



REVISTA

CÁTEDRA

Innovación de contextos relacionales- comunicacionales para una educación transformadora

Innovation of relational-communicative contexts for a transforming education

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Resumen

La investigación que se describe surgió de la pregunta ¿cómo generar procesos transformadores en contextos educativos?, teniendo en cuenta que, todavía, en el Ecuador la educación está marcada por la jerarquización del conocimiento y relaciones que buscan la homogeneización y estandarización. Para el proceso se eligió una perspectiva innovadora, el construccionismo social-relacional, el cual mira al cuidado y a la educación como apropiación creativa, asertiva y proactiva de todo lo que nos sucede en la vida: vínculos, trabajos, relaciones y encuentros significativos; cuyos procesos permanentes de aprendizaje necesitan espacios de reflexión y acompañamiento.

La investigación relacional contó con la participación de docentes, autoridades, padres de familia, y otros miembros de contextos educativos, a lo largo de 4 años, y tuvo como escenario la implementación del proyecto “Cuidando al cuidador” para instituciones



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educativas y de protección a la niñez y adolescencia en Tungurahua-Ecuador, entre los años 2016 y 2019.

El propósito de la investigación es comprender cómo desde las prácticas colaborativas-dialógicas y el enfoque generativo -como maneras de ser y de hacer- se crean nuevas condiciones relacionales que ponen en el centro la apertura hacia lo diverso, lo distinto y lo local y en las cuales los estudiantes construyen sus propios recursos creativos, emocionales y relacionales. El resultado permite evidenciar que la libertad, diálogo, curiosidad, reflexión crítica, respeto por la diferencia y ética relacional potencian los contextos educativos y generan transformaciones que contribuyen a una vida digna a la construcción de posibilidades y bienestar común.

Palabras clave

Construccionismo social-relacional, contextos educativos, prácticas colaborativas-dialógicas, posibilidades, transformaciones relacionales.

Abstract

The research described here arose from the question of how to generate transformative processes in educational contexts, taking into account that, in Ecuador, education is still marked by the hierarchization of knowledge and relationships that seek homogenization and standardization. An innovative perspective was chosen for the process, social-relational constructionism, which looks at care and education as a creative, assertive, and proactive appropriation of everything that happens to us in life: links, work, relationships, and meaningful encounters; whose permanent learning processes need spaces for reflection and accompaniment.

The relational research involved teachers, authorities, parents, and other members of educational contexts, over 4 years, and had as its scenario the implementation of the project "Caring for the Caregiver" for educational and protection institutions for children and adolescents in Tungurahua-Ecuador, between the years 2016 and 2019.

The purpose of the research is to understand how from the collaborative-dialogical practices and the generative approach - as ways of being and doing - new relational conditions are created that put in the center the opening towards the diverse, the different and the local and in which the students build their own creative, emotional and relational resources. The result shows that freedom, dialogue, curiosity, critical reflection, respect for difference, and relational ethics enhance educational contexts and generate transformations that contribute to a life of dignity and to the construction of possibilities and common well-being.

Keywords

Collaborative-dialogic practices, educational contexts, relational transformations, social constructionism, possibilities.

1. Introduction

At the present time, in which immediacy prevails, there are few spaces in which raising useful questions to reflect constructively on the teaching-learning processes becomes indispensable. It is necessary to raise questions that generate sustainable transformations, linked to local contexts, that allow for the eradication of abuse, mistreatment, violation of



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rights, as well as homogenization that rejects difference, all of these common aspects in Ecuadorian social environments.

The present article shows the results of the implementation of innovative perspectives for the Ecuadorian context (sustained in the social-relational constructionist epistemology), on how to conceive other styles of relationships in educational spaces. It describes the implementation of a process of relational co-research whose methodology invites the protagonists to a reflective pragmatics.

Social-relational constructionism and collaborative-dialogical practices and the generative see care and education as a creative, assertive and proactive appropriation of everything that happens to us in life. Affective bonds, works, relationships and meaningful encounters; as well as existential crises, successes and failures are part of the constitution of people and their relationships. Anderson (2013) proposes this position as:

a philosophical stance - a way of meeting, reflecting together, and talking with the people a teacher works with. It is a posture characterized by an authentic, spontaneous and natural way of acting. Through this attitude, tone and position, one is saying to the other: 'I respect you', 'You have something valuable to tell me' and 'I would like to hear it' (p. 64).

The process described is based on asking reflective questions to the protagonists of the educational contexts (students, teachers, parents and institutions) about their being, doing and knowing. This makes it possible to verify that in the Ecuadorian reality there is still space for sustainable transformations. Furthermore, it allows for the assumption of co-responsibility in the maintenance of hierarchical relationships that make abuse, mistreatment and exclusion possible.

It is necessary to recognize that the critical discourse on education in Latin America has an important tradition. In this regard, Freire (1972) points out that:

No one educates anyone - no one educates himself - men educate each other with the mediation of the world (...) Education as the practice of freedom, contrary to that which is the practice of domination, the reflection it proposes, because it is authentic, is not about this abstract man, not about this world without man, but about men in their relations with the world (pp. 61-63).

The experience and research presented here are based on the idea that educational spaces must be constituted in contexts of the exercise of freedom and the participatory construction of relationships, which will be significant throughout life. These spaces refer, in the words of Anderson (2019):

(...) to the metaphorical space and the polyphonic process in which the transformation is generated. In other words, the transformation occurs in the dynamics of the relationship and the conversation. The essence of the collaborative relationship implies how we are oriented to be, act and respond 'with' another person, so that the other person joins us in shared commitment and joint action (p. 23).

These are spaces in which all participants actively contribute and all learn together, and a position that overcomes the hierarchy imposed on traditional education is fundamental.



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In the following section, a brief theoretical description is made of how social-relational constructionism, which is the epistemology that guides the co-research carried out, takes collaborative-dialogical practices and the generative model as methodological elements to contribute to the relational transformation of educational spaces. Finally, the conclusions reached by the co-researchers are presented, as well as how these derive into new ways of understanding the relationships between students and teachers, between colleagues and between all the members of the educational communities.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Contributions from social-relational constructionism for a transformative education

This research is approached from the perspectives of social-relational constructionist theory and collaborative-dialogical practice and includes the reflective positions of Andersen, 1991, dialogical in Bakhtin, 1997, collaborative in Anderson, 1999 and generative in Fried-Schnitman, 1998. These positions focus on building relationships and help to understand their value in the professional practice of teachers and authorities and their contribution to the well-being of Ecuadorian families.

Social-relational constructionism "is concerned more with networks of relationships than with individuals and questions the position of transcendent superiority claimed by those who act according to the traditional scientific mode" (McNamee and Gergen, 1996, p. 21). This means participating in a transformative dialogue as opposed to a monologue, the dialogue implies being changed by the process itself.

Gergen, one of the most relevant theorists of this epistemology interviewed by Robyn Stratton-Berkessel (2015) for her podcast, states that:

The possibility is this orientation of Social Construction, which is neither a belief nor a truth, it is an invitation for us to enrich our relationships. (...) The social constructionist perspective is the reverse of the modernist Western tradition of converging on a single vision. The possibility is to value differences and enrich relationships by valuing multiple perspectives

(...) The constructionist work depends on the discourse. We need to talk. What other realities can we take into account? If you broaden your sensitivity to who you are, you broaden your perspectives. We are multi beings. We carry with us a myriad of perspectives. Let us listen to all the voices.

When talking about education, what is relevant is to offer the student: empathy; acceptance (respect for his or her being); confidence, coherence, curiosity and a safe and reliable space to develop meaningful learning. The educational system can encourage relational processes so that through narratives the different and the diverse contribute to develop a new style of being with oneself and with others.

A new relational perspective implies contributing to the transformation of the person's being by emphasizing conversations. Through language and meaning each human being enters into a relationship with others, thus building their own identity or inner voice. Every idea, every concept is born from social exchange mediated by language.



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In this framework, social-relational constructionism finds in the collaborative-dialogical practices ways of being and doing that put in the center of the relations the opening towards the diverse, the different and the local in contrast with the homogenization that implies the positivist -traditional- logic that hierarchizes the univocal knowledge.

It is a matter of creating new relational conditions within which students can generate their own resources, that is, their relational capacities, resilience, respect, innovation and creativity. In the words of Fried-Schnitman (1998)

The proposal is to explore the conditions of possibility, so that the questions of these times become instruments for creativity. Action planning implies putting into play the visions that are held about change -and its conditions of possibility-, of "reality", of time, as well as the conception about the role of those who plan the construction of the "desired future" (p. 450).

Morin allows us to broaden the horizon of these reflections and to look for new alternatives in the context of the teaching-learning process when he points out that complex thought is that which is located in a moment and in a time; that is to say, that it is always linked to the local space. This author affirms that complex thought recognizes that there is uncertainty and this makes it escape from the dogmatism that is characteristic of non-complex thought. In the same text, Morin points out:

But complex thought does not fall into a resigned skepticism because, operating a total break with the dogmatism of certainty, it courageously launches itself into the uncertain adventure of thought, thus joining the uncertain adventure of humanity from its birth. We must learn to live with uncertainty and not, as we have been taught for millennia, to do anything to avoid uncertainty (Morin, 1998, p. 440).

For his part, McNamee asserts that the social constructionist perspective holds that relationships are built in conversation, this means talking to the other, without trying to convince or defeat them. The purpose is to understand each other, not to agree. Conversation has no other objective than itself and, being free, is one of the pleasures of existence (McNamee, 2016, para. 3).

To be "understanding" is to coordinate one's actions with those of another; it is to be a certain kind of person in relation to the other. The kind of conversations we have with others tell of the quality of life we choose to build.

The relationship that is built in the educational system represents the establishment of a new coordination that will be developed from the resources that both the teacher and the student put into the relationship. The main question is whether the conversational resources generated in the educational relationship are feasible to put into practice, that is, outside this context.

Anderson's proposal is that teachers should make an honest analysis of their pedagogical traditions: of how they relate to people, of how they think about, talk to, act toward, and respond to their students. The author states that, if students question the teaching work in some way, they could listen to the invitation to pause and reflect instead of hearing the questioning as a condemnation (Anderson, 2013, p. 63).



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Social-relational constructionism invites to think from another position the relationship that occurs in educational processes, a position that transcends the hierarchy imposed by the supposed scientific knowledge to approach the other valuing his difference. More than information and cold data, what students ask from their teachers are questions:

What is brought to the relationship? What relationship is valued? Who are the teachers? Are they experts? Teachers? Friendly advisors? Moral guardians? And, in any case, how do we become who we are?

2.2 Education: sense and meaning

The meaning of life is to achieve what the philosopher Montaigne proposes: "everything I do, I do with joy" (Montaigne, trad. in 2007, p. 588). Joy is an approval of existence. To ask oneself about the meaning and significance of education remains current, the answers are multiple and do not exhaust themselves.

The verb "to educate" is taken in the context of this process of co-research, as posed by the social constructionist epistemology, that is: to contribute to bring out the best in a person, to mobilize his resources, potentialities, to recognize and value the positive of his being, of his contributions and questions. It is about emphasizing positive resources rather than deficits. As we understand it, it is to accompany children and young people so that they become sensitive, honest, humane and intellectually contribute with their proactive, creative and critical participation to social change.

When you are part of a relationship in the educational context "the fundamental thing, in every human relationship, is gentleness, which means: speaking gently, listening gently, asking gently, explaining gently, dealing gently" (Andersen, 2013, p. 80). The teacher has the responsibility to contribute to the children and adolescents becoming more and more autonomous and independent, to be able to discern, think with criteria, reflect and express; to question, to contribute to the respect for others and, above all, to tune in with empathy, both with themselves and with others.

It is about providing children and adolescents with daily: joy, true acceptance, legitimization of their being and feelings, authentic affection, sincere respect, trust, human limits, which contain and guide. The alliance, the bond of trust and security between teachers and students is what makes it a meaningful relational and educational process.

The best teachers at personal criteria are those who with their sensitivity, empathy, creativity, imagination and intelligence manage to infect students with the taste, passion and pleasure for the subjects they teach. They are the ones who contribute to the inner wellbeing of the child and the adolescent.

The well-being of the students is based on the fact that, in the first instance, the teacher recognizes that he or she loves doing what he or she does (being a teacher), that he or she enjoys sharing that teaching-learning space, that he or she accepts and values it as a human being by the mere fact of being, of existing. What strengthens is not the capacity to submit and oblige, but the ability to see things with good eyes, to laugh, to mobilize one's resources, to invent solutions, to expand one's resilience.

In this context, to educate is to build a different relational ethic and a deep intimacy, it means to open oneself totally, in a transformative dialogue, to the "truth" of the other and that this be transformative. Ethics is present in people's actions, in their conduct and their relationship with others and with themselves.



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2.3 Relational Intelligence

Relational intelligence translates into the ability to be happy, not to be dominated by adversity, to take control of one's life and to establish harmonious relationships with others. According to Anderson, it is not enough to boost a child's IQ; we must also be concerned about his emotional quotient, and even more so if we take into account that many intellectual and school difficulties have their origin in emotional blockages (Anderson, 2012, p. 4).

McNamee maintains that relational intelligence is immediately recognizable because it brings into contact what is human in a person. He also asserts that those who are inhabited by it penetrate beyond the surface of things, listening to deep motivations (McNamee, 2016, para. 8). The teacher, then, must enhance his or her capacity to listen and strengthen his or her relational intelligence in order to strengthen, in turn, the relational resources of his or her students.

Relational intelligence and emotional intelligence are linked because they imply the conviction of respecting the person's emotions; that is, allowing him or her to feel who he or she is, to become aware of himself or herself here and now. It is to place him in the position of subject, to authorize him to show himself different from the interlocutor. The two are associated to generate relational contexts that allow a different being and a different doing that makes possible a transforming learning.

People learn mainly from their parents when they have an educating attitude from the time they are children. This is a determining factor in the development of their emotional quotient. "The emotional habits are built according to the emotions accepted or forbidden by the parents, consciously and, above all, unconsciously, of the taboos and family secrets, as well as of the place that is occupied between the siblings" (Belart and Ferrer, 1998, p. 86).

The child, at home, takes the adults as a model of action, when he enters the educational system his model of action will be the teachers, and he has a tendency to follow spontaneously the action of the other, more than the advice he can offer them. Unconscious messages are more powerful than conscious actions or words.

Helping children to develop their emotional quotient implies that adults themselves develop theirs. Helping a child grow means that the adult grows in a different way.

2.4 Self-esteem and empathy

Self-esteem is the sum of confidence and self-respect. It can be built and strengthened in an environment where individual differences are respected, where positive appraisal is open, mistakes are learned, communication is open, rules are flexible, responsibility is modeled, and sincerity, honesty and integrity are practiced.

In environments where children and adults feel good about themselves, they will be loving, healthy, creative, and capable of providing solutions to problems. In educational contexts, the aim is to establish a pleasant relationship with students instead of neglecting their needs, depriving them of the reasoned and respectful explanations to which they are entitled. It is to co-create with them a space for the free expression of the multiple voices present and to legitimize that rich diversity.

Satir maintains that positive human relationships and proper loving behavior originate from characters with strong feelings of self-esteem; only individuals who love and value themselves can value others. For this author, strong self-esteem allows for healthy and happy human beings. In addition, it helps to build satisfying relationships.



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Individuals who know how to appreciate themselves would not violate their interpersonal relationships by resorting to violence. Those who do not love each other become instruments of hatred and destruction at the hands of unscrupulous beings. The more we value ourselves, the less we demand from others; the less we demand from others, the more we feel confident; the more we trust in ourselves and others, the more we can love; the more we love others, the less we fear. The more we build with others, the better we will get to know them and the better we know others, the greater the bridge of union with those around us. In this way, self-esteem behavior helps us to end isolation and alienation between individuals, groups and nations (Satir, 2002, p. 47).

Self-esteem is the most intimate relationship with oneself. The person with good self-esteem has an inner life that is rich and rewarding and therefore feels satisfied with himself. The challenge is to learn to free oneself, to be spontaneous and authentic in all relationships with oneself and others.

On the other hand, empathy is the affective and intellectual rapport between two people. It implies sharing the emotion perceived in another. It is "putting oneself in the other person's place" (Fonseca et al., 2011, p. 23), that is, putting oneself in the other person's shoes, but above all being able to walk in those shoes. This will require an emotional state that is congruent in the dialogue with the other.

Empathy allows us to confirm the other's way of seeing; to understand and recognize their own logic, their own reason. Empathy humanizes, allows us to understand the other in their motivations, in the explanations of their actions. It is the feeling of the other and their explanation that must be understood; to recognize their legitimacy and their right.

Psychoanalyst Miller (2009) explains the possibility of being empathic or not:

The condition for real empathy with others is empathy with one's own destiny, which an abused child could not develop because he was forced to deny his pain. When we force a child to learn that he has to repress his emotions, he fails to develop empathy with himself and therefore also with others. This promotes criminal behavior, often hidden behind seemingly progressive moral - educational - religious or political language (pp. 142-143).

Likewise, Miller describes that all exhortations to love, solidarity and compassion will be useless if this most important prerequisite of human sympathy and understanding is missing. Without empathy there is no change and no growth. In the educational environment it is fundamental, then, to build relationships sustained by sympathy, understanding, and respect from the adult to the child in order to strengthen transformative learning (Miller, 2009, p. 143).

Every child and adolescent needs an empathetic and non-dominant human being as a companion, because whoever is capable of empathizing has no need to repress. In this regard, therapist Rogers (1989) used to emphasize that:

...a person, upon discovering that he or she is loved, because of who he or she is, not because of what he or she pretends to be, will feel that he or she deserves respect and love... empathy is a process; it is penetrating the



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other person's private perceptual world and becoming completely familiar with it. It involves being sensitive to the changing intentionalities flowing in that other person... (p. 103).

Miller (2009), also explains that:

Children who from birth experience love, respect, understanding, kindness and affection, will develop radically different traits from those children who from the beginning suffer abandonment, contempt, violence or even abuse, without at any time a kind person to support them and allow them to believe in love. When this does not happen, as is the case in the childhoods of all dictators, the child will tend to glorify the violence experienced and to exercise it later in an excessive way whenever possible. Because all children learn by imitation. The body does not learn what it is meant to be taught by words, but what it has experienced itself. Therefore, a child who has been hit and mistreated learns to hit and mistreat, while a child who has been cared for and respected learns to care for and respect the weakest. Because he only knows this experience (pp. 59-60).

In the educational spaces in the adult-child relationship, an empathic and respectful treatment is basic and fundamental. It is necessary that the students' self-esteem can grow. A strengthened self-esteem is the basis for positive, creative and life friendly relationships. Therefore, self-esteem and empathy are at the foundation of new relational contexts conducive to the construction of significant transformations in the lives of teachers and students.

3. Methodology

3.1 Relational investigación

Relational research was applied, in the Ecuadorian context, is little known and is an innovative way of doing research. It is a significant contribution for future processes that want to be carried out seeking to overcome the hierarchies of the positivist perspective.

In this proposal of relational co-research, we move from the researcher-subject pair to the relationship of co-researchers who, sustained by a reflective pragmatics, discover and, at the same time, generate sustainable processes of significant transformation. It has been previously pointed out that the research process presented is inscribed in the social-relational constructionist logic. Researching, from this perspective, is not a matter of merely collecting data, doing the conventional work that places the researcher in the place of the expert, without questioning the status quo of the hegemonic culture and maintaining "that form of non-thinking, which are prejudices" (Tapia-Figueroa, 2018, p. 341). It is the opposite of critical reflection, which accompanies from uncertainty.

Research is understood as a form of conversation, which is the same as another form of dialogue and with it -as in every activity committed to the relation- worlds are described. Only language allows us to represent the world, that is, it is what is done together poetically.

According to McNamee, research is a poetic activity. This means focusing attention on research as a dialogue that responds to specific relationships and situations and can therefore broaden the spectrum of possibilities and ideas for other forms of social life (McNamee, 2013, p. 108). The aim of relational research processes is to generate dialogues



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that have the potential to make differences, however small, in the work with communities and, specifically, with students, their families, teachers, and members of social organizations.

Relational research is about connecting, "about embracing complexity" (McNamee, 2016) [Taken from Sheila McNamee's intervention at the Taos Institute's Relational Research Network, March 15, 2016]. The relational research method becomes a resource that helps people get involved, participate, reflect, commit, and act in the directions they build together. Research will be a process in which conditions are generated to relate to the new, the different.

Research is a reflexive practice in which investigating is asking to expand, process and understand what is being done together. To learn from what is done and what could be done differently. What is interesting in relational research is practical knowledge, which serves and is useful for all participants in their specific local cultural context.

The co-researchers seek to reflect critically on their own theoretical assumptions and the need to open the panorama to other ways of conceptualizing and understanding research. In the case of the research described in this article, qualitative approaches are taken, as argued by Sisto (2008):

In this way, qualitative methodology demands a disposition to dialogue that has been called active by some authors (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) as the active involvement of the research subject with the other, recognized as the subject, transforming the instances of data production as dialogically active instances (pp. 23-24).

The fact that the research is relational means that it is a process to produce transformations in the relational contexts of the participants; a process that starts with the intention of knowing and, also, of transforming. A process that never ends, it is an infinite dialogue. According to Gergen (2016)

Dialogical practices that restore the flow of productive meaning are extremely necessary. So are practices that bring humans and their environments together in a mutually sustainable world. All these actions are materializations of a different morality, an energizer for the relationship between relationships. And everything holds potential for the future (p. 579).

Relational research understands as co-researchers all the people who were involved in social relational research, making their own voice heard, choosing, according to their human and professional needs, the topics that were worked on in each meeting. The co-researchers actively and creatively participate in the reflective meetings, contributing with their experience and local culture, as well as with their resources and strengths, in the construction of a collaborative learning space. Similarly, those who decided that they wanted to see their perspectives and transformations, given during the process, contribute with their voices to the final research document and, therefore, to the summary presented here.



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The main instrument of the research is the relational dialogue. McNamee and Hosking, explains that this allows for pragmatic and practical "results" for all involved (McNamee and Hosking, 2012, pp. 30-32).

From the perspective of dialogue, relationship-sensitive research creates the potential for participants to engage in critical reflection, to develop the expression of the multiple voices present and the coordination of diverse arrangements. This is precisely the idea that when there is involvement with others, meaning is actually being created among all of us.

Dialogue, then, is the tool that allows us to observe, reflect, analyze, and strengthen our own and collective resources and to co-construct the transformations; as Fried-Schnitman maintains, appreciative dialogue is based on focusing on the positive in order to grow its strengths and strengthen its resources (Fried-Schnitman, 2015, p. 56),

Finally, relational research is guided by the position outlined by McNamee (2013):

Research has to be conceived as a constructive process that suggests that we construct and deconstruct descriptions of social life, while remaining actively engaged in the research process (...) the political nature of research is enhanced, emphasizing the need to listen to the multiplicity of voices (p. 106).

The relational research described here is supported by the approaches of social-relational constructionism. This form of research assumes that the research is, in itself, a relationship that allows for reflection and transformation of the participants and the contexts in which it is developed. As co-researchers, participants observe, reflect, dialogue, and transform their contexts.

The method used was that which proposes social-relational constructionism for relational research: empowering the participation of those involved in the process through reflective, appreciative and collaborative dialogues referenced in their local contexts, opening, with curiosity, the space for the inclusion of all the voices present. By proposing this research as part of the training process, the method also implied conceiving it as a form of social action aimed at the transformation that teachers, families and communities needed according to the testimonies of the co-researchers.

The training and clinical supervision process that served as the framework for this co-research was "Caring for the Caregiver", carried out in the city of Ambato, Ecuador. It was an initiative of the Danielle Children Fund, an organization in charge of protecting children and adolescents in institutional care, and was initially planned for the technicians and families with whom the organization works. Later, other community actors linked to child protection were included.

The fundamental objective of "Caring for the Caregiver" was that the participants became responsible for their own self-care, mobilizing their social and professional support networks. Within this framework, the co-research involved teachers, authorities, parents and technical teams from educational institutions in the province of Tungurahua; a total of 400 people during 4 years (2016-2019), as co-researchers. The participants were called to continuous meetings for reflection, training and clinical supervision every 15 days, according to a jointly constructed work schedule.

The dialogue was considered the main tool for observation, reflection, analysis of the way in which relationships were carried out in the educational spaces, and also as a potentiator



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of the resources of the participants and the transformations that are required to generate other types of relationships. The methodology of the relational co-research raised for each meeting specific themes and generating appreciative questions. The questions were aimed at mobilizing resources and potential of the co-researchers to understand their social and relational contexts and to reflect on different ways of being, doing and knowing. The reflective processes generated in the co-research opened up possibilities for responsible transformation in their professional practices and everyday life, following the logic of the epistemological proposal of the research (reflective pragmatics).

Additionally, relational research requires that all the material co-constructed between the co-researchers be reviewed and approved by them prior to the systematization and presentation of the final research report, a document from which this article is drawn. The testimonies that provide the results presented were collected during the collaborative dialogues in two instruments: the researchers' field diary and a logbook kept by a designated person among the participants.

4. Results

The results obtained in the proposed relational research reflect the reflections that the participants (co-investigators) made during the process. The fundamental themes of reflection were the construction and strengthening of new ways of relating in educational spaces to promote significant transformations in themselves, their students and the community in which they develop.

The following fundamental aspects, which emerged from the reflective dialogues and which were collected in the instruments indicated in the methodology section, were highlighted for the realization of transformative relational and educational spaces:

- Everyone - teachers and students - learn in the process of building transformative educational spaces, sustained by dialogue and different relationships; it is not a unidirectional process in which students receive or learn and teachers "impart" or teach.
- Co-researchers argue that a different position is needed to learn, not only the desire to learn, the passion to learn, the pleasure to learn, but also humility to learn. Humility is a human and intellectual attitude and includes the validation and positive appreciation of others' questions, doubts, and alternatives.
- For co-researchers, the transformative relational process involves taking into account the experiences, resources, knowledge, and strengths of the students. One must overcome the logics that support an "expert" facilitator/teacher who "teaches" and adopt a posture that helps open up alternatives and possibilities.
- For the co-researchers it is necessary to recognize that the community in which the teachers work, creates - with sensitivity, skills, intelligence and creativity - the generative alternatives, which their needs, those of their relational and social contexts, require.
- The communities in which teachers work can propose possible future horizons for meaningful student learning. This implies, for teachers, a posture of theoretical and practical humility to accompany dialogues that make visible the resources of students and parents.



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- The co-researchers recognize that the "humble" posture of the teachers is nourished by genuine curiosity and uses active and deep listening as a tool.
- Among the tools that co-researchers most value, in their exercise of teaching that prioritizes transformative relationships, the question is fundamental. Questions, more than tools to validate the academic information that students have, are means to learn to open up to listening to what is important to the other, what is really significant for children and adolescents.
- To ask incessantly, to nourish oneself with criticism and reflexive self-criticism, are elements that positively nourish the relationship and should be strengthened in the exercise of teaching.
- Innovative educational spaces imply the generation of relationships and conversations in which the freedom to be and do of students and teachers prevails. The freedom of being and doing, both of the teacher and the student, is the engine of the lasting transformation in the educational spaces.
- The co-researchers emphasize that building themselves as legitimate interlocutors who value and recognize themselves in their diversity is one of the objectives of the transformative educational process.
- The responsibility with the other, the reciprocal respect, the legitimization of the other as an authentic other, is at the base of the approach of dialogical educational spaces that promote significant transformations.
- The permanent construction of a dignity in the relationship and with the relationship is a priority in the educational spaces.

In addition, the relational research process managed to systematize, as part of its results, a systematized proposal for the profile of teachers who build transformational relational spaces. Table 1 describes teachers' aptitudes and attitudes, which are located in three aspects: the "being" of the teacher; the "knowledge" of the teacher; and, the "doing" of the teacher.

TO BE	TO KNOW	TO DO
attitudes - values - ethical relational lifestyle - emotional intelligence	knowledge	professional practices, resource management, skills, methodologies
Free of prejudice and stereotypes	Get to know conceptual orientations	Create authentic connection links
It integrates in a coherent way the three areas: being-knowing-doing	Reflexively questions prejudices and stereotypes	Manages care criteria for students and families
Has ethics (confidentiality)	It has a solid foundation in social-relational constructionist epistemology	Manages resources for family care
It is curious and flexible	Differentiating child and adolescent friendly work models and schools	Articulates and guides students and families on statewide care pathways
Is respectful	Identifies the needs of every person in their social interaction	Promotes the culture of good treatment



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TO BE	TO KNOW	TO DO
attitudes - values - ethical relational lifestyle - emotional intelligence	knowledge	professional practices, resource management, skills, methodologies
Maintains assertive relationships	The culture of abuse and violence as an educational method differs from the culture of good treatment	Facilitates understanding and prevention of sexual violence against children and adolescents
Does not judge, criticize or give advice	Knows the basics of laws related to the exercise of rights	Emotional Crisis Intervention
Promotes -in a coherent way- gender equity	Applies a human rights, gender and generational approach	Adequately handles tools to approach students in vulnerable situations
	Identifies the integrality of sexuality	Handles mediation and conflict resolution strategies
	Has local (cultural) resources for care and support of students and families	Handles methodologies for sexual health education
	Distinguishes and questions, on a daily basis, inequities and inequalities based on gender	Handles relational communication bases
		Promotes local support networks
		It promotes higher levels of resilience in people
		It facilitates processes of empowerment of adolescent girls and the construction of new masculinities.
		Creates bonds of commitment and authentic relational ethics

Table 1. Profile of the teacher who builds transformative relational spaces

The co-investigators highlighted the use of skills and attitudes that make visible a rights and gender perspective with a focus on good treatment and the valuing of differences. This fact is fundamental in the construction of transformative educational contexts.

5. Discussion of results

Relational research is new in the Ecuadorian context and constitutes an alternative that can open the perspective for new ways of knowing, understanding, and transforming education in Ecuador. The results presented in the previous section give an account of the reflective process that research has fostered, and at the same time, of how it is possible to build reflective pragmatics when it is placed at the center of relational processes sustained by dialogue, curiosity, and the appreciation of difference.

Although it has been repeated, in the educational system, that the final objective of education is not to transmit information, nor even to impose norms, the reflection of the co-researchers led to the conclusion that it is important to develop a thought of genuine critical reflection. It is not a question of giving easy answers, but of learning to ask new questions, on which well-being can be built. The process of learning-teaching requires developing an awareness of the position in which teachers and students are placed. A position that differs



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from the traditional positions, sustained in a hierarchy of teaching authority and aimed at submission and obedience (active or passive) of those who learn.

Teaching, from every point of view, implies taking into account experiences and resources that the participants have in order to increase their knowledge. What is innovative, then, lies in the construction of positive relational spaces that promote the transformation of people and contexts. In addition, it requires the teacher to leave the hierarchical position of "expert" to propose himself as an equal, willing to enhance the resources (their own and those of their students) in resilient learning for life.

For the construction of relational contexts in the educational field, it is necessary to recognize the social groups that are part of them (local community, families, authorities, etc.) Teachers who want to build transformative relational spaces must link community contexts in their practice. To this end, promoting positive resources, reflective capacity and community experience in favor of meaningful and sustainable transformations is a priority.

From these perspectives, the questions are not for the verification of learning or for the validation of the teacher's knowledge, but for knowing the interlocutor, for promoting curiosity and the appearance of resources for life. The question becomes the door for learning and for the transforming relationship, the tool that allows these links and lasting transformations. The questions promote the fundamental freedom for the teaching-learning process. Freedom that implies thought, action and, perhaps most importantly, freedom to be. This is built from the acceptance of the other and oneself, in a constant and uninterrupted dialogue.

An additional element that has emerged in the relational research proposed is the legitimation of the other as an interlocutor. Knowing it differently and recognizing that difference is the beginning of a transforming relationship for the participants in the learning process. The richness of the educational process lies, precisely, in the diversity of voices, experiences, ideas and personal and community contexts. The challenge for the teacher lies in the respect and responsibility to sustain the difference and not to try to homogenize the interlocutors.

Together with these elements, the construction of a profile of the teacher that promotes transformative relational contexts, with the three axes (being, knowing how to do) is a contribution of the reflection generated by the co-research, for a pragmatic teaching. The teacher's profile gives an account of the elements that must be present in processes that have a transforming impact on the educational context and that are not only put into play in the professional field of teaching but also in the teacher's own life, as a member of his or her context and community.

In the profile, the axis of "being" speaks of the teacher as a person, immersed in his or her own relational and cultural contexts in which values, relational ethical conceptions, and his or her own resources sustained by his or her experience and local culture are brought into play. The responsibility of interrelating from a relational ethics and recognizing that it contributes to the construction of the common welfare, by embodying the difference with their professional practice and lifestyle congruent.

The axis of "knowledge" emphasizes the knowledge and professional experience of the teacher, his or her academic training and the knowledge he or she has acquired about pedagogy, group management and others, which are useful for his or her educational work. In addition, it is essential that they know the context in which their interlocutors are developing, both from a cultural perspective and from that of the law and procedures that



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are part of the educational system and the protection of children and adolescents, prevention of gender violence, etc.

The third axis included in the profile that emerges from the co-research, is that of "doing" that emphasizes the tools, resources, skills, abilities that the teacher must have for the construction of transformative relational educational contexts. Among the resources pointed out by the participants are: the use of mediation tools, conflict resolution, assertive communication skills, the construction and strengthening of support networks (with the participation of the educational community, local and families) and the active involvement of all participants.

6. Conclusions

To propose a research process in the complex context of the Ecuadorian educational reality is a priority. It means facing the responsibility of opening and innovating professional practice with non-conventional reflexive questions.

Asking questions also implies proposing possibilities and committing oneself to the generation and construction of futures that contribute to social well-being. A real transformation in educational contexts takes into account the responsibility of building, with dignity, a fair and equitable society.

Among the challenges that teachers face in their professional practice is to be the motor for transformation, and this is one of the deep and congruent meanings of the teaching-learning process. Educational innovation does not only lie in the implementation of innovative pedagogical tools or the inclusion of technology - so much in vogue due to the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic - in the teaching-learning process. A real transformation starts, as we have seen in the relational research process described in this article, from a constant questioning of the aspects that are part of the student-teacher relationship. Questioning the position of the teacher, rethinking him/her as an interlocutor open to the difference, to his/her own permanent learning and updating and who puts into practice and strengthens his/her communicational and relational resources was one of the most interesting results of the process we have described.

An innovative approach to generate transformative relationships in the educational context is to position oneself as a teacher who seeks to create different training spaces, understanding that these are mobile, rich in perspectives, complex and changing. Recognizing the other (student, family, community) as an active subject, possessor of knowledge, a valid interlocutor for joint construction, is part of the very transformation that teachers must undertake.

The implementation of relational research - little known in Ecuador - sustained in the social-relational constructionist perspective, is, in itself, an innovative proposal. It contributes to the generation of significant transformations in the educational field.

It is a research process that prioritizes dialogue for investigation and the recognition and appreciation of the other as a co-researcher, and is oriented to the practice and inclusion of the multiple participating voices. It is an invitation to conversation, which the research itself contributes to make visible and give new meaning to, and is, in itself, a learning process that strengthens the reflective pragmatics of the teacher who seeks to build transformative educational contexts.



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During the process described in this text, research became not only a way to know reality. It also encouraged the participants' reflection and the construction and proposal of tools, contextualized, to put into practice the dialogues and generate transformations in the educational contexts, as well as in the people who live in them and in the teacher-student-family-community relations.

To place oneself in a different position -that leaves aside the hierarchy that has been imposed by the traditional educational system-, to take into account the resources and knowledge that teachers, students, families and community have. In the same way, it makes it possible to accept that everyone can learn from each other when the difference is valued. These are elements that transform the relational contexts for education that emerged as a result of the research process.

Putting into practice freedom, humility, curiosity, acceptance, legitimacy and respect for difference is a priority. This will allow educational contexts to become spaces for transformation and is a constant challenge for Ecuadorian teachers.

Finally, it is fundamental to prioritize the dialogue between teachers, students, family, authorities and community; dialogues build realities, open perspectives, and generate transformation. The difference that makes the difference lies, as can be seen in the results of the relational research that has been carried out, in the openness to the question, as a fundamental motivating element for reflection and transformation. The question that does not know the answer and that is open to a multiplicity of perspectives and expands the possibilities.



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