

Teacher-student relationships and teacher resilience in the context of a pandemic

Relación docentes - estudiantes y resiliencia docente en contexto de pandemia

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Background

The relational dimension of resilience has sought to establish the characteristics of the bonds that beginner teachers maintain with members of the educational community that strengthen their resilience, among them compassion, receptivity, reciprocity, trust, and effective communication. Such relationships depend on the managerial support and positive feedback from other members of the school community such as parents, colleagues, and students. This study focuses on the teacher-student relationship which constitutes the core of the educational process and has a high emotional impact on teachers. Such bond is linked to teachers' motivation to take up the profession; teachers who enjoy positive teacher-student relationships report a sustained sense of resilience and commitment, making a difference in their students' learning. This study provides an account of the views of beginner teachers in relation to school managers and the students' perspective regarding the teacher-student bond that under pandemic conditions succeeds in strengthening the resilient capacity of the teaching staff.

Aims

To analyze the features of the teacher-student bond that grant teacher resilience, including qualities that, from the teachers' and students' perspective, enhance a positive bond that strengthens resilience and to identify the contribution that school managers make in the construction of such a bond.

Method & procedures

This study is framed within the qualitative-interpretative paradigm. The design responds to a case study. It included a purposive sample of fourteen beginning high school teachers working in public schools, with at least an average level of resilience evaluated from the SV-RES Resilience Scale for Youth and Adults, all graduated from a public university. The study involved the collaboration of eight principals from the schools where the teachers were employed and twenty-five high school students, who had access to a virtual interview. Interviews were conducted to teachers and principals as well as focus groups to students through video conference. The data were subjected to content analysis. Strategies for validation of the results were considered. The research was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

Results & discussion

The results show a shared view regarding the value of closeness in a positive teacher-student bond, which coincides with Wilcox and Lawson (2018) who allege trust as a key element of the relational dimension of resilience. For the students, a positive bond with teachers includes pedagogical performance components such as the willingness of the

teachers to innovate. For teachers, remote education made innovation urgent, which coincides with studies on pedagogical work in Chile during the pandemic and with previous studies that highlight innovation as means to promote learning and teacher resilience. Teachers made significant use of several platforms and social networks during the lockdown to keep in touch with their students and ease their educational process. Teachers do not perceive that their pedagogical performance is recognized by their superiors, which is contrary to the evidence on the role of superiors in the promotion of teacher resilience. Students recognize the contribution of a good sense of humor to the generation of a positive learning climate, which coincides with other researches, regarding the pedagogical contribution of having a good sense of humor as well as with the personal qualities of resilient teachers. Aspects such as welcoming, listening, affection and empathy that students value in their teachers endorse the qualities of resilient teachers. Therefore, the sense of achievement arising from students' learning contributes to teacher resilience, matches the evidence provided by previous studies on resilience in beginner teachers and validates the findings of recent research that associate teacher resilience with pedagogical performance focused on students' learning.

Conclusion

The individual dimension of teacher resilience comprises personal and professional attributes that have been expressed in the teachers' work during the pandemic, in a context of greater professional autonomy. The teacher-student bond was a central axis of the pedagogical labor; however, it is necessary to strengthen institutional conditions in order to strengthen teacher resilience. The evidence provided by this study is opposed to prior results regarding beginner teachers placed at a disadvantage compared to experienced teachers, given that new teachers evidenced innovative potential and a high capacity to adapt to remote education. It is concluded that trust, the choice for dialogue and participation were distinctive of pedagogical performance even in an adverse scenario such as the one of the pandemic, which could be related to the moral purpose of teaching. Further research is needed to delve deeper into interpersonal skills, pedagogical use of social networks, and institutional conditions that favor resilience.

Keywords: teacher resilience, teaching resilience, teaching performance, teaching practice, teacher-student bonding

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