Pedagogical Triangulations

from the online forum to the e-magazine: a praxiological experience about school and its actor during COVID19 confinement

Cristina Palmeirão
Portuguese Catholic University, School of Education and Psychology, Research Center for Development
cpalmeirao@porto.ucp.pt

Alexandra Carneiro
Portuguese Catholic University, School of Education and Psychology, Service for improving Education (SAME)|
CFAE Póvoa de Varzim e Vila do Conde
alexandracarneiro@cfaepvarzimvconde.org

ABSTRACT

The Pedagogical Triangulations – COVID19 school experiences: the journey emerged in the context of the international pandemic and the experience of online teaching (referred to as E@D) as a time to experiment, question and reinvent curricular practices of pedagogical differentiation. The initiative consisted of two activities: a) online forums "pedagogical Triangulations COVID19 – school experiences: the journey, for teachers (be they director, supervisors, coordinators. . .); and b) e-magazine Challenges [Desafios] – Trans_Formation Notebooks #32, "Pedagogical Triangulations – COVID!) school experiences: the journey – Memories, Stories and Students' Time" dedicated only to works produced by K-12 students. It brought together educational actors around three objectives linked to pedagogical practices of inclusive differentiation in a logic of reflection – action – reflection. This article presents a first approach to the data collected in two digital media. A praxeology experienced in relation to the fulfilment of the mission of education for all emerges from the data, with all that is rooted in the most recent international framework.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Social and professional topics** → Professional topics; Computing education; K-12 education.

KEYWORDS

praxiology, uncertainty, negotiation, knowledge, professional development

1 INTRODUCTION

After seven months living through a pandemic context - confinement, invisibility, uncertainty, and concern - there is still the need for the construction of scenarios about what it will be like to live, to continue to live, in the times to come: urgency, resilience, questioning, hope. Maintaining a society where access to basic social rights is guaranteed depends on interdependence, in the sense "of care, of the vitality of inclusion mechanisms that, not appearing spontaneously" (14) demand permanent (re)construction of social and political relations that increasingly consolidate a democratic system of a participatory nature, pivotal "for human society to survive and prosper in the world in which we now live" (17).

Because life compels us, there is no delay, there are no breaks, it is necessary to undertake the activities that structure our individual and collective lives. For the first time in history, billions of people share a standard of living associated with reasonable expectations of longevity; global societies based on the guiding principles of human rights in which education plays a key role (1; 6; 15; 16; 20). The interdependence of social systems was evident: school is essential, not only because of its dimension associated with personal and social development, but also because it allows for the healthy functioning of the socio-economic subsystems, for the custody and protection of children and youths.

However, inequalities persist and predate the pandemic crisis: "high rates of school failure and dropouts that mainly affect social groups with less resources, non-compliance with compulsory education in almost all study cycles, inability to successfully integrate ethnic minorities, slowness in the generalization process of pre-school education, and deficiencies in the way in which integrated education is dealt with."(8) The awareness of existing vulnerabilities and the destabilization of the education system as a result of Covid 19 has a threefold effect: 1) in schools - where students, teachers, staff, parents are involved...; 2) in the communities, either restricted (close to the organic units and which cooperate with them for local development), or in the extended ones, of a national scope, which include the political decision makers responsible for the strategic lines that guide the educational system towards greater equity and inclusion, as well "as in the perspective of innovation and diffusion as a proposal for change" (12); 3), and in universities and researchers, in particular those in the educational sciences, led to recreate work processes and positioning in relation to the problems of school reality, in their mission to identify, create, sustain, enable explanatory scenarios, as structuring hypotheses for the pedagogical action.

It is the community of researchers that has long been aware that, in a rapidly changing world, youths may develop 'uncertainty competences (19), that is, the competences, knowledge, attitudes, and capacities necessary to deal with the uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity in different contexts: learning to tolerate, assess, and reduce uncertainty, which requires learning environments that tolerate, even invite, uncertainty into the learning process. The change in education, where innovation and smart education are conditions for decision making, was accelerated by the pandemic context when E@D (Distance Education/Learning) was triggered. Overwhelming circumstances that required teachers and students to redesign existing teaching strategies, recreating places of learning and educational activities using technology (which, in certain cases, was removed from the classroom) and strengthening democratic relations between partners (leaders, families, and members of local and scientific communities). It is here that the opportunity to mobilize existing knowledge on the ground takes root, in the manner of Shön (1983), with sharing and reflection between committed teachers, capable of significant teaching and learning dynamics, professionals in continuous learning through participation in networks or communities, more or less extended, and who see students as true partners in the teaching and learning process, students as knowledge builders (11).

As members of the Service for Education Improvement (SAME – Serviço de Apoio à Melhoria da Educação is a consultancy service for schools, supporting organizational and professional development) of the School of Education and Psychology at the Portuguese Catholic University, we understood this situation in a double engagement - with teachers and students of higher education and with teachers and students of basic and secondary education in a dialogical relationship capable of (re) creating teaching and learning. It is in this line of work and intervention that emerges the initiative "Pedagogical Triangulations - Covid 19 - school experiences: the journey" as an opportunity for the schools we work with to get out of their Covid 19/E@D confinement and share experiences and practices with each other.

2 METHODS

2.1 Research strategy

The initiative "Pedagogical Triangulations - Covid 19 - school experiences: the journey" was launched by the Portuguese Catholic University with the purpose of presenting and debating teaching, learning, and evaluation practices, of valuing challenges of learning by E@D, to analyse and spread pedagogical practices of inclusive differentiation in a logic of reflection - action - reflection from the perspective of school actors (teachers and students) and in order to allow for "the production of knowledge about reality, innovation towards singularity of each case, the production of social changes and, furthermore, the development of the participants' competences" (10). The Pedagogical Triangulations - Covid 19 took on two digital supports: a) online forums "Pedagogical Triangulations: Covid 19 - school experiences: the journey" with and for teachers; and b) Challenges (Desafios) e-magazine - Notebooks from Trans_Formation n# 32, "Pedagogical Triangulations: Covid_19 - School experiences: the journey - Memories, Stories,

and Students' Time" with students (http://www.fep.porto.ucp.pt/sites/default/files/files/FEP/SAME/Caderno_Desafios_32_VF.pdf).

This paper is the result of a research strategy of a qualitative nature, as it "allows for the understanding of a problem or situation (. . .), raises silenced voices of marginalized groups or people (. . .), concerns, setbacks, and dilemmas that are the very structure of our lives (5). From a methodological point of view, it pursues the principles of action-research, as 1) a process capable of improving and/or evaluating decisions and actions (18) and 2) and consequently offers the opportunity to identify the relevant lines of force, given the lack of knowledge of the situation under analysis.

2.2 Participants and procedures

The forums took place in six sessions, from May 19th to June 4th 2020, twice a week, lasting about 60 minutes on the ZOOM platform, live with three guest teachers in each session (n=18) and dozens of participants per session (n=360), and their narratives focused on the following issues: 1) what were the priorities assumed when the school was closed by the declaration of the state of emergency; 2) what were the immediate actions for the students; 3) what was most positive factor in the relationship with the educational community. It was from this point that the data to be analyzed in the form of content analysis emerged. The online sessions were recorded for data collection.

The e-magazine had the participation of different types of schools (n=24) that collected the works/testimonies of students (n=550), whose motto was Memories, Stories, and Students' Time.

In the set of the two activities, the number of participants was almost one thousand people, whose only inclusion criterion was the availability and interest to participate. The first intention was to ensure, on online forums, the diversity of the participants (10), giving voice to six groups of three teachers each representing leadership positions: School Principals, Distance Learning Coordinators/Managers, Qualifica (Adults Long Life Learning Centers) Coordinators, Class Supervisors, Psychologists from Psychology and Guidance Services, involved in the teaching and learning processes; the second purpose was to challenge students K-12 and from different schools/groups to share memories, stories and life experiences. Twenty-four schools/groups and more than five hundred students responded positively (n=550). The e-magazine focused on the participation of children and youths, offering a point of view not about children but from the children themselves. The aesthetic character of the students' voice was assumed, as it is considered that the arts are still sometimes diminished in the context of the formal school, 'pushed' towards the extracurricular activities, or seen as 'accessory', although it is in fact 'essential' in education, in line with long-standing UNESCO (22) and CNE (4) recommendations. It is UNESCO (21) that reminds us of the "incredible power and incredible resilience of human creativity during the International Arts Education Week 2020".

2.3 Instruments

1) The narratives produced in each online forum with teachers were used as instruments for data collection, the result of an exploratory interview design, set up to exhort the discourse that focuses on the description of the experience (23) and 2) the materials designed by

the participating students - texts, poems, images, videos. For this choice, the fact that artistic supports "provide important paths for the development of knowledge and skills, as well as the means of self-expression and communication" (9), was taken into account. The choice of this register was due to the disconnection from the spoken speech, which can oscillate depending on the context and by whom it is received, and this can severely limit what can be said, as well as the way it is heard.

2.4 Data collection and data analysis

Ethical issues were extremely important at all times, and followed the Code of Ethics and Conduct of the Portuguese Catholic University (3) and the Ethics Charter of the Portuguese Society of Educational Sciences (2). Permission was obtained through the Informed Consent, signed by each of the participants and/or by the parents or guardians when participants were minors. The processing and analysis of data followed the content analysis of the narratives and the hermeneutics of the materials produced (10). This is a first approach to data and will be continued in future works.

3 FINDINGS

Research questions were taken into account in this part of the study - (1) what were the priorities assumed when the school was closed by the declaration of a state of emergency; (2) what were the immediate actions for the students; and (3) what was most positive factor in the relationship with the educational community.

All participating guest teachers (n=18) on the online forums affirmed that "the students were the greatest priority", and this challenge, "at the beginning of this new world and before the end of the second school period, was to help students, through activities and using different media, to develop a sense of belonging to the school, even when not in school " (e1), reassuring everyone, but in particular students and teachers, was imperative; then it was necessary to reorganize the work, always maintaining contact with students and parents" (e2). In fact, "the big issue was regarding communication, saying that we didn't leave anyone behind, and that meant looking at all school levels, from pre-school to secondary, as well as vocational education, in order to continue to preserve the principles of inclusive education and also provide teachers with the skills and tools to put distance education into practice" (e3). With this opportunity, "each school organized itself with different learning platforms so that students could work in an interesting way" (e4), then adapting the existing processes to others - schedules, activities, workload, and content" (e5). The idea was "to create integrated, highly negotiated responses between teachers, members of the psychology and guidance services, and the student and family support department (e3) and therefore "keep students connected to the school" (e6).

In terms of concrete measures, interviewed teachers referred that the schools actions were multiple and diverse and stem from the identified needs by and for each reality. However, the first concern was to ensure contact with each and every one of the students, "strengthening networks and means of communication" (e2), digitally or t through the teams created to coordinate the design, development, and evaluation of the E@D plans. The aim and concern involved was to "maintain proximity to the school and facilitate access to equipment and technologies" (e3) for the effective access to fair and appropriate learning environments for which the support from municipalities, local councils, and other community partners and stakeholders in general was crucial. "Moving towards this new paradigm [E@D] and, above all, thinking about school operating in a different way, where technology was [is] important" (e3), implied developing and strengthening "autonomy, responsibility, and technology" skills (e1). Teachers and students challenge themselves to "manage expectations, fears, and emotions" (e2). A demanding and very complex transition that generated relational links of a different nature, both in terms of interinstitutional and interpersonal communication, and in terms of school work plans. "Working closely with students and families" has always been present in the work developed by EMAEI (Inclusive Education), SPO (Psychology and Orientation Services), Class Supervisors' Teachers, and Qualifica Centers (Long Life Learning) teams. The objective (path) is "no student left behind and, as such, it is necessary to be aware of vulnerabilities and learning barriers in order to reach all the students with a network and teamwork" (e8).

When designing the e-magazine, we kept focused that children and youths, given that they are "specialized witnesses" (9) of their own lives, can provide unique perspectives as well as reasons for, and ways of, changing education. By showing their voices/experiences to a wide audience of educational actors, leaders, and decision-makers consolidates the right to their participation as a condition of citizenship and is also the affirmation that children and youths, in addition to being subjects of law, can/should be also participating in the production of knowledge. As can be seen in the works delivered, their testimony materializes a school experience, and what is portrayed is the comparison between journeys lived in person and at a distance. Living up to the idea that "art is the place of perfect freedom" (André Suarès), we find, in some works, the memory of classroom classes whose structure has remained the same - that is, the experience of being educated in a 'conventional' type of pedagogical/ curricular/evaluation way, remained. The tacit and explicit (traditional) rules that govern ways of being at school have been transposed home in a dilution - invasion? - of the private place. Others tell stories of a time of discovering themselves, building resilience strategies they have triggered, with greater or lesser guidance from teachers, and the different opportunities they have had access to, through distance education. Through aesthetic expression, students expressed a discourse that was less connected to the classroom and more to school life, in a willingness to say what they think, the way they wanted it, just having the motto as a guide and not as a question (avoiding the risk of conditioning the response).

4 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Scientific knowledge about Covid 19 is under construction, which amplifies the difficulties that arise when planning in education. The OECD (13) presents us with a compilation of medium-term challenges that schools and education systems will have to face, and whose statement also emerges from the narratives of the participants in the Triangulations, among which we highlight:

- - an innovative elan provided by E@D, since many teachers and students used a variety of digital tools and had greater control over their teaching and learning process. Digital classrooms provided many with the involvement in effective collective activities, learning from their classmates in collaborative processes. What worked and did not work, and for whom, should be evaluated/monitored. This reflection can be the basis for rethinking ways of organizing the curriculum and reinforcing multidisciplinary and collaborative teaching and learning models;

- - the role and importance of presence, of proximity: E@D provided a real awareness of the corporeal dimension of learning - children need to move, play; youths need contact with each other. Human beings grow when face to face and, despite the usefulness of digital media, a smile through the camera is not the same as a smile given together with a hug. Balancing this need for touch on digital mechanisms, promoting educational processes that are beneficial for children and youths in their academic, physical, and psychological development is fundamental for the generation that currently attends school;

- - safeguarding and protecting the most fragile: as a social system, it is up to the school not to leave any students behind so that, upon its closure, the pre-existing disadvantages forced an extra effort by the school and the community, generating changes that allow even the most disadvantaged students to be reached, and support to be given when they need it;

- - preparing resources: as the economic recession approaches, political leadership, cooperation, and the involvement of civil society are essential. The inequality of access to the digital society has become evident; info-exclusion goes hand in hand with the use of new technologies as a simple auxiliary to traditional teaching and not as a tool for differentiated learning and anchored in students' experiences (8). Some difficult choices have to be made: what digital equipment will be needed and under what access conditions; what skills training will be provided; how will it all be financed and who chooses among competing priorities (13).

REFERENCES

[1.] Azevedo, J. (2011). Liberdade e política pública de educação. Ensaio sobre um novo compromisso social pela educação. Vila Nova Gaia: FML.

[2.] Carta Ética da Sociedade Portuguesa das Ciências da Educação (2014).

[3.] Código de Ética e de Conduta da Universidade Católica Portuguesa (2015)

[4.] Conselho Nacional de Educação (2013). Recomendação n.º1/2013 Recomendação sobre Educação Artística.

[5.] Creswell, J. (2016). 30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher. University of Nebraska-Lincoln: SAGE Publications.

[6.] Dewey, J. (2007). Democracia e educação. Lisboa: Didáctica Editora.

[7.] Gil, J. (2005). Portugal, hoje. O medo de existir. Lisboa: Relógio D'Água Editores.

[8.] Gomes, R. (2020). Educação e desigualdades. In Reis, J. (Coord.) (2020). Palavras para lá da pandemia: cem lados de uma crise. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra, p. 56.

[9.] Goouch, Kathy; Grainger, Teresa and Lambirth, Andrew (2005). Creativity and writing: developing voice and verve in the classroom. Oxfordshire: UK: Routledge.

[10.] Guerra, I. (2006). Fundamentos e processos de uma sociologia de ação. O planeamento em Ciências Sociais. Cascais: Principia.

[11.] Hargreaves, A. & Shirley, D. (2009). The Fourth Way. The Inspiring Future for Educational Change. California: Corwin.

[12.] Louis, K. (2010). Better Schools Through Better Knowledge? New Understanding, New Uncertainty. In Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins (2010). Second International Handbook of Educational Change. USA: Springer, pp. 3-29.

[13.] OECD (2020). "Coronavirus special edition: Back to school", Trends Shaping Education Spotlights, No. 21, Paris: OECD Publishing, https://doi.org/10.1787/339780fd-en.

[14.] Reis, J. (2020). Economia do cuidado. In Reis, J. (Coord.) (2020). Palavras para lá da pandemia: cem lados de uma crise. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra, p. 56.

[15.] Robinson, K. & Aronica, L. (2009). The element. USA: Penguin Group.

[16.] Savater, F. (2006). O valor de educar. Lisboa: Dom Quixote.

[17.] Senge, P. (2010). Education for an Interdependent World: Developing Systems Citizens. In Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins (2010). Second International Handbook of Educational Change. USA: Springer, pp. 131-153.

[18.] Stake, R. (2010). Qualitative research: studying how things work. New York: The Guilford Press.

[19.] Tauritz, Rebekah. (2016). A pedagogy for Uncertain Times. IN Research and Innovation. In Education for Sustainable Development. Exploring collaborative networks, critical characteristics and evaluation practices (pp.90-105) Chapter: 8Publisher: Environment and School Initiatives - ENSI, ZVR-Zahl 408619713. Vienna: Austria Editors: Wim Lambrechts, James Hindson

[20.] Touraine, A. (2005). A new paradigm for understanding today's world. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget.

[21.] UNESCO. Arts Education Week, 25 - 31 May 2020, https://pt.unesco.org/news/unesco-celebra-o-poder-da-arte-e-da-educacao-em-todo-o-mundo).

[22.] UNESCO. Roteiro para a Educação Artística, Desenvolver as Capacidades Criativas para o Século XXI, 2006.

[23.] Wengraf, T. (2001). Qualitative Research Interviewing; Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods.London: Sage Publications.