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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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DIGITAL DESERT: REALTY OF THE EDUCATION IN PANDEMIC TIMES

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ABSTRACT

With COVID-19, the way of doing and thinking about education mediated by digital technologies suddenly emerged. The new educational reality is evidenced by the distance between the bodies and the teaching and learning processes, requiring teachers who are prepared and committed to the act of educating. This paper is a theoretical-practical study that explores professional development and teacher education in the context of the current pandemic. **Objective:** This research sought to understand the perception of basic education teachers in Spain and Brazil about the impact of COVID-19 on education. **Method:** This is descriptive-exploratory research, in which there were interviews with 12 basic education teachers from both countries. **Results:** The abrupt incorporation of digital technologies caused great suffering to teachers. The researchers observed the precariousness of work, the emergence of new professional and psychological demands, and the urgent need to adopt training processes for teachers that meet the new realities and challenges presented. **Conclusion:** Education has become more complex: working conditions have worsened; difficulties in dealing with their fears, emotions and losses; increase in educational inequality and illness. Teachers express feelings of solidarity and are aware of the importance of education.

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INTRODUCTION

Even before the pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2, worldwide education presented needs and challenges that people could not overcome for decades. The pandemic only increased the erasures, exposing the need for initiatives that foster policies, projects, and actions with innovative strategies that enhance learning to immerse participants in an inclusive, accessible, and universal education. These policies, projects and actions must contribute to the role of the individual in the context of political, social, economic and cultural development for a sustainable society (Moura-Vieira, Alves-Hopf, Hoefel and Collado, 2021). As Morgado (2020, p. 2) emphasizes, "we are facing a situation that requires a great capacity for collaboration, sharing and innovation among the actors of the educational community". In this sense, it is essential to rethink the training of education professionals, aligning actions to the promotion of individual and collective health, and encompassing the dimensions of intersectionality, interculturality, subjectivity, and internationalization

of knowledge through a positive language and reflective articulation (Moura-Vieira, Alves-Hopf, Collado and Hoefel, 2021), in order to promote a continuous and intense flow of deterritorialization and dislocation, meeting and interaction with the principles of Permanent Education in Health (PHE): Training, Management, Service and Social Participation (Ceccim and Merhy, 2009). Thus, it is possible to favour connections, exchanges, learning, autonomy and the construction of collectives of learning and practices, in the process of translating critical reflections, into attitudes, into a way of being, an engagement, effective and resolute presence in the world (Gadotti, 2003). In this perspective, Morin (2020) warns about education's importance in the pandemic and post-pandemic world, highlighting the need for children and young people to learn how to deal with their fears, anxieties and uncertainties. The author also points to the need for a new educational order, a new gift, where education is the engine and the primary device to deal with anxieties and uncertainties. In this context, as a learning space, the school should be considered a space for health promotion, with a comprehensive view and a knowledge and affections' systematization.

That would make the education generated in these spaces the very materialization of the meaning of life, mainly from the lessons learned with the current pandemic (Moura-Vieira, Hoefel and Collado, 2021). Furthermore, we must consider the new challenges posed by the pandemic. According to Moura-Vieira, Hoefel and Collado (2021):

School and education are no longer the same, even with the return of in-person classes. The educational context became even more complex; other challenges were added to the existing ones, such as working conditions that got much worse (Moura-Vieira, Hoefel and Collado, 2021, p. 190).

According to these authors, many teachers had to adapt to virtual reality and new technologies. The distance from the bodies caused by social isolation and protective equipment, such as the mask, make teaching, bonding, and learning hard. In this sense, it is essential to reaffirm the importance of the teacher's role as the protagonist of the act of educating and its importance, developing a "sensitive reason" for a more humanized teaching practice, full of meanings and affections. The processes of teacher training and education itself must be an ethical, aesthetic, and political commitment involving governments and society. The teaching practice must have its based on the inseparability of training, management, service, and participation; in addition, there is the inclusion of language and the dimensions of knowledge: interculturality, intersectionality, inclusion, internationalization both in the educational process and school's pedagogical and political project (Moura-Vieira, Hoefel, and Collado, 2021). In this context, it is imperative to dialogue with some concepts and the protagonists of school education (teachers, managers, students) from an educational perspective.

As a starting point, we put in context some variables, dimensions, discussions and concepts that dialogue with the needs and challenges that education is experiencing in this pandemic. We do not intend to overcome discussion but to start a dialogue with what has already been produced or signalled and the new educational needs the pandemic imposed. Therefore, we will start by dialoguing with the following questions: How do teachers in Brazil and Spain deal with the current educational scenario permeated by the digital environment? What is the impact of bodies' distancing, and what are the erasures imposed by this distancing? Have the teachers received a training process, especially in digital literacy? What is the message these teachers would like to leave to their fellow teachers and government officials?. In this sense, the objective of this study is to dialogue with teachers from Brazil and Spain and some authors and thinkers about the needs presented during the pandemic, drawing a parallel with the models of Continuing Education (CE) and Permanent Education in Health (PHE).

Educational context in times of pandemic (Spain and Brazil): Education is a fundamental right of children and adolescents. The repercussions of education are vast and profound, impacting every area of our lives. Through it, we guarantee social, economic and cultural development. The rights to education of children and adolescents must be always protected, anywhere, especially in times of pandemic (Unicef, 2020). The pandemic is impacting the education system in Brazil, Spain and the world. The suspension of in-person classes, the unequal access to technologies for monitoring online/remote classes, the lack of digital literacy of education professionals and students and the effects on medium and long-term learning are some challenges that education faces in the current context of pandemic and post-pandemic. Aware of the importance of education and the seriousness of the pandemic context, many countries have discussed and adopted mechanisms to guarantee coexistence, school ties, and continuity in school learning. In Spain, there was the suspension of classroom teaching activity and the closing of educational centres across the country when a state of alarm was declared, through Royal Decree 463/2020, of March 14, 2020. The suspension of classroom classes accompanied the implementation of digital/distance education and the first proposals and measures adopted to face this new educational reality.

Consequently, the school year of basic education 2019/2020 in Spain, beginning in September 2019, had its in-person activities until March 11, 2020. And distance learning until June 2020. The new 2020/2021 school year, which began in September 2020, started with a return to in-person classes, but with several restrictive measures that made the educational practice more complex, such as minimum distance, use of masks, hygiene measures, others. In Brazil, the Federal Government has not adopted a consistent guideline to reduce the epidemic curve, protect the health and safety of citizens, or even guidelines related to school activities. On the contrary, the Brazilian president criticized the measures of social distancing adopted by state governments and always defended the maintenance of all economic and social activities, including school activities, without adopting any national plan to combat COVID-19.

"We must return to normality. A few state and municipal authorities must abandon the scorched earth concept, the ban on transport, the closing of trade and mass confinement" (President Jair Messias Bolsonaro in a statement on national radio and television, on 24.03. 2020). Furthermore, he still asked, "why to close schools?"

The result of the policy adopted by the Brazilian government is disastrous. It led to the confirmation of five hundred seventy-nine thousand ten deaths of Brazilians on 08.28.2021 (<https://covid.saude.gov.br/>), and schools are still in the process of opening. According to UNESCO (2021), worldwide, schools remained closed, totally or partially, for an average of 5.5 months (22 weeks). In Spain, the average is four months (16 weeks). In Brazil, it reaches 53 weeks when the ideal would be for schools to be the last institutions to close and the first to open – as in any humanitarian emergency (Unicef, 2021). The long closing time of most Brazilian schools has profoundly impacted the learning and mental health, nutrition, and protection of children and adolescents (Unicef, 2021).

Continuing Education (CE) and Permanent Health Education (PHE) – A Necessary Connection: Human development is expanding the range of personal options, so it is closely related to work. The positive relationship between human development and work is reciprocal. Health, education, and development are interlinked, as there is no development process without proper attention to health and knowledge. Likewise, the development of workers is not disconnected from updating the work itself; that means work and workers constitute an inseparable dyad (Merhy, 2015). For example, in the educational sector, processes require extensive communication, harmony and correspondence with social needs, comprehensiveness, inclusion, internationalization of knowledge, and political-pedagogical projects, especially in the current context of the health crisis. In addition, the context of education professionals, given their target audience's social and cultural vulnerability (e.g. teachers and students) and further aggravations by COVID-19, says something. It appears that the organizational structure of schools, derived from current educational policies and their way of functioning, do not offer enough possibilities for the reconstruction of dynamics, processes, participative methodologies, and forms of democratic management that reaffirm themselves in the practice of the school group. In this context, the discussion on teacher training processes has gained momentum in recent decades. Therefore, Continuing Education (CE) was adopted as a mechanism for training education professionals to keep teams in a constant educational process, improve educational practices, and, consequently, optimize service to the school community. Pan American Health Organization (1978) defines Continuing Education as a process of permanent and constant education, which follows basic training and aims mainly to update and improve the capacities of individuals or groups for technical and according to the proposed social needs. For Pereda (1982), CE is a process that professionals must carry out permanently and systematically to obtain new knowledge, assess the validity of previously acquired knowledge, and compensate for their deficiencies

so that the performance of their work reaches its maximum efficiency for society. In this perspective, CE has also become the training mechanism for several other sectors, including Health. For the health sector, CE is the process that includes experiences after initial learning, with the objective of training, improving the profession and professional practice with more safety and productivity by acquiring new concepts and reformulating existing practices. "Adequate continuing education must reflect the health needs of the community and lead to a planned improvement in community health" (WHO, 1982). However, Continuing Education as it is being made available is not managing to challenge teachers to change and problematize their practices. Teacher training focuses on initial preparation courses, generally based on models of technical rationality, and, when available, continuing education programs usually focus on theoretical and short-term courses (Diniz-Pereira, 1999; Diniz-Pereira and Zeichner, 2002). In this context, in 2007, Permanent Health Education (PHE) was instituted in Brazil as a Public Policy by the Ministry of Health to meet the demands of the Unified Health System—SUS, since CE did not meet the health sector's need for learning at work. Politics defines the concept of PHE as learning at work. In that sense, the daily life of organizations and the work process incorporate learning and teaching. PHE proposes that health workers' education processes rest on the problematization of the practice itself. The PHE, as a public policy which a group of actors who make SUS elaborated and agreed upon, happens all the time in the world of work and management, in the processes of exchange, learning, management and formulation. It is the exchange of knowledge: technical, scientific, and ethical dimensions of life, work, human development, health, education, and relationships (Brasil, 2018). We understand that PHE aims to discuss the work and, based on this work, seek to transform the institutional space into a space for problematization, reflection, dialogue and construction of consensus, exchanges and co-production. PHE acts through the conception of critical education, meaningful learning, and the appreciation of work as a source of knowledge.

It is no longer possible to sustain the almost exclusive managerial views systematically positioned by the notion that the low effectiveness of health actions is due to the lack of competence of workers. Nor that it can be corrected as we supply, through compensatory courses, what they lack. Given this view of the problem, these managers start to propose courses to exhaustion, which consume immense resources and have not been generating positive and changing effects in the practices of these professionals (Merhy, 2005, p. 172).

It is important to point out that PHE is much more than a pedagogical or methodological concept, according to Ceccim and Ferla (2008). PHE proposed a political process of dislocation and questioning that seeks to transform reality. This dislocation and this questioning, we would say, would encourage the expansion of dialogue in work relations and educational action by incorporating emotional exchanges and sensitivity, allowing to go beyond dialogue-based only on logically organized and planned knowledge and arguments, towards a dialogue of encounters and connections. To advance from theory to practice, Ceccim and Feuerwerker (2004) propose, as a way of operationalizing the concept to Permanent Health Education, the Quadrilateral da Formation, which is the articulation between training, management, care and participation. Ceccim (2005) highlights that through this quadrilateral, there can be a change in the traditionalist and elitist conception of health education, the search for integrality and the inclusion of users as active subjects in health practices. The entire scenario presented makes us glimpse a new scenario for education in response to the current needs imposed by SARS-CoV-2. For example, the need to equip teachers to develop a "sensitive reason" and the dissemination of pedagogical skills via training processes implemented by CE and guided by the PHE principles and by the school's pedagogical and political project towards a common project of society.

METHODS

This study is part of a doctoral thesis under the co-tutorship (Brazil and Spain) of the main author. This paper composes a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory study with the use of the comparative method, which is defined as a systematic research procedure, based on the differentiation of phenomena, in order to establish similarities and differences between them (Durkheim, 1985).

Research Subjects: We interviewed teachers from Spain and Brazil, from the basic education network, who worked in the classroom (virtual and/or face-to-face) in 2020. Twelve teachers were interviewed: 6 from Spain and six from Brazil, eight women and four men aged between 28 and 51 years old. The teachers' teaching experience varies between 3 and 29 years and covers the three stages of basic education (kindergarten, elementary and secondary).

Inclusion criteria: The inclusion criteria were: teachers from Spain and Brazil working in the public school system who were working in the classroom (virtual and/or face-to-face) in 2020. The fictitious names used in this research for teachers are related to the Country where they worked.

Procedure and Data Analysis: The research used individual semi-structured interviews via video call as a research instrument. Each interview lasted around 90 minutes and followed a script of provocative questions, covering the dimensions of the issues mentioned in the introduction about the teachers' perception of the challenge caused by the pandemic. To analyse the results, we used the principles of the content analysis method by Bardin (2011). The coding organisation was followed by choice of registration units through the theme and represented the clipping of ideas through different sentences, which had meanings for the chosen objective regarding the answers to the open questions. These variables were grouped into categories, such as 1) Hearing and Voices of Teachers facing the Pandemic; 2) Digital Literacy; 3) Learning and New Realities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Category 01: Teachers' Hearing and Voices facing to the Pandemic

If there's one thing this pandemic is teaching us, it's that we should take a closer look at education. A plural and integral look with political, social, economic and cultural dimensions. The Brazilian pedagogue Rubens Alves, in the Documentary "Rubens Alves, the Teacher of Amazement", warned that, "The possibility of education has nothing to do with government programs, it has to do with two things, two fragile things: feelings and the teachers' intelligence" (Alves, 2003). Agreeing with Alves (2003), the feelings and intelligence of teachers are essential for a plural and integral education and for that, it is necessary to place the work of the educators at the center of debates and theoretical, political and methodological reflections. But on the other hand, teachers and the educational system, in its general context, need policies that value education, and committed managers who develop actions for the personal and professional development of teachers, from the perspective of listening to the actors involved, of intelligence love, building affections and emotions, continuing education in health for teachers, and administrative support (infrastructure, logistics, didactic-pedagogical). Respondents dialogue with the above when asked what message they would like to leave for government officials/managers/teachers:

Managers, listen to the teachers to make the laws, facilitate the communication channel between you and us teachers so that the opinions and educational needs presented by teachers can influence and contribute to your decisions (Spain).

Above all, you need to look more carefully at the needy, providing both health and education conditions. Students cannot afford the technology; with remote learning, the poorest population does not have access [to education]. The difference in access to education is that it was already big, and now it has become enormous. Sometimes it's just a cell phone for an entire family (Brazil).

You guys are very clueless. You cannot promise what you cannot deliver. They promised many things, and they did nothing. The schools had to shake themselves up to get the school working (Brazil).

Fellow teachers, we are all in the same boat; it is difficult, we continue paddling together. Thank you very much for the mutual support (Spain).

I am grateful for all the effort that each one has had, as it is not easy. Many did not have the knowledge of digital technologies and dedicated themselves a lot to be able to learn. And they are still in the fight (Brazil).

The scenario that presents itself for education is one of the multiple needs of reinventing its status quo. For Gadotti and Carnoy (2018, p. 16), this reinvention of education “is only possible through a collective, collaborative, plural, non-sectarian effort, thinking of a gradual transition to other ways of conceiving educational systems, their planning, its management and monitoring”. Candau (2016) complements this maxim when he argues that the change in the educational context should be born from the words of educators, who are in the daily life of the school and not just from a group of specialists. In this perspective, facing the new challenges imposed by the pandemic, the school has a role much more as a knowledge manager than as a lecturer of content (Gadotti and Carnoy, 2018). This management role should be the responsibility of everyone involved, as education should not be seen, under any circumstances, as just an institutionalised work, that is, restricted to the school institution. Education must be seen as community work for a community guided by a common goal.

Thus, both teachers, managers, and students need to understand and appropriate the broad role of education, considering social, philosophical, ethical and moral values, that is, ethical dimensions of life, as a path to be followed for the materialisation of education in its role of educating for life, and not just for literacy. In this sense, change needs to start from the social context, from what is experienced, from what is in process, “*from critical reflection on practice*” (Freire, 1996, p. 43), from the experiences experienced, such as when asked to the teachers how they felt in this moment of social isolation and having to work at a distance with digital classes: “*...I feel extremely overwhelmed and invaded too. I have a daughter, who I am still breastfeeding, and I had to breastfeed her when I was teaching. My house became a public space*” (Brazil). The teacher’s speech is filled with hearing needs. In addition, it is imperative that the processes of teacher education encompass the context of human development and the integrality of the subject, in the view of Paulo Freire (1996) “*of a pedagogy that proposes learning to read and write not only the letters but also the world*” (Freire, 1996, p 42), the world with the magnifying glasses of reality, this reality of the classroom and the school environment and the subjects involved. According to the reality presented by the teachers regarding the beginning of classes in digital format, the interviewees reported:

[...] It was complicated; they threw you all the responsibility, we had to cope with learning the technology, teacher training was just about registering and logging into the system. Not even the education department was prepared for this (Brazil).

It was very complicated in the first month; the public network was not prepared for this digital universe (Spain).

The school as a space of an integral vision, of systematisation of knowledge and affections, makes the education generated in this space the very realisation of the meaning of life. And this sense of life from now on must be built mainly from the lessons learned from this pandemic, that is, “*to treat Nature and the Earth with more care, love and respect*” (Boff, 2020).

In this sense, the entire school team, its performance and the treatment of knowledge are of fundamental importance to delineate new directions for pedagogical practice in this new educational reality, which is evidenced by the separation of bodies and the need for feelings of empathy.

I work at a school where I have contact with over 20 different nationalities. It's a challenge, but I feel prepared; I'm always studying. But it is not because the school or the government encourage and support this preparation, but because of my own need to know how to deal with this diverse context (Spain).

The interviews above alerts government officials about the importance of permanent and continuous training of teachers for more meaningful and effective practices, subjects responsible for carrying out the pedagogical act. Since the teacher’s learning in their daily lives as a historical and socially contextualised being can help to define a new educational/pedagogical order. Oliveira, Figueiredo and Félix (2020, p. 176) contribute to the above by stating that “*the most significant teaching practice is one in which the teacher also gives new meaning to the activity developed with the students*”.

Thus, we understand that the world has changed, education is no longer the same. It needs to be recreated in the direction of how-know-do, and teachers will have to study more, know more, relate more, exchange more knowledge, socialise more and extrapolate information and academic knowledge. By Spain, “I don’t understand education without socialisation, learning is social motivation, we are emotions, and if we don’t work in relationships, we don’t learn”. From this perspective, this same interviewee warns that we must consider the teacher as a learner/student/worker, who inevitably needs to be in a constant process of problematising and liberating training, permeated by the critical reflection of their practice (practice in action). Hence the practice of meaningful teaching requires extensive communication, information, socialisation and correspondence with social needs, processes of participation and connection with oneself and the other (Vieira, 2013).

According to another respondent:

In schools, there is a lot of diversity; it is important to discuss and promote actions for the internationalization of knowledge in schools because students are the future, and many who complete high school do not go to university because of economic conditions (Spain).

Thus, the internationalization of knowledge in the school space is intrinsic to its pedagogical needs. As said in the following report:

It was very complicated for the school when we received two indigenous students; they didn't know how to speak Portuguese, they left their community straight for school. The teacher didn't understand their language, so she worked with gestures. No matter what happens, we teachers always have to get by (Brazil).

Furthermore, according to the interviewed, many had to overcome their fears, their shyness, their insecurities to cross the digital space, breaking not only technological but also psychological barriers — “*I feel that I am in a mental prison*” (Brazil). Another respondent complements:

School is sorely missed. I miss contact with students and that organisation when it's not working. For some, less contact is better, but not for me. You can hold their hands in the classroom and make them do the task; there is hugging, affection and the power to teach; I really miss all of this (Brazil).

All this with a drastic change in the domestic routine and an even greater complication for those who have children at home: *"Today I have to deal with children, a sick grandmother and students, all from the same place, it's all very bad"* (Brazil).

The scenario that presents itself is complex and full of new needs for the educational context. The new reality aspires to generate a transforming awareness of society, in which people recognise themselves as part of the problems, but mostly of the solutions. It is time for solidarity, collaboration, and empathy. Therefore, governments must develop educational policies considering the contexts, multiple identities, knowledge, and singularities that configure the subjects involved in the educational activities. Governments must also value the teaching staff of schools as a fundamental agent in education for a more sustainable society. About that, Morin (2020), in the process of reflection about an experienced, lived and seen world, of a century of existence, alerts us about the importance of education in the pandemic and post-pandemic world: *"we must teach in schools and universities human understanding and teach children and young people to face uncertainties"*.

Before, we thought that there was certain progress, and now the future is anguish. Therefore, to bear, to face uncertainty is not to sink into anguish, to know that it is necessary, in a way, to participate with the other, in something in common, because the only answer to those who have the anguish of dying is love and life in common (Morin, 2020).

In this context, in addition to invest in the ongoing training of teachers—as they are responsible for a teaching practice filled with meanings, teaching, learning and creative research—, it is also necessary to include them in the political/management decision processes concerning the needs of the educational system.

Category 02: Digital Literacy - Open Gap: Education in digital format and/or at a distance has increased educational opportunity inequalities, widening the existing digital gap between students with different economic and social backgrounds and housing areas (rural or urban). According to the Ministry of Education of Spain (2021), this gap is due to the most vulnerable families' low digital literacy level and lack of access to technology and/or connectivity. The interviewees reaffirm this situation — *"as we have many students from rural areas, some 6% do not have any technology. Thus, we prepare printed work, and the family comes to school, or the teacher goes to the students to take them away"* (Brazil). This distance learning format can also generate differences beyond the digital divide. This format involves carrying out tasks autonomously at home, and not all students can receive the same support from their families. The digital divide also exists between schools since some schools have more resources and more teachers with higher competence and skills. The large school segregation aggravates this situation in some areas, which concentrate most of the disadvantaged and more vulnerable students, both in Brazil and Spain. Some schools extrapolated the normative requirements to try to reach the maximum number of students, *"in the ordinance the requirement was only remote activities, but the school chose to enter a live class"* (Brazil). However, the lack of structure in schools and the lack of access conditions to remote activities by students in different social contexts have meant that remote education provokes a deepening of inequalities in conditions and an increase in exclusion in education. In this context, according to UNESCO (2021), the pandemic aggravated educational exclusion, especially of students in socially

vulnerable environments, a total of 258 million children and young people were excluded from education during confinement, which is equivalent to 17% of the school-age population around the world. According to UNICEF (2020), in Brazil, 17% of children and adolescents between 9 and 17 years old live at home without Internet access, which shows the inequality in access to digital education. In Spain, according to the Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (2021):

[...] although the vast majority of homes have an internet connection, the devices do not reach everywhere. In 2020, 93.2% of households with a monthly net income above 1,600 euros had some type of computer; on the other hand, this percentage dropped to 58.2% when earnings did not reach 900 euros (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2021, p. 19).

On the other hand, technology was a great ally to minimise the negative impacts that social isolation brought to education. The interviewees reaffirm this situation:

The whole context brings something positive. With distance classes, I was able to help with the learning of some students who did not participate before and now send messages, ask questions on WhatsApp, and through the platform, they feel less shy through technology. We left the book summary, and it was easier to address certain content, which is positive (Brazil).

Teachers were thrown in front of the computer and took the classrooms into the house, triplicating the work, making teachers replace the boards and school desks for screens and digital applications. They became immersed in a true digital desert. *"Being in the classroom today is like screaming in the desert, and nobody is listening"* (Spain). Morgado (2020, p. 2) corroborates the interviewees' statements by saying that *"the educational community has undergone immense changes in its practices and exacerbated by the physical absence and invisible presence in the world of digitalisation, has got used to it"*.

Learning, in record time, to use digital tools to teach was the first challenge. Then they had to learn to deal with the limitations imposed by distance. They had to face computer screens often without faces, cameras turned off, and the absence of absence, *"we never know if the students are participating, and there is always that feeling that they are not participating"* (Brazil). The new educational reality is also evidenced by the distance in teaching and learning processes between the generations of digital technologies (students) and those of analogue technologies (teachers).

For me, in the beginning, it was very difficult to deal with technologies, but the students took it very quickly, and now they are very autonomous, they explore technology very easily, we teachers are learning from the students (Brazil).

In addition, at first glance, another issue arises, social inequality, as one of the greatest limitations to the use of new technologies. Without discussing its benefits and support for teaching and learning processes and due access for all, the educational inequality of students will continue to be glaring. Another relevant barrier, according to the interviewees, is the lack of competence and lack of knowledge of most teachers and students in technology management and knowledge. Thus, education today has challenges that intersect with the context of the pandemic and the digital literacy of teachers and students. Having access to the internet, computers, telephones, or other devices is part of digital access and, consequently, access to education. The lack of access to these technologies becomes a barrier

to teaching and learning. These accesses are gaps that must be dimensioned, faced and resolved so that education is for everyone.

Category 03: Learning and New Realities - Reflection Points and Contexts

The pandemic exposed and contributed to widening the gaps and differences that already existed between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and further increased the strain and educational problems, as explained by one respondent:

In education, there are things that did not work well before the pandemic, such as the lack of digital training for teachers and the need to connect more with the reality of students and the community, with the social, with nature, and all of this is possible (Spain).

In the current scenario, many teachers feel exhausted and anxious, even after returning to classes. The use of a mask, for example, makes teaching and learning in literacy very difficult, as reported by the respondent below.

With the mask, the auditory issue becomes complicated, as the phoneme is drawn in the mouth (for example, motorcycle). The auditory and the visual are needed to understand the sound of words/syllables more easily (Spain).

Furthermore, the current pandemic has further highlighted the importance of education and its role in the context of social, economic and cultural development for a sustainable society, as Boff (2020) argues in a virtual master class, available on YouTube: *“We have to learn from the signs that the earth gives us, COVID-19 is the consequence of humanity’s lack of education, it is a problem of education, and from now on, education cannot be the same”.*

Boff (2020) also warns that we must reinvent ourselves as humans:

I believe that education is the best place and way to recreate new relationships and a new projection of what it is to be human, man and woman because education focuses on people. You, teachers, have the extraordinary mission of redesigning another type of inhabitant of Planet Earth (Boff, 2020).

If the crisis is an educational crisis, as stated by Boff (2020), it is important to highlight that the historical transmission of the knowledge produced, from generation to generation, has become fundamental for the development of human beings. This historical transmission occurred in various ways throughout history, but mainly at school, as a teacher’s task. In the same direction, Saviani (2010) states that educational work is the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each individual humanity that all men historically and collectively produce. In this perspective, the teacher assumed the enormous importance of transmitting, re-interpreting and recreating with the new generations the knowledge already produced by humanity, being basic for the development of society in general and the condition of humanity in each one. As stated by another interviewee — *“Because human beings have been naturally sociable since the time of the apes, relationships of solidarity are important, and for this it is necessary to look them in the eye, to be together, this is what the school offers us”* (Brazil). According to teachers from Brazil and Spain, they live an entirely new moment in their professional lives caused by COVID-19. Suddenly, they had to adapt to continue teaching their classes remotely/virtually/at a distance (not in person), in their private space, in their homes, generally without the ideal infrastructure and without the help of the State.

When remote learning was defined, they (government) said they were going to offer databases, but they did not take any initiative. There are teachers who only enter through cell phones because they don’t have a computer. Everything used is at the teacher’s private expense: technology, energy and the internet. My

expenses increased, I had to change my internet for a more powerful one, and my energy bill increased a lot (Brazil).

Most teachers had to learn from scratch how to use technology for emergency digital study. They had to learn to deal with various technologies that were hitherto unknown. They turned to find the best digital tools, the best platforms. Learn to master official platforms made available by governments, Teams, Zoom, Google for Education, Google Classroom, among others. Many teachers are feeling overloaded, exhausted, anxious and confused. After returning to classroom classes, the educational context became more complex, other challenges were added. With this, schoolwork and housework were mixed, private life and professional life were not separated, as expressed by the interviewees — *“I feel extremely overwhelmed and invaded. My house became a public space”* (Brazil). For schools that are back on-site, whether in Brazil or Spain, the picture is the same. They had to adopt several restrictive measures to avoid contamination, making the educational practice not the same, such as minimum distance, use of masks, both by teachers and students and shift shifts, among others, are part of the new reality school. In addition, some restrictions directly interfere with the pedagogical/didactic practice of the teacher (a) and his/her emotional one, such as the orientation of not working in groups, not being able to have physical contact (such as hugging), and the impossibility of performing the laboratory practice in person (which are only being carried out remotely).

What is important for students must be considered, including this situation of need students are living. When I’m in the classroom, in normal times, the student sees us as a confidant and now it’s difficult because there are family members listening and/or colleagues, so they lost a lot with this (Brazil).

Finally, the context presented demands attention from the school team, students, especially teachers. Development of training processes guided by the inseparability between training, management, care, and participation, in dialogue with the new needs and that incorporate motivation and empowerment strategies to promote the health of these teams, favouring sustainable development, work motivation and appropriation knowledge, becomes imperative.

CONCLUSION

In this research, both Brazilian and Spanish teachers are living through moments of great suffering; they had to adapt to new technologies, faceless screens, the distance of bodies, immersed in an actual digital desert, and often without minimum conditions work, moreover, they had to overcome their fears, not only of technology but also their personal fears and suffering, due to the erasures imposed by SARS-CoV-2. The education is no longer the same, even after returning to face-to-face classes. The educational context has become more complex, other challenges have added to the existing ones. In addition, teachers need support to deal with their fears/emotions due to losses, and especially the challenges of rekindling the flame of the students they meet in a context of poor motivation, sickness and discouragement. Thus, we conclude that, on the one hand, the new educational reality comes with the distancing of bodies caused by protective measures against the spread of SARS-CoV-2, such as the use of masks, social isolation and non-attendance classes. On the other hand, digital technology has become a reality in the educational context, but with gaps, especially in lack of access and digital literacy for teachers and students. Furthermore, it is imperative to develop training processes aimed at teachers, guided by the inseparability between training, management, care, and participation. Those processes must dialogue with the new needs and incorporate motivation and empowerment strategies for the health promotion of these actors to promote motivation at work, appropriation of knowledge and love in teaching practice. Finally, we reaffirm the importance of the role of the teacher as a protagonist in the act of educating and the need for them to develop "sensitive

reason", considering digital technologies in education have become a reality and emerged as powerful devices for the development of a creative and inclusive education.

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