricular subjects and with the teacher, and consequently ensures better academic performance (Ribeiro, 2010. p. 406).

The adoption of this commitment to a pedagogy grounded in affective understanding became evident throughout the process. Reinforcing the importance of building a pedagogical relationship anchored in the principles of affectivity and care, Professor Marina states:

One very important thing I did was to make my WhatsApp available. If someone is my student, enrolled in my course, my WhatsApp is open to respond at any time [...] because I understood that we were all in a situation we were all vulnerable, all of us were fragile so at that moment, more than ever, we needed to hold hands and support each other." (Marina, Interview, 2023).

Therefore, the dialogical process inherent to the pedagogical relationship becomes impossible without the presence of affectivity. It is through affection that students and teachers are able to move

together toward a common goal a goal that is built through the ongoing process of becoming in education, both for learners and for teachers. Thus, physical isolation brought about the need for new forms of closeness, which were consolidated through affectivity and the necessity of sustaining dialogue and care.

Understanding Technologies: Challenges and Possibilities of Physical Isolation

The use of technology revealed the need for inventions and reinventions something only the human species is capable of achieving. Flusser states that, “The factory is, therefore, a common and characteristic creation of the human species what has been called 'human dignity.' One can recognize humans by their factories.” (Flusser, 2007, p. 35). From the moment human beings comprehend their world, they begin to transform it. The production of technology is, therefore, a form of resistance and transcendence—not only a transformation of the environment, but also a process of self-transcendence, in which individuals, by modifying their surroundings, expand their way of existing in the world. “Factories are places where new forms of human beings are continually produced.” (Flusser, 2007, p. 37) Flusser further argues that:

Machines required not only empirical information, but also theoretical knowledge, and this explains the reason for compulsory education: primary schools to teach how to operate machines, secondary schools to teach how to maintain them, and universities to teach how to build new machines. Electronic devices demand an even more abstract learning process and the development of disciplines that, in general, are not yet widely accessible (Flusser. 2007. Pg.42).

Considering Flusser’s (2007) perspective, it becomes evident that education, in general, has a formative role in preparing individuals to engage with technology. Even before physical isolation, technology was already part of everyone’s daily life. Thus, when remote classes were implemented, neither students nor teachers were expected to encounter significant difficulties in this regard. However, that was not what happened. Marina shares: “*Within me, there was always something missing—we need to improve, we need to get better with this technology, because this technology brings us closer, so that it doesn't remain something cold.*” (Marina, Interview, 2023). In other words, although technology is an extension of the human body that is, one of the ways human beings exist in the world—teachers and students did not experience a process of identification with it. Because they did not identify with the virtual environment, they felt a kind of absence an absence of the self. To deal with such absence, it became necessary to reconfigure and re-signify the concept of the body. Is it possible to be truly present in the absence of the other’s physical presence? Is there space for bodies in a virtual environment? As educators and learners, the challenge lies in shaping an integrative

Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university education one that can respond to this absence of the “self.” Based on the testimonies shared, it is also important to stress that access to technological resources cannot be ignored . Student Qiyana emphasized:

To this day, I don’t know how to use some tools I still have difficulties. I used to live with my parents, and there was no internet at home. We only got electricity in our house when I was 15 years old. Even now, my parents still don’t have internet, although my father is trying to get it installed, but the network hasn’t reached the area yet. I attended classes using my cellphone, but it was already very old it had been repaired three times. So, during class, I could hear the teachers, but when I tried to speak, they had trouble hearing me. That’s when I started looking into financial assistance to buy a new phone, because even though I submitted several résumés, no company gave me a chance since I don’t have any work experience.” (Qiyana, Interview, 2023).

From Qiyana’s account, we can identify some key issues for understanding the phenomenon of lack, previously addressed by Professor Marina. First, the difficulty in handling technology, in having a device to attend classes or even in having reliable access to such a device directly affected students’ ability to follow classes during the period of physical isolation. Professor Marina points out that “there’s a certain shyness about raising one’s hand” (Marina, Interview, 2023), and this shyness relates to the willingness or comfort to engage in learning and construction. In other words, if a person does not identify with the technology or finds themselves unable to establish such identification, their capacity to act will be consequently inhibited leading to another discussion: the process of humanization. On this subject, Freire (2022) states:

It does not matter which age group the educator works with. Ours is a task carried out with people children, youth, or adults but people who are in a constant process of seeking. People in formation, changing, growing, reorienting themselves, improving and, because they are people, capable of rejecting values, of distorting themselves, of withdrawing, of transgressing (Freire, 2022 p.141).

We therefore understand that, even within the context of physical isolation, overcoming the barriers imposed by technological limitations in terms of closeness required a process of "becoming human"—that is, a need to reframe bodily expressions, redirecting the understanding of the machine not as something distant, cold, empty, or as a labyrinth in which the “selves” of teachers and students are lost, but rather as a space in which multiple conditions and possibilities of existence can be explored. “Ultimately, what is essential in the relationships between educator and learner, between authority and freedom, between parents and children, is the reinvention of the human being in the learning of their autonomy. I move as an educator because, first, I move as a human being.” (Freire, 2022, p. 92). And it was precisely this capacity for reinvention that became evident during this period.

From the narratives presented, one fundamental phenomenon cannot be overlooked: human curiosity.

Freire (2022) writes:

The exercise of curiosity calls upon imagination, intuition, emotion, the ability to hypothesize, to compare, in the search for the perfection of the object or the discovery of its reason for being. A sound, for example, may spark my curiosity. I observe the space where it seems to originate. I sharpen my hearing. I try to compare it with another sound whose origin I already know. I investigate the space more thoroughly. I consider several hypotheses regarding the possible source of the noise. I eliminate some until I arrive at its explanation. Once one curiosity is satisfied, my capacity to be intrigued and to seek remains intact. There would be no human existence without our openness to the world, without the transitivity of our consciousness (Freire. 2022. p. 85).

And the curiosity that drives educators and learners must always move in the direction of humanization. In the words of Tom Zé, *“What saves humanity is that no one can cure curiosity.”* Human curiosity reveals itself as an inherent part of the questioning nature of the human being. Without the desire to understand why night falls or how we might preserve food for longer, without this driving curiosity, it would be impossible to conceive of what we now call society, ethics, or morality. Without this curiosity that propels us, there would be no way to comprehend ourselves or the world around us. It was this very curiosity that proved essential for teachers and students alike, guiding them toward possible pathways for navigating the new reality of remote education and physical isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was in this pursuit of knowledge of learning how to navigate technology and reinvent oneself that the following concern emerged for Marina: *“I kept thinking, the classes need to go in this direction we need to humanize this. I’m not going to let the machines take over completely.”* (Marina, Interview, 2023). Here, we can perceive, within this constant tension between the relationship with oneself and with technology, the human difficulty in navigating something that they themselves created..

However, Marina’s statement reveals to us a possibility a viable path to overcome the coldness and dominance of machines, the lack of mastery, and the absence of the “selves” that become lost in this technological world: affection. *How can we “humanize machines?”* This was the question that stirred Marina’s curiosity, as well as that of other teachers and students during the period of physical isolation.

This issue was mapped out based on the idea of understanding how a process of identification with the machine was established how teachers and students engaged with tools, methods, or strategies that enabled them to carry out their university activities. In this way, we observed the need

Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university to identify with one another and, consequently, to also identify with and humanize the machines, so that a meaningful teaching and learning process could be built one that incorporated technological resources as human resources as well, imbued with affection and care.

As a teacher as a mediator of knowledge and learning you need to ask yourself: How does the student perceive what they're feeling? And they speak, and they articulate that speech. I believe that speaking is an extremely healing process. And in the classroom space since we were no longer together to hug, smile, debate, or disagree where, in theory, formal knowledge is supposed to happen in the physical space, we couldn't see it." (Marina, Interview. 2023).

In Marina's narrative, we find the idea of speech the manifestation of the body as a healing process, for it is through speech that an understanding of the body's extension was achieved. It highlights the importance of the teacher recognizing the student as an active subject, one who simultaneously participates in that moment of teaching and learning, and in the educational environment as a whole. Even in remote classes, the environment is shaped by the distinct existences and ways of being and being present. It would be impossible to engage in the virtual space without acknowledging these aspects.

Learnings: Understanding Humanization

As observed, both teachers and students showed signs of vulnerability when faced with the adversities of physical isolation. During the interviews, it became clear that both groups made direct or indirect references or critiques not only regarding issues related to diversity, but also to phenomena concerning the academic curriculum. This is evident in narratives such as that of Professor Marina, who, when discussing learning situations, reflects:

There was a decline, perhaps, if we're thinking in terms of quality—but what kind of quality are we talking about? Are we referring to a cognitive, grade-based quality, thinking in terms of indicators? But after all, what constitutes those indicators? Because what really matters, when I assign an indicator to a grade, to attendance, to dropout or retention rates... How many students were present? Yes, but when I use an indicator that's meant to reflect how the class went and what the students actually learned, I'm also taking other factors into account." (Marina, Interview 2023).

Professor Marina highlights that when we speak of the quality of education, there are, behind this notion of "quality," certain attributes or foundations that define how we measure what we call quality. More precisely, learning situations need to be reflected in indicators that demonstrate student learning. The most basic notions commonly associated with high-quality education tend to rely on criteria such as grades, participation, attendance, or dedication. However, these foundations were severely shaken by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of remote learning, and

physical isolation. How can we assess a student based on class participation when many do not have easy access to technological resources or, even if they do, they lack an adequate study environment?

On this matter, Ribeiro (2010) points out that:

The guidelines concerning teacher education in Brazil (1999) emphasize that a “quality” education must foster in learners a range of capacities: “cognitive, affective, physical, ethical, aesthetic, social integration, and interpersonal relationship skills” (p. 25). This document states that the establishment of affective relationships has a direct impact on educational work, and that only teachers who value the development of such relationships create the necessary conditions for the social integration of their students (Ribeiro. 2010. p. 406).

Thus, the notion of quality emphasized in Professor Marina’s narrative is intrinsically connected to the elements highlighted by Ribeiro (2010), particularly because quality cannot be dissociated from human conditions and from indicators that reflect effective improvements in the interpersonal relationships students establish with their professors at the university. However, the pursuit and implementation of this kind of quality, as outlined above, requires both teachers (and students) to understand that quality cannot be defined by a single, isolated factor. According to Freire (2022):

The democratic educator cannot deny the duty, within their teaching practice, to strengthen the learner’s critical capacity, their curiosity, their insubordination. One of their primary tasks is to work with learners on the methodological rigor with which they must ‘approach’ the objects of knowledge. And this methodological rigor has nothing to do with the ‘banking’ concept of education.” (Freire. 2022. p.28).

From this reflective perspective, and considering the learning possibilities that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, one essential question arises: what did teachers and students learn from this experience? The concept of experience that emerges here points to an idea of collaboration of a body that is conscious of the relational and affective dimensions that education fosters. It is necessary, however, to understand that the learning process is built through minds and hands that complement each other in an act of knowledge production and liberation. And none of this would be possible without the relationship between teachers and students a relationship that demands attitudes of resilience, of overcoming barriers and difficulties. According to Freire, (2022):

Life on its own does not imply language nor the upright posture that enabled the liberation of the hands hands that, to a great extent, made us who we are. The greater the solidarity between mind and hands became, the more life transformed into existence and the world took shape. Life became existence, and the support became world, in proportion to the human body becoming a conscious body one that perceives, grasps, transforms, and creates beauty, rather than a mere ‘space’ to be filled with content (Freire. 2022. p.51).

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In other words, learning is more than merely the ability to understand. Learning takes place through the overcoming of the environment as it is perceived. It occurs in the act of transcendence, in which the individual surpasses both internal and external barriers and limitations. It is, consequently, the capacity to transform the environment to the extent that one transforms and surpasses oneself. This perspective is clearly expressed in the words of student Qiyana, who, reflecting on perseverance, states: *“Even though everything is complicated, we must not give up on what we truly want.”* (Qiyana, Interview, 2023)

And it is this *wanting* that motivates us, that moves us forward. Spinoza (2022) affirms: *“There is in the mind no absolute or free will; the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this one, in turn, by yet another, and so on to infinity.”* (Spinoza, 2022, p. 87). What is it that moves and motivates a student to strive toward self-overcoming? And likewise, from this perspective, we may ask: what compels teachers to go beyond their own limitations, pushing through fatigue in order to foster learning?

For Freire (2022), *“My presence in the world is not that of someone who merely adapts to it, but of someone who seeks to engage with it. It is the position of one who struggles not to be merely an object, but also a subject of History.”* (Freire, 2022, p. 53). And it is precisely this *desire to engage* that drives us, that affects us. It affects us because we are human because we recognize that we are beings in the world. That is, from the moment teachers and students acknowledge themselves as beings inserted in the world not as passive objects, but as subjects, as protagonists of their own stories, capable of transforming both themselves and the world around them, the learning process becomes possible. Without this movement, meaningful education cannot exist. In other words, without this movement, it would not be possible to conceive of anything positive arising from the period of physical isolation or from any other moment in human or individual history.

It is from this context that questions such as those raised by Professor Marina emerge: *“I always tried to be engaged in what I was doing how can I do it better?”* (Marina, Interview, 2023). How can we do better? She also points out that she sought to direct

(...) A more individualized attention to the student a gaze of awareness. I had that gaze, and the pandemic shook me even more in that sense; it made me more alert to the problems that afflict us, to the problems that afflict humanity, to the glaring inequality we witnessed during the pandemic.” (Marina, Interview. 2023).

This *gaze of awareness* inherently demands an individualized understanding an acknowledgment that inequalities are closely tied to the learning process, since diversity is directly

affected by them. As we have seen, with the arrival of remote classes and physical isolation, this more critical perspective became more acute. To be a teacher requires the ability to perceive and understand learners in their diversity and individuality to know how to navigate and listen to students' voices amid overwhelming inequality. Student Belchior states:

From my experience in both scenarios, I can say emphatically that teachers were much more understanding. Professors I had already studied with in face-to-face classes really surprised me in this regard, because they tried to adjust and understand the challenges students were facing unstable internet connections, lack of privacy during presentations, anxiety, emotional imbalance (...) there were many problems throughout remote learning activities, and I always witnessed, on the part of the teachers, attitudes of understanding and flexibility to support teaching within the existing possibilities" (Belchior, Interview, 2023).

Here, we reaffirm a fundamental aspect of the teaching profession: the ability to work with the possibilities at hand. A good teacher seeks the necessary solutions to foster learning by relying on the resources available within their environment. This is not to say, of course, that we do not need greater investment in education, or that issues such as research funding and the infrastructure in which teachers and students operate should be overlooked. Rather, it means that a good teacher, despite the adversities encountered, does not give up they do not abandon their role in motivating others to learn and to overcome their difficulties.

A true education professional is one who invests effort, who understands that their position can change lives and, beyond that, can contribute to making the world a better place. In light of this, Nasus states: *"I became more concerned with interaction something that was crucial during the pandemic."* (Nasus, Interview, 2023). And it is precisely because of this concern because of this humanizing posture of listening on the part of teachers that the process of humanizing machines emerges as necessary. The interaction referred to here goes beyond simply responding to questions posed by the teacher during class. It moves in the direction of understanding that students must truly grasp the content being taught. However, it is also necessary to keep in mind that:

No one is the subject of another's autonomy. On the other hand, no one suddenly matures at the age of twenty-five. We mature every day or we don't. Autonomy, as the maturation of the being for itself, is a process, a becoming. It does not happen on a set date. In this sense, a pedagogy of autonomy must be centered on experiences that encourage decision-making and responsibility that is, on experiences that respect freedom (Freire. 2022. p. 105).

In other words, it is important to recognize that the notions of interaction or autonomy discussed here are not realized exclusively through the actions of the teacher. This point must be

Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university emphasized to avoid the misconception that the teacher is solely responsible for delivering a quality education. One of the fundamental roles of the teaching profession is the ability to encourage learners to pursue knowledge critically and autonomously. It becomes clear that such knowledge is achieved when we encounter statements like: “I learned that difficulties can be overcome, and the virtual world reduced the distance between knowledge and learning.” (Jhin, Interview, 2023). These are students who learn to persist and to fight for their education students who find, within difficulty, a path toward overcoming.

The distance from knowledge mentioned by Jhin can be understood from multiple perspectives, including the physical proximity to technologies and information that make viable learning pathways possible, and the affective closeness the individual establishes with the machine. Let us consider, then, these two dimensions of distance. The knowledge expressed by Jhin refers to learning, revealing, first and foremost, that this distance is shaped by diversity by each individual’s context, environment, and available time for study. He continues, reflecting on the difficulties of that period of physical isolation: *“It was difficult and at the same time a new challenge. It made me reflect and gave me an opportunity to keep advancing in my studies from the comfort of our home.”* And he adds: *“It opened up new horizons for me, because now I have another way to improve my qualifications.”* (Jhin, Interview, 2023). Thus, as revealed in his account, the student understands that the physical isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic enabled a new way of learning a development of strategies that had to be shaped by each individual’s specific reality.

When reflecting on learning during this period, it is pertinent to consider the role of technology in this process. “We may regard tools, machines, and electronic devices as imitations of the hands as prostheses that extend the reach of the hands and, as a result, amplify the information inherited genetically through culturally acquired knowledge (Flusser, 2007. p.36).

In other words, the act of informing is carried out through communication that is, whoever communicates intends, in turn, to convey something, which necessarily involves a dialogical relationship with the other. Finally, it is essential to consider the learning achieved through the process of adaptation. Within this interpretive dynamic, Spinoza (2022) states that “the human mind is capable of perceiving many things, and it is all the more capable the greater the number of ways in which its body can be arranged.” (Spinoza, 2022, p. 66). The environment affects us in many ways, and since our body can only perceive the things by which it is affected, adaptation and the overcoming of challenges are only possible through this condition. To the extent that our body is stimulated in

diverse ways, we become capable of imagining multiple strategies for mobilizing ourselves and navigating certain learning situations.

Final considerations

Based on the observations made, it is clear that challenges already faced by teachers and students within the educational system were intensified during the period of physical isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who previously struggled with issues of infrastructure such as transportation and access to technological resources were even more affected during this time. However, it was also observed that this environment prompted a more attentive gaze. With their realities laid bare, many teachers came to recognize that certain methods they had been using required adjustments. This heightened awareness created opportunities to improve the planning and delivery of their lessons.

Thus, two key factors emerged from within this chaotic context. First, the versatility of teachers must be emphasized their ability to recognize themselves in the midst of crisis and to redesign their pedagogical practices in such a short span of time. Of course, by highlighting and acknowledging the commitment of teachers, this is not to suggest that teachers (or students) hold full responsibility for the challenges they face. As made evident in the narratives, responsibility for a strong commitment to education must begin with the State. The lack of investment in adequate infrastructure and accessibility for citizens directly impacts the dynamics of the pedagogical relationship in universities across teaching, research, and outreach.

In reflecting on the pedagogical relationship, it becomes clear that physical isolation is not synonymous with loneliness, abandonment, or the impossibility of forming affective bonds. Physical isolation led to a reconfiguration and recognition of the limits of the human body and its affective dimensions. Although, at times, difficulties related to mobility, access to technology, and other factors restricted people's integration into technological environments, these very challenges rather than driving people apart became decisive factors for connection and unity. Amid so many obstacles and differences, teachers and students raised their voices together in pursuit of improvement, and it was together that they built and rebuilt the pedagogical relationship.

Secondly, we must highlight the importance of the affective dimension within the pedagogical relationship in the construction of knowledge. The university is a humanist institution, and its purpose is to educate human beings through human beings for the good of humanity. What is true for the university is also true for all forms of education. Therefore, the institution and its members cannot—

Implications of the coronavirus pandemic on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students at university and could not lose sight of the fact that the educational and humanist movement revolves around human knowledge. And this knowledge is only meaningful insofar as it is capable of humanizing.

An education that does not follow these basic principles is unable to withstand major crises. Without this humanizing movement, it is impossible to resist the rapid advance of technology as one of our participants pointed out, underscoring the need to humanize technology. We must understand that technological tools serve as extensions of our bodies extensions that, in turn, are meant to enhance our abilities or simplify certain tasks. When used in a dehumanizing way, however, these technologies risk leading us into isolation.

As educators, we must be aware that occupying a different position within the classroom does not automatically make us the holders of all knowledge, or judges of others' destinies. The strength of being a teacher lies in acting ethically and in recognizing that learning happens alongside the student. It would not have been possible to deal with physical isolation, build a pedagogical relationship, teach, and humanize technology during the COVID-19 pandemic without such awareness.

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