Perspectives of a school teacher and teacher educators teaching during the COVID-19 situation: between insiders.

Perspectivas de um professor escolar e professores universitários sobre ensinar durante a pandemia do COVID-19: Entre olhares internos.

Perspectivas de un maestro y docentes sobre la situación del COVID-19: Entre perspectivas internas.

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Abstract: This article considers the lived challenges facing three educators as they adapt, plan, and teach online lessons as a response to the Coronavirus disease. The closure of schools has forced many educators into new and uncertain territory and practices. Teaching online has been challenging in different terms and has also forced a deeper reflection on the nature of education. A self-study methodology was used to analyse the perceptions and feelings of the participants as a result of the Covid-19

pandemic. In conclusion, migrating quickly to a virtual environment deeply challenges educators' teaching praxis beyond their technical proficiency and includes the ability to be coherent with their deeper beliefs, values, theoretical approaches, and practices as educators.

Keywords: Education, Covid-19, School Teachers, Faculty, Emergency Remote Teaching

Resumo: Este artigo considera os desafios enfrentados por educadores ao se adaptar, planejar e ministrar aulas online em resposta ao novo cenário gerado pelo Coronavírus. O fechamento de escolas forçou muitos educadores a territórios e práticas novas e incertas. A educação remota tem sido um desafio em diferentes termos e tem gerado reflexões sobre a natureza da educação. A metodologia auto-estudo foi utilizada para analisar as percepções e sentimentos dos participantes em decorrência desta pandemia. A rápida migração para um ambiente virtual desafia profundamente a práxis pedagógica dos educadores, além de sua proficiência técnica, incluindo a capacidade de ser coerentes com suas crenças, valores, abordagens teóricas e práticas.

Palavras Chave: Educação, Covid-19, professores escolares, docentes, ensino remoto de emergência

Resumen: Este artículo considera los desafíos que enfrentan los educadores a adaptarse para planificar e impartir clases en línea en respuesta al nuevo escenario generado por el virus Covid-19. Los cierres de escuelas han obligado a muchos educadores a vivir en territorios y prácticas nuevas e inciertas. La educación y las tecnologías para la enseñanza digital ha sido desafiante y ha generado reflexiones sobre la educación. La metodología de autoestudio se utilizó para analizar las percepciones y sentimientos de los participantes debido a la pandemia. La rápida migración a un entorno virtual desafía profundamente la praxis pedagógica de los educadores, además de su competencia técnica, incluida la capacidad de ser coherentes con sus creencias, valores, enfoques teóricos y prácticos.

Palabras clave: Educación, Covid-19, maestros, docentes, educación remota de emergencia

Introduction

When the world was hit by the current threat to global health, the respiratory disease Covid-19 in 2019 (FAUCI; LANE; REDFIELD, 2020), most educators worldwide did not feel prepared to teach in this scenario; to perform classes in an emergency remote teaching (ERT) (BOZKURT; SHARMA, 2020). Questions and reflections were raised constantly in their teaching settings and their educational working plans. Therefore, the focus of this paper is on the effect the pandemic has had on our practice as teachers and teacher educators. Indeed, the aim of this article is to describe and develop an understanding of the educational process and changes that are happening during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The outbreak started in Wuhan, China, and, as it quickly spread in an exponential fashion worldwide, was officially labelled a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on March 14th 2020. The catch-cry became one of "lowering the curve" as the focus fell on the need to limit the potential impact on health systems by reducing the rate of community transmission through person-to-person contact. By April 2020, most countries in the world had initiated ways of limiting the spread of the virus, including shutting down their borders as well as non-essential businesses, schools and other public institutions where people may gather. In addition, social distancing and work-from-home initiatives were employed (NOVEL, 2020). At the time of writing this paper, the pandemic has had a profound effect on all aspects of society, including impacting significantly on areas such as health, the economy, education, employment and individual freedom.

Due to the relevance of this worldwide pandemic, research on the COVID-19 outcomes and consequences is growing and it became a fundamental theme around the scientific community across different areas, including education (BELLANTONIO; COLELLA, 2020). Related to the methodological approach used in this paper, a known purpose of self-study for educators is to

improve their teaching while systematically conducting research of the self-in-practice (LOUGHRAN, 2004), in this pandemic scenario, this represents an important contribution to the understanding of teaching in this ongoing situation.

To reach these finds, the authors used questions as a start point of the debate and research of this self-study. These questions guided the discussions between critical colleagues and supported new questions and reflections that were raised during the research process. Moreover, these discussions around the way educators are enacting their teaching and the perceptions of those within an inside perspective. Differences and similarities between educators in different countries and social and pandemic situations were part of this paper.

Self-study methodology allows an inside perspective of the Covid-19 novel from an educational perspective. There are many questions around education and how to lead with these quick changes in many countries and different levels. These questions change and new questions are raised on a daily basis. Using the perspective of different educators, in different countries around the world, from teachers to teacher educators, the leading question of this paper was how to enact teaching in this new normative scenario?

2020 Covid-19 pandemic

The year 2020 is the time when the world is facing the Covid-19 pandemic scenario. The disease is caused by the Sars-Cov-2 virus and, as an emerging infectious disease, puts the entire world on an alert stage due to the risk of human-to-human transmission (WU; WU; LIU; YANG, 2020). Therefore, WHO recommendation is that the population decreases circulation and social contact (COVID; TEAM; COVID; TEAM *et al.*, 2020).

All nations reached by Covid-19 have been through restrictions. These restrictions involve actions such as the closure of public and

private spaces and social distancing (LEWNARD; LO, 2020). Thus, schools and the way teachers conduct their teaching-learning process were also affected by these actions (WHALEN, 2020). With the closure of schools, the online and hybrid teaching-learning models have been widely used. Yet, a vast number of educators are not comfortable using online teaching and electronic learning with their students.

It is difficult to adapt and perform teaching, with confidence and ability, to an online or hybrid teaching model in a quick necessity of changing. Therefore, the teaching under Covid-19 situation urges in a quick changing scenario and under the pandemic chaos. What teachers were applying to their teaching was not only regular online education. Even the educators that had previous experience in teaching remotely felt the necessity and reality of emergency remote teaching (ERT). ERT is known as the urgency of teaching online due to the pandemic situation. This urgent way of teaching remotely can be differentiated from the regular online teaching in that ERT raises and connects to an unexpected and unplanned shifting of face to face learning to teach using a remote education model

New Zealand (NZ) has had a relative consistency on the political decisions, which guides society actions and the determination of closures and openness of services, business, facilities, and schools in mainly one direction, with a unit of decisions embraced by most of the population. The Brazil pandemic scenario is different from the one presented in NZ, considering it as a continental territorial country and with no possibility to close frontiers and a very different social-economic condition in the populations and also among the different regions of the country.

As a current resident of NZ, one of the researchers raised a few points to attention related to the action taken by the government and the political leaders in the country. First, all the necessary measures were always advertised by only one source. The NZ government created a few ways of communicating with the population in general and all the decisions of the entire country,

across different sectors, were taken by what the Prime Minister were determining. Second, the educational sector had clear decisions about whether institutions should or not be open. Also, a determination of the continuum of online learning was decided for both schools and universities around NZ and also in Brazil, but this decision in a country where the internet is not possible for major students is completely different from an NZ student population. Third, the support of the government on many levels could be noticed, for example, one of the researchers had received a phone call from the government to check about him and his family's health and wellness. Also, both public and private institutions related to education kept the salary of the educators; yet, if needed the financial support from the NZ state is real and people that need money to keep the basics of their lives can apply to it. The economic situation was conducted by the Brazilian government in two directions: with financial assistance and flexibilization of employment contracts. Currently, we are unsure about what is going to happen in the short and long term in the New Zealand and Brazilian educational system.

Methodology

In order to situate the research within a professional context and examine our own pedagogical practices, we chose the methodology of Self-study. As a methodology Self-study sits alongside other forms of practitioner research and can be seen as a systematic way of structuring inquiry, reflection and experimentation that is critical to enhancing educational practices (PINNEGAR; HAMILTON, 2009). Previous study (OVENS; FLETCHER, 2014) suggests that self-study provides the means for enacting a politics of action in ways that are transformative for both knowing in action and for being a teacher. In a similar way, another study (HAMILTON; PINNEGAR, 2014) argues that self-study provides a powerful means for teachers, when uncovering and exploring their pedagogical beliefs and personal practical knowledge developed

during their practice that may remain hidden from those using other forms of research. In this way, Self-Study was coherent with our own desires to be professionally and personally committed to looking for ways to improve our teaching and enhance the lives of the students we teach.

An relevant publication (LABOSKEY, 2004) outlines five characteristics of the self-study methodology. Firstly, it is self-initiated and focused. As a form of practitioner research, self-study is oriented around the problems emerging from the practitioners' own context and a desire to make improvements to one's own practice (LABOSKEY, 2004). For this to be successful, the research agenda and action must be situated within the context in which the practice takes place and structured in a way that enables critical reflection on those practices to enable the practitioner to take informed action. Secondly, the self-study methodology is an improvement aimed. However, as (OVENS; FLETCHER, 2014) explain, self-study, "...can potentially be an uncomfortable and disconcerting process for the self-study researcher" (p. 7) since the objective is not to determine whether "improvement" has taken place, in terms of good or better teaching, but rather whether it leads to a greater awareness of why we, as the researchers, make the decisions we do.

In line with these first two characteristics, we generated a set of research questions to help focus the study on our own practice, guide our discussions as critical friends to each other, and support the process of discussion and reflection. The questions were:

1. How are we, as teachers and teacher educators, feeling enacting our teaching?;

2. What tensions and clashes are we experiencing during this process, especially during the requirement for social distancing?;

3. What do the forced changes to pedagogy reveal about our praxis?;

The third characteristic of self-study is that it draws on multiple methods for "defining, discovering, generating, and articulating the fleeting, complex interactions and musings that characterise pedagogical work" (OVENS; FLETCHER, 2014). In other words, it is a methodology that is flexible to whatever methods are needed to bring evidence to the understanding of practice (LABOSKEY, 2004). In this study, we generated data for analysis by creating an open and online document that enabled the participants to record their personal reflections and critical friend conversations. In this document, we recorded our experiences.

The fourth characteristic of self-study research is that it is always interactive, particularly in the way the researcher sustains a dialogue with others co-participating in the practice, with data sets, with related theoretical and research literature, and with co-researchers, critical friends and colleagues (OVENS; FLETCHER, 2014). Such interactivity requires a sense of openness, honesty, cooperation, debate, and dialogue, which means that the participants in the study have an inherent sense of collectively performing the research. In this study we structured interaction by recording our experiences in the online journal, meeting to discuss the journal data and acting as critical friends who could challenge and provoke different ways of interpreting our experiences. This iterative and interactive process allowed us to enact a form of thematic analyses of the data, (MILES; HUBERMAN; SALDAÑA, 2018). Also, a pedagogical way to raise the themes was brought by using a previous study (NOWELL; NORRIS; WHITE; MOULES, 2017). This type of analysis allowed a broad overview of the context, enabling the researchers to obtain a better understanding of the reconstruction of a new praxis within the influences of the COVID-19 world.

The fifth characteristic is that of the researcher using examples that show the "authority of their own experience" to gain validation and trustworthiness (LABOSKEY, 2004). Therefore, there is always a risk that in providing an interpretative, interactionist, and contextualised view the researcher may end up only supporting their beliefs, hopes, and dreams (OVENS; FLETCHER, 2014). Thus,

it is possible to state that in self-study "we work to ensure our interpretations are ones others could support, and this is the reason why self-study requires not only a critical friend but also a critical community" (TRUMBULL, 2004). In seeking exemplar-based validation, the researcher works from the premise that it is the reader of the research that decides on the validity of the research. This makes it important for not only a variety of methods to be used but for the data and interpretation of the data to be clearly documented for the reader.

Dialectical moves between the insiders, known as the researches in this article, and data sources were used in this paper. In order to weave this dialogue between authors during the pandemic of Covid-19 in a way to achieve the construction of this academic article with trustworthy and ethical parameters, besides the critical friend conversations, an open and online document was created and used to generate data in collaborative and integrated design.

The present research project was conducted following the ethical standards expected by Aotearoa New Zealand and the international academic community. Since this study involves human participation, ethical approval was obtained from The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee for this research.

There is a need to understand the current situation in education around the world with this ongoing pandemic in many nations. While Brazil is one of the largest democracies in the world and has over two hundred million people and represents a large part of Latin America, NZ is considered a small country, with just over five million people; however, extremely representative in the current educational scenario around the world. Both countries are having issues and extreme changes in all sectors due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, they can be considered in opposite directions and positions in the pandemic situation. "For me, as a Brazilian researcher and teacher in a federal University, I do not see as opposite paths in driving, but rather the way in which they were applied and especially the enormous territorial and socio-economic difference that this rather distances the two countries"

(Personal journaling of author 2). This paradoxical connection between the authors was thought of as a positive aspect of this publication. In addition, there is an appliance of critical approach in the curriculum of both countries (BETTI; KNIJNIK; VENÂNCIO; NETO *et al.*, 2014; CULPAN; BRUCE, 2007), which makes sense in this dialogue between researchers and educators from and in both countries.

Findings and discussion

Feelings and mental conditions

It is known the importance of considering feelings and the full condition around educators in order to understand the way we raise our teaching, our praxis. In agreement with this, a previous study reminds us that a teacher's understanding of praxis also includes personal experiences, values, morals and ethics, emotions, theories, and feelings (CANADA-PHILLIPS, 2014). Also, praxis is a form of understanding the teaching practices in a critical way, which brings to the connection and the importance of understanding the feelings and how it leads the way educators teach. Furthermore, it became essential in this ongoing context to understand these feelings towards the capability of teaching and the way educators will raise their practices. In this sense, the teacher raises that *"the feeling of incapacity in not being able to reach the learning intention and not comprehend the learning process. I feel like I am not enacting teaching and I am not sure how I am going to be teaching now and in the future after these changes in education and society."* (personal journaling of author 1).

I believe that the capacity for transformation that all teachers had to do was previously unknown. Paulo Freire provoked that educating is transforming, it is exchanged, it is dialectical (FREIRE, 1973)*.* The issue is beyond the capacity for change and adaptation,

but rather the conditions that we teachers and educators will have to move in this imposing scenario of change.

Personal experiences shape educators' praxis (KEMMIS, 2012) and this supports the importance of understanding our feelings, fears, aspirations, and perspectives in teaching across all levels. During online or emergency remote teaching (ERT), teachers' feelings and emotions vary daily. With social distancing being applied in many countries and for a different time length it is hard and also unpredictable how educators will feel each day that we have to teach remotely. *"Today I woke up feeling useless. I am not sure what is my role or importance as a teacher. I am not sure how and how much my students need me"* (personal journaling of author A). Praxis changes due to the social circumstances and personal feelings which each teacher is living (GORDON; DYSON; COWAN; MCKENZIE *et al.*, 2016). Thus, our perceptions over this pandemic have guided us to changes in our praxis that will take time to be understood and embraced by us as a person.

The necessity of mindfulness preparation

Teachers need to be aware that not only pedagogical and technical preparation is needed in the current situation. Although there is an urgency to cover a lack of mindfulness preparation, educators across countries keep asking themselves if it is possible to be mentally prepared for an unknown breakdown of our society. Previous studies suggest that mindfulness training should be an effective part of teachers qualification and an ongoing subject on educators professional development, however, there is a shortage of this topic (GOLD; SMITH; HOPPER; HERNE *et al.*, 2010; ROESER; SKINNER; BEERS; JENNINGS, 2012). Considering this, it is not the aim of this paper to criticise teachers education, it is to highlight the importance that this theme is having nowadays across schools and universities.

In the Brazilian settings, these conditions are intrinsically related to the fear of losing jobs, excessive exposure and content overload and learning of the use of technologies. After one year of the COVID-19 pandemic has started, Brazil still using remote education in most schools around the country. Over these twelve months, the population has faced different scenarios and social distancing conditions; however, there is remaining social distance in education and only virtual class at federal universities are allowed. At the federal university that I work, all presential classes are not compulsory for students and teachers. This has the intention to test how many different social-economy-electronic conditions could be accommodated in the new situation. "What we could live in 2020 was a big amount of courses happening online, teachers and students trying to have some learning using virtual classes but we could not say that everything was ok and that this works fine. Especially because so many students were left behind due to the necessity to work, do not have technology suppliers, such as computers and the internet, and more important was the lack of dialogue so important for the learning process. Here in Brazil, classes mean conversations and personal interactions between all parts. In addition, the assessment of students means another trigger in our virtual learning." (Personal journaling of author B).

In both countries, Brazil and NZ, the students became the centre of the teaching-learning process. Although many pedagogical models state students' protagonists previously to the pandemic, during the online teaching or ERT the students are the ones who lead the educational process. "Students are taking control and deciding the pace of the learning and many times, what they are learning." (Portfolio - dialogue between authors). Yet, teachers have to quickly adapt pedagogically and mentally to this new role and modus operandi in teaching. This is a shift that also requires a shift and preparation of the mindset of the educators. "I felt unpowered. I did not know how to achieve my learning intentions, and more important, how to create connectivity with my students. How could I keep good practice, especially for those with low social conditions." (Personal journaling of author B).

Clashes into praxis

A number of teachers raise their praxis and enact their teaching using many elements of face-to-face (MAHON; HEIKKINEN; HUTTUNEN, 2019) and with the requirement to shift to online these teachers are reflecting and questioning some aspects of their praxis; "Our praxis is physically constructed and how are we going to enact our teaching now?" (Portfolio - dialogue between authors). Therefore, the concept of praxis in education is a form of action designed to effect improvements in people's lives in keeping with the particular aims of a particular enterprise and particular situations (HARDY; GARRICK, 2017); this statement makes practical sense in the days which we are leaving at the moment and agrees with the concept of praxis from the dialogue between authors. "It is not possible not to change our praxis. We are leaving in an extreme different and trigger situation; it will change our perceptions of society and the way we build our praxis in our teaching." (Portfolio - dialogue between authors).

When using some form of critical theoretical approaches and pedagogical strategies, the necessity to use different types of communication and incorporate elements presented by the students during class is commonplace in teaching. Yet, when educators are not physically present at that particular moment during class it becomes complex to reach this critical approach and a mosaic of teaching strategies have to be applied in order to achieve criticality in teaching education. It became a live challenge for teachers to understand and reconstruct their praxis, whereas constructing praxis in teaching involves reflections and reconstructions of values and teaching perspectives (KEMMIS, 2010; LABOSKEY, 2004).

"Suddenly, everyone including parents, old siblings, and caregivers are now teachers of their own children" (Personal journaling of author A). With this, a mix of different understandings of teaching is raised inside of people's homes. Much different

educational praxis is happening now around the world in the home-schooling which is happening at mainly the houses with children. Yet and especially in this scenario, it is important to reflect and analyse the importance of how much of the teaching-learning process is dedicated to teaching content and how much of this process is spent on building and developing relationships established in the school environment. In answer to this outcome which was raised in a dialogue between authors in this research, author two brings this reflection: "That's the big question. What is being proposed for educators to the teaching-learning process during the pandemic is purely the maintenance of the formal face to face education which is based on transfer content to students. This transference of pedagogical models and praxis deserves deep reflections: need, urgency and quality" (Portfolio - dialogue between authors).

Yet, educators who are qualified and trained to teach and to apply praxis in education are now in doubt of how to be a teacher in this new environment, how to raise their own praxis?; Praxis is raised by what and how educators teach considering the circumstances and exigencies which they are facing at a particular time frame, considering the entire scenario and what is the best teaching action to consider and apply (KEMMIS; SMITH, 2008).

The necessity of quick changing and adapting

There are needs for educators to quickly understand and adapt their teaching praxis which often changes in society in response to political and educational necessities (DYSON; LANDI; GORDON, 2018; OVENS, 2010)Sport and Physical Education. These changes are happening at a speed hardly ever experienced before in the generation of the current educators. In addition, there is an existing demand for educators and the educational system to understand the new online educational normative and also a need for educators to re-understand and reconfigure themselves. It is

necessary for educators to figure their identity and their feelings about this teaching style and process. This understanding happens synchronously with the necessity to reconfigure teachers' teaching style into a new teaching system (HALICIOGLU, 2015). With the closure of the physical structure of schools and universities, the changes in the teaching approach need to happen as fast as the coronavirus diseases.

While the necessity of changing the teaching style seems obvious in this new scenario, the way each educator adapted their praxis is not equally evident. A diverse of teachers carry different values, cultural and theoretical backgrounds, and pedagogical approaches; they carry different praxis which will lead to different and unpredictable reactions and teaching design in the new settings. Assuming that these changings became compulsory for educators during this worldwide situation, they will rearrange their praxis in order to teach and try to keep the quality of their educational work. Furthermore, going fully online and having to reorganise and trying to keep the high quality of their teaching can raise internal conflicts and an uncertainness of pedagogical strategies.

In other areas, such as medicine, the internet and online procedures are also being implemented around the world to develop quick responses due to the virus disease situation and requirements of immediate actions. One of the possibilities that medicine is implementing is automated logic flows, where the patient does a self-assessment and identifies where they are related to the sickness (HOLLANDER; CARR, 2020) . Would these flows charts be an option in education? A systematization of part of the educational process may work to build final learning outcomes throughout the students, however, is that the aim of education? As part of the critical colleague conversation, a point was raised in this sense; "The learning outcomes will be built, however, what is going to be the reflection on the learning, are any type of criticality on this automatised teaching/learning process?; our short and immediate answer is, probably not." (Portfolio - dialogue between authors).

Digital learning collections and teaching material have easier access through the internet and electronic devices (POPOVIĆ, 2015), however, the critical process of using it and the importance of raising critical reflections on the studied material is not easy to be achievable. While a critical pedagogical approach is full of importance in education at different levels, the universities environment are not a favourable niche to a critical teaching approach (MAHON; HEIKKINEN; HUTTUNEN, 2019); now, with the explosive progress of online education, this reflection towards this paradox is marked.

In addition to all the changes imposed and which called for quick responses of adaptations, it is important that it is also that they are seen without prejudice and observed with the proper potential of, some of them, remain even after the world leaves the state of pandemic and school activities to return to the face-to-face state.

In other parts of the process of dialogue between authors, a few questions are raised for further reflection: "That is, what activities, classes, content, relationships created from the virtual and remote teaching environment can we maintain and have an important gain? What will be positive about the teachers' praxis that will be maintained? I believe that in the university environment much can be absorbed with improvements in learning, optimization of time and use of economic resources." (Portfolio - dialogue between authors).

Conclusions

The changes are happening into the teaching-learning scenario at such a speed that makes it hard for the authors to state a closed conclusion and because of this, we agreed on having an ongoing conclusion in this academic paper. Educator's praxis had changed due to the necessity of adapting to a new worldwide pandemic-educational scenario.

Similarities related to the understanding of the educational process and the perceptions and outcomes of educators are stated between different countries. Even with the social and political differences across nations, in this study, it is possible to confirm an analogy of feelings and the uncertainty of teacher and teacher educators in the current online society. Anxiety, the necessity of understanding ourselves, fear, and doubts were commonly quoted by the authors across countries. In addition, the necessity to shift teacher's praxis to a new way is a common point as well. The ERT places educators in a new teaching setting, which requires adaptability in their teaching and also the necessity to prepare teachers mentally for the role of teaching.

Althoughmanysimilaritiesaretraced,therearesomedifferences in the teachers' voices related to the feeling of incapacity in front of the situation, the uncertainty of teaching in the future and the understanding of our role as a teacher during this pandemic and onwards. Yet, singularities related to the teacher educators and can be stated in the aspects of how to reach critically the student learning and the necessity of shifting teaching practices due to external social factors during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nowadays, teachers and teacher educators are constantly changing the teaching approach, praxis, to achieve students' academic success in a scenario with a high degree of uncertainty of the necessary skills to teach, online or in the emergency remote teaching.

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