

The New Normal In Virtual Education: A View From Teaching Practice

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Abstract

The health emergency determined that classes were suspended in person, implementing virtual education, this measure required actions to adapt to the new normality. The objective was to explore the repercussions of virtual education from the perspective of teaching practice through the qualitative approach of systematic bibliographic review; Consulting academic literature, it was concluded that there were coincidences that teachers faced in the context of the health emergency, such as self-training initiatives, lack of digital skills, and emotional conditions.

Keywords: Covid-19, teachers, virtual education and new normality.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the year of the appearance of COVID-19, it was determined that, in Peru, like several countries in the world, to limit contact between people due to the easy transmission of the coronavirus, mandatory isolation or quarantine be established; for this reason, regular activities were altered due to the limitations of not being able to move. The Ministry of Education (Minedu) implemented the virtual, remote or distance education service; this context required implementing actions to adapt to this system; At first, it was believed that this situation would be temporary; however, what began with fifteen days of quarantine went on for months; Regarding education, the entire school period was under this educational system. During the year 2021, the confinement measures were relaxed allowing students to return to classrooms in several countries around the world. In Peru, unique in those rural areas with little connectivity, later, as of September 15, urban schools were incorporated; that is, for the continuity of education it was necessary to adapt to the new normality.

The new normality implied adaptive coping, which must be responsibly, socially, in such a way that the regulations issued by the authorities are respected, for example, the mandatory use of masks ²². The new normal included returning to the productive economic system; however, it was taken advantage of by some governments imposing restrictive measures and punishments for non-compliance. This new normality meant living with the virus, complying with the necessary health provisions to avoid becoming infected ²⁵.

Regarding education, the new normality involved the regular use of technology, use of digital skills, integrating strategies that motivate students into learning experiences, who, taking advantage of the distance or means of connectivity, demonstrated a certain passivity; on the other hand, the gradual return to classrooms required both schoolchildren and teachers to comply with sanitary measures; protocols must be drawn up because the appearance of the virus in the school will be inevitable ¹³.

Regarding the situation of teachers, in this context, it was necessary to explore in greater detail the difficulties they had in carrying out an adequate exercise of the profession; a report was issued in which the weaknesses found in teachers before the pandemic, which had not been addressed, were expressed; for example, the initial training according to the curricular meshes of institutes and universities, showed a lack of preparation in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), so necessary in the health emergency, in addition there was a significant number of teachers who practiced the profession without being qualified, mainly in rural areas and private schools; These data were important because they allowed us to have a panoramic view of their condition and if they were really prepared to face this new normality ⁵.

From another perspective, the reality of Latin American countries was explored ³; the important contribution of teachers to be able to face this context was recognized, they adapted their methodological strategies and prioritized curricular contents with the objective of maintaining the educational service; The Peruvian Government also prioritized curricular

content, and also established the guidelines for teachers' work during the pandemic: "Pedagogical guidelines for the educational service of Basic Education during the year 2020 in the framework of the health emergency due to the Coronavirus COVID-19"; which specified their role as mediator and trained, generating alliances to be able to help the students ¹⁶.

The way in which the teacher's work performance was also regulated through RV No. 155-2021 "Provisions for the work of teachers and education assistants that ensure the development of the educational service of public educational institutions and programs, in the face of the outbreak of the COVID-19" ^{17,31-51}. Flexible conditions were promoted with the aim of achieving academic results, demonstrating their work through the presentation of evidence; In addition, self-training courses were implemented on the PeruEduca platform and with the help of the United Nations Organization for Culture, Science and Education, which provided socio-emotional strategies to strengthen their pedagogical practice in the new scenario of remote or distance education. ²⁹.

According to the above, this new educational scenario required, from the teaching practice, to develop actions to allow the continuity of learning experiences; it was difficult to carry it out in face-to-face education; it was a challenge to face this situation, besides ²⁰. The lack of digital skills was added, for this reason, to improve their professional practice, they had to quickly learn the use of platforms, virtual environments and gamification resources ³⁰. This new normality involved taking advantage of the opportunities of the new learning acquired. The teachers had to move the classroom to their home and, from this physical space, to the virtual environment, generating emotional conditions and stress, which affected their health; For this reason, the objective was to explore the repercussions of virtual education from the perspective of teaching practice. This study was considered important for the academic community because it was carried out during the context of the health emergency, allowing future researchers to make comparisons of what was the behavior of educational actors in light of new findings ²³.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

qualitative approach of systematic bibliographic review was used, for which databases available on the web were consulted, such as SCOPUS, Web of Science (WOS). Education Resources Information Center (Eric) and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO); It was considered as an inclusion criterion that the publications were from the years 2020 and 2021: in addition, that, in the keywords, they were found together with the teacher and COVID-19, they contemplated the work of teachers in schools, that the language was in Spanish or English, being able to be from any continent; It was also necessary to resort to regulatory documents from the Minedu because they set the guidelines for job performance. The exclusion criteria were that the academic information consulted understood the reality of teachers in technical institutions and universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review of the literature made it possible to establish coincidences in the perception of teachers regarding their work in times of pandemic in which virtual education was implemented, it also required important changes to be made in how they viewed their professional performance because, during The face-to-face, from the Minedu, constructivism was promoted, in such a sense that the student was the manager of his own learning, the teacher being simply a mediator ¹⁵; there were leftovers to continue with the lecture or expository class; This way was tried to lead to the beginning of the pandemic; however, the teachers, within the routine, understood that it was not appropriate, which is why the need for self-training ²⁶ arose, searching the networks for methods that would allow them to update and reinvent themselves ²¹, since, in their professional training, it was not contemplated that out online teachers; but they were forced to enroll in this modality ¹².

Although some teachers, on their own initiative, sought improvements, this did not hide the fact that a significant number found this adaptation difficult because they lacked digital skills ¹⁰; it was difficult to leave their comfort zone which they used during face-to-face education, in addition, the resources they had available to strengthen these skills had to be explored. Previous studies already demonstrated these weaknesses ^{11,1}; As well as the enormous differences in access to ICTs between continents, the best prepared in the use of digital devices was Asia; it was not only necessary to have oca resources; but knowing how to use them from a pedagogical perspective and take advantage of their usefulness during the development of the class sessions ⁷, this implied a challenge because it was also necessary to find adequate mechanisms to evaluate the progress of the students by redesigning the rubrics ²⁸; On the other hand, regardless of the professional need to improve, the support provided by school directors was also important, creating spaces for them to strengthen their digital skills; For this practice to be successful, teachers had to have four domains: interest, motivation, self-efficacy, and emotion ²⁷.

Teachers had difficulties connecting with their students due to the digital gaps that emerged during the pandemic; in the case of Peru, these deficiencies had already been alerted ⁵; the places with the best access were the urban ones, while in

rural areas they lacked a connection system, these limitations affected those with lower economic resources ¹⁴; in Peru, it was unfortunate to hear news of the efforts that the students had to make to obtain a signal and be able to attend their virtual classes ⁸, in this line of power, the teachers would be able to contact their students, the family factor influenced, the parents believed that this educational system was not adequate ⁹, for example, in countries that could be typified as advanced or modern such as South Korea, there was also this resistance due to the traditional thoughts of families about what education should be like ²; with respect to Muslim culture, it was explored that ethical questions could arise about its use, indiscriminate access to digital content could have positive and moral effects ¹⁸; however, it was possible to demonstrate over the months that this system is more flexible and allows different communication channels such as synchronous and asynchronous. In addition, the accelerated progress of this educational system requires that, in the future, policies be designed to regulate content and form of execution ¹⁹.

Finally, another coincidence that was found in the consulted literature was the emotional affections caused by virtual education, as it was pointed out lines before, there was no professional preparation; however, the teachers made efforts to adapt, because it was not only the work at home, but also sharing their family responsibilities with the school, added to this was the uncertainty caused by the spread of the virus, stress, apathy, reluctance, frustration: were the main symptoms, these conditions were exacerbated by uncertainty ^{4,24}; the exhaustion they went through made them even doubt and leave the profession; but they had no other alternative and had to continue; however, they demonstrated positive skills such as resilience to face the challenge of virtual education ⁶.

CONCLUSIONS

The pandemic caused by covid-19 showed that the teaching staff, as fundamental actors in the teaching-learning process, were able to adapt, this adaptation to the virtual education system for which they were not prepared from their initial training, required their self-training in the use of platforms and networks to be able to develop adequate synchronous and asynchronous communication despite the fact that it was evident that, when the emergency broke out, digital skills were lacking; however, they demonstrated positive skills to learn them and put them into practice with their students, they also had to adapt the traditional way of how learning experiences were taught, using strategy and contextualized rubrics, as this teaching modality advanced, they understood which were the most adequate to reach their students, understanding the importance of the use of gamification and collaborative work; on the other hand, moving the school to their home, sharing their normal routine with their professional functions, the uncertainty due to the progress of the virus, etc., generated stress and emotional affections; but there is no doubt that they were able to face this situation, it is only expected, in the future, to regulate this form of education in the EBR institutions and take precautions, because they are not free from facing another pandemic of this nature that paralyzed everything and They had to adapt to the new normal.

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