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Body Re-education in Teacher Continuing Education

ABSTRACT: This paper outlines a workshop of the teacher continuing education programme at the National University of Education in Ecuador (UNAE). This workshop is part of a series of innovative pedagogical practices that enhance professional awareness in teacher education. It presents an experience that focuses on the relation between the body and education as the axis of analysis and development of professional and personal competences. The theoretical and conceptual framework of the experience is developed from thinking the body in education, conceived as a category of observation and analysis. In this proposal, didactic strategies are developed for a collaborative and autonomous work in virtual and face-to-face classrooms, with a body re-education insight.

KEYWORDS: Continuing Education; Teacher education; Body; Body Re-education

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The continuing professional development of teachers has become an important issue worldwide. This engagement is mainly understood as a process of teacher self-regulation on a lifelong learning basis. In this paper, the authors argue that learning opportunities for teachers to engage in lifelong self-education processes might be taught and learnt. That is why this article presents a workshop carried out in the continuing education programme of the National University of Education in Ecuador (UNAE), with the aim of enhancing professional awareness in teacher education and specifically oriented to provide significant learning tools for body re-education. Body re-education, as proposed by the authors of this text, suggests an integral process of metacognition of the body, culture, education, and emotions, which poses a challenge for an autonomous work based on research and self-education (Feldenkrais, 1985).

In this sense, this educational practice is considered from a metacognitive and complexity perspective (Cabrera and de la Herrán, 2015; Morin, 2004). Teaching-learning processes are linked in this practice to develop research and teacher awareness competences in thinking about the significance of the relation between body and education in teacher education. Although the educational traditions of the aforementioned authors—Cabrera and de la Herrán (2015), Morin (2004), and Feldenkrais (1985)—show different theoretical positions in relation to the body and education, it is worth mentioning that in this practice they become relevant because of their perspective of complexity in education in terms of self-knowledge, self-education, and body metacognition.

In a literature review of education practices related to body education, a number of studies related to body expression can be identified, generally from the arts field (Toivanen and Kaasinenb, 2016; Anttila, 2015; Lecoq, 2000), although it can be extended to other education fields as well (Gallo, 2017; Escudero, 2014; Crisorio and Escudero, 2012; Behares and Rodríguez, 2008). Other experiences invite reflection about self-knowledge in education, mainly related to studies on teachers' socio-emotional competences (Torres, 2018; Bisquerra, 2003, 2005, 2009). However, in this search it has been difficult to identify research-oriented experiences that enhance a body re-education approach in teachers' professional development "that involves knowing in and through our bodies" (Toivanen and Kaasinenb, 2016, p.126). That is why the actual practice, and others previously suggested by the authors of this text, is oriented towards increasing teachers' self (re-)education competences, in agreement

with “the belief that embodiment is the basis for consciousness, cognition, and learning” (Toivanen and Kaasinen, 2016, p.126).

In addition, this practice innovates through the integration of virtual environments in teaching body re-education, which is usually associated with face-to-face learning rather than virtual. It is then about updating, reinventing oneself, daring to create from new technological opportunities—without having to redeem the body in such a process—and provoking critical reflection.

THE BODY AND VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

The current socio-educational reality demands strategies and teaching resources that include and reflect other ways of looking at the body in education from an emerging virtual dimension.

Several authors have worked on the “body” as an object of study and analysis, for example, Mauss, Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Mounier and Foucault, as well as Le Breton and Nancy. The former authors have contributed to thought about the essence of human being regarding the body and its relationship with the world. In relation to the body and virtual environments, a new type of relationship is observed. This new relationship promotes a language that reduces distances and establishes other forms of expression, which transcends a face-to-face body language.

In that sense, the body is not silenced by virtual participation. Rather, it converges on new forms of communication, transformation, evolution, dynamics, and expression. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, it is about rediscovering the body through educational practice, an opportunity to re-educate the present and the virtual body, which allows for the reinventing of itself in the educational act.

The body-education relation promotes assertive contact and communication, meaningful learning, and a better understanding. Thus, body re-education (virtual and present) through a self-education research process facilitates autonomous growth (individual and collective) that allows us to understand our role as human beings in today’s world (Castells, 2009; 2003) and learn to self-regulate. It also means seeing and feeling our body through sharing spaces with others.

FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

The theoretical and conceptual framework of this educational practice has been developed through thinking the body in education, conceived as a category of observation, analysis, and inclusion. Moreover, the current pedagogical practice includes virtual environments in the continuous education of teachers, where the innovative character arises from the dialogue between face-to-face and virtual environments that promotes a multiplicity of intelligences; metacognition; self-regulation; and the collaborative and autonomous work of the participants (Arias and Linares, 2018; Chiappe and Cuesta, 2013; Daura, 2017; Gardner, 2016, 2005; Goleman, 1997). Fol-

lowing Gil and Martínez (2018), a teaching-learning process is understood under the autonomy of those who teach and learn:

The mission of teachers is, once assumed that students can be autonomous, organize a system that facilitates reaching the goals, give them the means to achieve the goals, present devices that allow access to new intellectual adventures, lead them to face the world that surrounds them in order to transform it, create it, make it more fair and equitable. (p. 44)

Accordingly, this proposal suggests thinking the body in education with accessible resources in the current scenarios, while strengthening the autonomous work in the class group and in the virtual classroom. In particular, in the virtual classroom, the proposal is about "... converting the digital scenarios into more Edu-communicative spaces..." (Gil and Martínez, 2018, p. 59). Meanwhile, in the face-to face classroom, it is proposed that

The learning process is strengthened if it is carried out from the body: our gestures, our words, our tone of voice, our entrance and exit from the classroom, all these are bodily expressions that denote a directionality, transmit a message and ways of communicating with others. (Ires and Tur, 2016, p. 34)

Objectives:

- » Identify educational trajectories in relation to the body.
- » Generate inclusive educational practices.
- » Raise teachers' interest in the concept and experience of re-educating and rediscovering the body.

The course lasted a total of 80 hours (virtual and face-to-face), was oriented to teachers in continuous education programmes, and had 25 participants. The distribution of the 80 hours was carried out as follows:

- » 32 classroom hours (4 Saturdays of 8 hours), theoretical and practical.
- » 28 hours of virtual work on the platform, theoretical-practical, with forums, debates, chats, programming of research tasks and questionnaires, self-evaluation, final assignment and reports with permanent updates to the course.
- » 20 hours of autonomous work associated with implementing strategies of the workshop to participants' educational settings and tasks performed individually.

Participants came from different educational centres and provinces of Ecuador, with a predominance of women. The instructor worked with participatory techniques to make a diagnostic survey of the group in order to observe and explore the place that the body occupies in educational action. This allowed for generating educational actions and adapting some themes related to the interests and needs of the participants. In the diagnostic stage, different expectations of the participants were expressed that are worth assessing in their own voices:

- *“I feel the need to work my body and to consider it important in the pedagogical relation.”*
- *“Children need to start working with their bodies, avoiding to fall always into physical disciplines.”*
- *“I have experience in working with indigenous cultures and this broadens my social spectrum in pedagogy, that is why I need to learn different body strategies that expand pedagogical possibilities.”*
- *“I work with people with visual disabilities and my expectation is to learn about the body and to share with them this experience.”*
- *“What children like best is working with the body, learning with and from the body, for me it is very important for my personal growth, too.”¹*

The diversity of expectations says something about the need for actively involving the body in teaching-learning processes. This concern was the main motivation for teachers to enrol in the proposed workshop. For this, various pedagogical strategies were used, such as active and participatory techniques in both environments (virtual and face-to-face classroom).

FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

Based on the diagnostic of the group and their educational needs, careful work was conducted to adapt some components of the course. The application of an initial questionnaire regarding the significance and presence of the body in education helped to develop specific activities and strategies. The beginning of the workshop was done in green spaces with practical body activities; performing, for example, group greeting exercises, since a need to relate to one another and to build confident relations to work from a bodily approach was identified. Accurate guidelines were established to improve the practice, with the facilitation and feedback of the instructor in correcting the positions and pointing out improvements on the body awareness of the participants, by making use of oriental ancestral body techniques.

Different exercises were oriented to developing skills for group communication, reflection on personal experiences, and also to address participants' concerns about their own teaching practices. For doing so, there was an audio-visual presentation about an educational experience of body expression, rhythm, and movement in childhood, and the importance of play and its different applications from body expression. In addition, a problem tree was created in small groups in which they reflected on an individual and group basis on the main difficulties concerning the body in education. They then presented in groups their reflections and concerns on that issue.

The narratives from the face-to-face experience, also projected on the problem tree, aimed to think critically about the educational relationship with the body. Thus, oral and written expressions emerged concerning the perception of some central

¹ The paragraphs in italics show some writings and textual expressions of the participants during the workshop.

problems that affect Ecuadorian education and the place that the body occupies in it. According to the participants:

- *“The education system does not consciously consider body education to promote self-knowledge.”*
- *“There is absence of training regarding corporality in a responsible and conscious way. The body is relegated. Cultural identity is relegated, too.”*

Some central concerns expressed by participants were the lack of institutional and state support for suggested creative proposals that link education and the body, beyond physical education. Also, some of them highlighted problems related to their students' population, such as emotional instability, lack of motivation, violence, and asedentary lifestyle, among others, that made their innovative proposals a bit difficult to put into practice.

The discussions that arose from the problem tree continued through debate in the virtual classroom. In addition, a continuous critical dialogue with the participants was encouraged through texts introduced in the virtual classroom, which were the point of departure for giving their opinions in forums to then continue the discussion in the face-to-face meeting. This generated dynamic work that offered not only a theoretical debate about the link between body and corporality, but also generated a rich face-to-face encounter through the practice of conscious body exercises proposed by the instructor.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Digital technologies introduced new educational needs and challenges, which entailed a high degree of complexity in educational processes, and at the same time led to changes in educational strategies for meaningful learning. The body and the word of the participants were supported by technological resources, in which the face-to-face and virtual environments complemented each other through movement, expression, and communication. In this sense, in the virtual classroom, the generation of forums and debates and interaction chats (in real and deferred time) were suggested. In the interactions, the approach to the body and cultural knowledge in various contexts were integrated, as well as a vision of gender equity through corporality. Also, an ancestral exercise guide was carried out as a complement to the classroom, material specifically created for the virtual classroom of this course and taking into account the makeup of the group. The creation of discussion forums in the virtual classroom motivated different debates and practical and research tasks.

It is important to consider that even when the participants signed up for a semi-presential course, not all of them knew how to work in virtual classrooms. Therefore, the participants were instructed on its use as an educational tool. Despite this, not everyone achieved full skills in the use of this resource. Likewise, there were chats and discussion forums for instruction, some of them suggested by the partic-

ipants. It is also important to highlight the instructor's feedback for reflective questioning. According to Gardner (2016), the only reliable way to determine if a student has truly understood is to ask her/him a new question or to show them something new, something about which s/he has not been trained. Likewise, "the ability to interweave information from different sources in a coherent whole is vital in today's world" (Gardner, 2016, p.41).

RESULTS

In this workshop, the pedagogical relationship "integrate[d] the affective, practical and—especially—the ethical" body (Ayala, 2018, p. 39), not only allowed participants to make use of technologies and become familiar with their uses in education, but also to become conscious of the importance of integrating the body in their own pedagogical practices. So far, it has been part of the teaching task to strengthen virtual participation and to increase critical and autonomous reflection, for example, through forums. This resulted in didactic tools designed for this specific workshop in order to strengthen the use of technology by teachers, which became relevant in the Ecuadorian context, where the access to and use of technology by teachers is still limited in several provinces across the country (Arroyo et al. 2018). Likewise, the face-to-face classes expanded other ways to manifest the body in the digital age. In this way, it was possible to legitimize these new ways of educating and learning through self-education processes.

One result of the group diagnostic held at the beginning of the workshop was that teachers shared some strategies to address conflicts that arise from working with children and adolescents in their own practices. In addition, the participants expressed some contradictions on the understanding of the notion of the body and corporality, especially in relation to a unidirectional look towards physical discipline and training. At the same time, 12 of the 25 participants said that they did not perform any physical activity; 4 participants expressed that they used to walk an average of 1 to 2 hours a week during the week; 9 of them said they spent some time a week that ranged from 10 to 20 minutes on an occasional walk. But none of the participants responded that they had experienced or practised conscious ways of approaching the relation between the body and education on their own or with their students. In the same way they expressed student demotivation in bodily practices, and they were critical of the fact that educational practices were usually oriented to physical education or dance therapy, with an absence of self-reflection and self-knowledge.

Furthermore, the diversity of situations and previous experiences of the participants determined how to adapt the planning to work with a (self-)critical approach from the corporality, the interpellation of the subject, and the body and culture (Escudero, 2014; Crisorio and Escudero, 2012; Foucault, 2010; Behares and Rodríguez, 2008). In this sense, participants were invited to work with reflections on the body and corporality proposed mainly by Foucault (2010), Le Breton (2006; 2002), and Les Goff and Truong (2005).

Against this background, the proposal was directed towards a re-education approach from/with the body, where the teacher understood that some educational needs in relation to the body could be addressed from their own involvement, research, and own educational process beyond the curricular deficiencies related to the body at the educational system, as emphasised by one participant: *“In the curricular framework there is no body education, many of us neither know it nor it is within the education system, I did not know it; only today that I participate in the workshop I learn what body education is.”*

In the workshops, data was collected from the diagnostic questionnaire, participant observation, and participatory techniques. In addition, the interactions in the virtual environment were documented and analysed, and the oral and written narratives generated in relation to the place that the body occupies in education were also studied.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The workshop aimed at encouraging a learning approach to teachers from body re-education and by continuing their education on a self-critical oriented experience. Specifically, the intention of the workshop was to re-educate from the body using current technological advantages, which allowed the teaching-learning processes to be articulated in virtual/face-to-face classroom environments. Additionally, the replication of this teaching practice to the participants' work places was encouraged.

It was observed that virtual interactions among teachers offered spaces and times of encounter and debate, where the participants manifested their (meta-)cognitive skills, and at the same time, opened new paths towards reflection and self-regulation from corporality. In other words, working the corporality from diverse environments meant getting closer to the potential of the body and its metacognition. This is a task that demands time and personal self-regulation which does not end at the conclusion of the workshop. First, one must want to re-educate oneself in this process of continuing education and learn and unlearn from the experience and experimentation of the own body as well as in the relation to others' corporality. Second, teachers must become aware of encouraging strategies or body dynamics in the classroom with the students, while also encouraging metacognition and self-regulation competences. These autonomous pedagogical practices invite teachers to become active subjects of their own continuing learning process. With this backdrop, it is appropriate to share one of the participants' thoughts about her experience during the workshop, which to a certain extent summarized the achieved goals in the presented practice:

It was a new experience, I was used to the workshop where instructors give you a folder, a CD, some sheets and talks, where you become a receiver of information. This method is new for me, it has provided me new knowledge and exchange opportunities of work and personal experiences with other colleagues.

It can be said from this first experience that the workshop allowed the participants to start a self-critical reflection process concerning their body. In particular, it allowed teachers to identify the need for generating educational trajectories for themselves and for their students that actively include the body in education, both in virtual and face-to-face environments. At the same time, this practice motivated other ways of seeing/looking at the corporality by making use of digital resources that are not always associated with body work. Most importantly, teachers shared with other colleagues the experience of learning by exploring their continuing teaching process. We have come to the conclusion that, concerning the relation body and education, teachers should become more aware of their own continuing learning process for building better pedagogical relations and positive leadership in teaching, under a holistic way of experiencing education.

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REEDUKACJA CIAŁA W DOSKONALENIU ZAWODOWYM NAUCZYCIELI

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy dokument przedstawia w zarysie warsztat programu doskonalenia zawodowego nauczycieli w National University of Education (UNAE) w Ekwadorze. Warsztat ten jest częścią serii innowacyjnych praktyk pedagogicznych, które zwiększają zawodową świadomość w kształceniu nauczycieli. Przedstawia doświadczenie, które koncentruje się na relacji pomiędzy ciałem a edukacją jako osią analizy rozwoju zawodowego i kompetencji osobistych. Ramy teoretyczne i pojęciowe tego doświadczenia są rozwinięciem myślenia o ciele w edukacji, pojmowanego jako kategoria obserwacji i analizy. W niniejszym wniosku opracowano strategie dydaktyczne na rzecz wspólnej i autonomicznej pracy w klasach wirtualnych i tradycyjnych, z uwzględnieniem reedukacji ciała.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: kształcenie zawodowe; szkolenie nauczycieli, ciało; reedukacja ciała