

Teacher training in times of pandemic: a comparative study between Chile and Honduras

Formación docente en tiempos de pandemia: un estudio comparativo entre Chile y Honduras

Formação de professores em tempos de pandemia: um estudo comparativo entre o Chile e as Honduras

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has been detrimental for teacher education programs in most of the countries of the world, affecting the education and training processes of future teachers. The research presented here aimed to analyze the meanings of student teachers in Chile and Honduras regarding their training processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was carried out from a comparative and interpretative perspective. Semi-structured interviews were applied to students attending public universities in both countries, Chile and Honduras. The results show the configuration of four categories of analysis: 1) teaching-learning process; 2) academic and economic limitations in the context of pandemic; 3) benefits of distance learning; and 4) university education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight the concern for the future of the training of education professionals in the context of the pandemic and invite reflection on the positive experiences in their training processes.

Keywords: COVID-19. Teacher Training. Honduras. Chile. Pandemic.

RESUMO

Desde a pandemia da COVID-19, a formação de professores tem sido afetada na maioria dos países do mundo, prejudicando os processos de formação de futuros professores. A investigação aqui apresentada visou analisar os significados dos estudantes docentes no Chile e nas Honduras no que diz respeito aos seus processos de formação durante a pandemia da COVID-19. O estudo foi realizado por meio de uma perspectiva comparativa e interpretativa. Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com estudantes matriculados em universidades públicas de ambos os países, Chile e Honduras. Os resultados mostram a configuração de quatro categorias de análise: 1) processo de ensino-aprendizagem; 2) limitações acadêmicas e econômicas no contexto da pandemia; 3) benefícios do ensino à distância; e 4) educação universitária durante e após a pandemia de COVID-19. Os resultados

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salientam a preocupação com o futuro da formação de profissionais da educação no contexto da pandemia e convidam à reflexão sobre as experiências positivas nos seus processos de formação.

Palavras-chave: COVID-19. Formação de Professores. Honduras. Chile. Pandemia.

RESUMEN

A partir de la pandemia por COVID-19, la formación docente se ha visto afectada en la mayoría de los países del mundo, perjudicando los procesos formativos de los futuros profesores. La investigación que aquí se presenta tiene por objetivo analizar los significados de estudiantes de Pedagogía de Chile y Honduras respecto a sus procesos formativos durante la pandemia por COVID-19. El estudio se realizó a través de una perspectiva comparada e interpretativa. Se aplicaron entrevistas semiestructuradas a estudiantes enrolados en universidades públicas de ambos países, Chile y Honduras. Los resultados evidencian la configuración de cuatro categorías de análisis: 1) Proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje; 2) Limitaciones académicas y económicas en contexto de pandemia; 3) Beneficios de la enseñanza a distancia, y 4) Formación universitaria durante y post pandemia por COVID-19. Los hallazgos destacan la preocupación por el futuro de la formación de profesionales de la educación en el contexto de pandemia e invitan a una reflexión frente a las experiencias positivas en sus procesos formativos.

Palabras clave: COVID-19. Formación Docente. Honduras. Chile. Pandemia.

INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher education has been affected in most countries of the world, particularly in those with limited conditions to continue developing the education and training processes of future teachers remotely, according to the requirements of the global health crisis (Ma *et al.*, 2022), as is the case of Latin America (Gajardo-Asbún, Paz-Maldonado and Salas, 2021; Zambrana and Hart, 2022; Silva-Peña and Paz-Maldonado, 2023). As an emergency measure to cope with this crisis, universities in Latin American countries closed their facilities and promoted distance education through the use of technological devices, but with little preparation of faculty and students in the development of this modality (Tsegay *et al.*, 2022). Thus, all teaching and learning in higher education was affected internally and externally by the prevailing situation.

In this context, the greatest challenge that public universities in Latin America face when analyzing teacher education programs during the COVID-19 pandemic has its origin in the diversity of environments and the requirement of specific attention according to their needs. From this perspective, it is vital to rethink teacher education for the development of a new, post-pandemic world (Silva-Peña *et al.*, 2021), considering the complexity faced by the pedagogical task in the Latin American context (Vaillant, 2021). In addition to this, it is pertinent to recognize that Latin American teachers in training face countless tensions linked to contexts of vulnerability, violence, injustice, and hopelessness while carrying out their pedagogical practices (Yancovic-Allen and Escobar-González, 2022). Therefore, to overcome these negative aspects, it is essential to prepare motivated, optimistic and resilient teachers ready to overcome adversities (Rahiem, 2021). In this sense, having experienced the pandemic was determinant for these generations of future teachers, who were invited to reflect deeply about and reevaluate the prevailing teaching and teacher training practices (Ellis, Steadman and Mao, 2020).

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE ORGANIZATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN CHILE AND HONDURAS

The countries of Chile and Honduras were chosen because they exemplify different regions of Latin America. Chile is located in South America and Honduras in Central America. Both countries share the Spanish language, although they differ in their approach to the area of teacher education.

In the case of Chile, teacher education is part of the National System of Teacher Professional Development, which is defined as a comprehensive policy that addresses the needs of teachers from the beginning of their education in the area of pedagogy to the development of their professional career (Chile, 2016). This system is undergoing an implementation period, which began in 2016 and will last until 2026. According to regulations, teacher education programs last four to five years and are developed only in public and private teacher-education universities that have been accredited. For teacher education programs to achieve accreditation, there are criteria established by the National Accreditation Commission (CNA), a public body in charge of verifying and promoting the quality of higher education in Chile. In this sense, teacher education is responding to the requirements of public policy, in terms of having a structure that offers support to the processes belonging to the different education projects (Schilling and Sánchez Sánchez, 2020).

With regard to Honduras, teacher education can only be developed in public universities, excluding the remaining 20 institutions of higher education that exist in the country. This is stipulated in the Political Constitution of the Republic of Honduras which, in its article 163, establishes that teacher training at the Honduran educational level is an exclusive function of the State (Honduras, 1982; Chacón Víquez, 2016). Therefore, the National Educational System is directed by two institutions, namely the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazán and the National Autonomous University of Honduras.

The National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazán is authorized to train teachers at the pre-elementary, elementary, middle, and high school levels, professionals who are mostly prepared to work with students in the classroom. On the other hand, The National Autonomous University of Honduras offers careers related to education, such as pedagogy and educational sciences, to individuals considered to be the ideal professionals to hold administrative positions in the educational system. The careers in both institutions have a duration of four years or more, and are offered in classroom and distance modalities.

TEACHER TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF PANDEMIC

Within this framework of virtual education, both countries took measures to maintain classes in the different initial teacher education systems, as well as to adopt mechanisms to guarantee the continuity of classes based on synchronous and asynchronous strategies, where the use of the internet was a determining factor. In Chile, the implementation of this type of educational modality produced exclusion and inaccessibility, since the lack of internet connectivity, mainly in rural areas, as well as the limited access to technological devices to continue with the training processes, were the main barriers faced by university students (Gajardo-Asbún *et al.*, 2020; Quintana Avello, 2020; Gajardo-Asbún, Paz-Maldonado and Salas, 2021).

In Honduras, the situation was very similar to the Chilean context. The virtualization of curriculum planning was considered a challenge (Acevedo-Duque *et al.*, 2020) since there was a lower level of response, particularly in the economic sphere. In general, students were affected by the decrease in their families' income due to massive layoffs in various areas of the national economy. This has had an impact on the acquisition of technological devices and internet connectivity that has hindered the educational process (Flores-Girón and Paz-Maldonado, 2021;

Paz-Maldonado, Flores-Girón and Silva-Peña, 2021). Also, teacher-student relationships were limited at different educational levels due to the aforementioned problems (Paz-Maldonado, Silva-Peña and Nunes-Fernandes, 2022).

Considering the similarities and differences between teacher training in the Chilean and Honduran contexts, this article analyzes the meanings given by student teachers from both countries to their training processes during the course of the pandemic. The following describes the research methodology used and its results, which will be discussed from a comparative perspective.

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF STUDY AND DESIGN

A qualitative study was conducted with a comparative interpretative perspective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012). The main objective of this study was to analyze the meanings of student teachers from Chile and Honduras regarding their formative processes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARTICIPANTS

Ten students took part in this research, nine women and one man, enrolled in the fourth and fifth years of careers related to teaching studies at public universities. In Chile, the students attend a public university located in the Maule Region and, in Honduras, they regularly attend a public university in the Central District Municipality. These participants make up a nonprobability sample by convenience (Cossio-Bolaños, 2015). Since this is a qualitative study, it is important to stress that the determining factor is not the number of participants, but the richness of the data they provide (Martínez-Salgado, 2012). Even when these considerations were important, and a larger number of participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were invited, only ten students responded to the call.

Participants were selected according to inclusion criteria decided by the researchers. Inclusion criteria included:

- Students who completed their first semester in 2021.
- Pedagogy students in their fourth or fifth year at the time of the research.
- Students from public universities in Chile and Honduras.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Initially, each of the participants was contacted by e-mail to be introduced to the research and invited to participate in it. Once they had accepted to be part of this work, a date was set for the semi-structured interviews. These interviews were carried out using the *Zoom*® application and were recorded for later transcription. These interviews took place in the months of July and August 2021, and each lasted between 30 and 40 minutes approximately.

The interview script was written on the basis of a previous categorization and contained seven questions, including: "Which communication methods have your professors been using to continue the teaching-learning process?", "How has the development of practical subjects been carried out?", "What have been the academic and economic limitations that you have faced during the pandemic?", "What have been the benefits obtained from distance learning?", "According to your point of view, how should college instruction be carried out in post-pandemic times?"

The analysis process was carried out through the codification and condensation of meaning, with the aim of accounting for the experiences and describing the meanings of the oral discourses of the Chilean and Honduran pedagogy students (Kvale, 2011).

ETHICAL ASPECTS

In order to respect the ethical principles established internationally (Paz-Maldonado, 2018), participation was voluntary and confidential. Prior to the start of data collection, a digital informed consent form was given to each of the participants who had agreed to take part in the study. This procedure made it possible to record the relevant information from the participants, and obtain their consent for the use of this information in the preparation of this article.

RESULTS

The results of the present research were organized into four categories of analysis: 1) the COVID-19 pandemic and the teaching-learning process; 2) academic and economic constraints in the context of pandemic; 3) benefits of distance learning; and 4) university education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

Most of the Chilean and Honduran student teachers agreed that the main means used by the teaching staff to continue the educational process, and particularly to hold synchronous meetings with the aim of developing curricular content, were the *Zoom*, *Google Meet*, and *Microsoft Teams* applications. In the case of communication for consultations, all participating students indicated that they used *WhatsApp* as the most direct channel and, to a lesser extent, an institutional e-mail. In addition, the institutional platforms established were considered useful for reviewing the activities carried out during the course, including literary research, content development and distribution of a variety of subject matter resources:

Chile Student 5: "We have used digital platforms that I did not know before and now I realize that they are very good and you save a lot of time, for example, especially for meetings, the main one we have used is *Teams* and also *Zoom* and *Meet*. And obviously we have always used it, but now we have made more use of *WhatsApp*, since we have *WhatsApp* groups by module or with a professor. Also with the pedagogical practice, so this method of communication has also been very useful."

Honduras Student 9: "We have used different communication methods and I think the most common is the *Zoom* platform, but we have also used *Google Meet* and *WhatsApp* as part of the process. The e-mail and our campus virtual platform have also been used, which I think is one of the most demanded resources as part of our process."

Most of the participants agreed that, when comparing face-to-face and distance education, the same capacities were developed with distance education in contrast to face-to-face education. This was so because they were supported by adequate technological devices to continue their learning process. However, they stated that, in order to benefit from this new educational approach, it was necessary to assume a personal commitment to advance their own educational endeavors.

Chile Student 4: "In relation to the modules and the competencies, I feel that I have been able to advance in the same way (...) however, I feel that I have been able to fulfill all the competencies because we are connected at the same time."

Honduras Student 6: "It also depends a lot on the student's attitude, if the student is self-disciplined, he/she will be just as interested in face-to-face classes as in virtual classes, so I think they can be just as efficient."

Regarding the development of subjects with a practical work component, the Chilean students mentioned that, in spite of that being a challenge for the teaching staff and themselves, they managed to get ahead and develop activities that made up for the presence of the students. These included leading facilitated seminars, producing instructional videos, creating didactic materials, and doing facilitated practical exercises.

Chile Student 1: "For example, when the teachers asked, let's see for example mathematics, which was not a practical subject, but if we had to do something practical like GeoGebra, then we had to attend the workshop, download GeoGebra on the computer and follow the class with the teacher."

Chile Student 3: "The professor provided us an hour of theory and an hour of practice, and I feel that we received very good direction in the pedagogical practices (...) I feel that we have had very good guidance, although there have been some communication problems with the school teachers, because they are always very busy (...) I believe that, despite the virtuality, we were still able to create useful, practical work."

On the other hand, Honduran students experienced feelings of nostalgia, given that most of the practical activities commonly carried out in some teaching-learning spaces were virtualized. It was underlined that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtualized techniques served as the primary strategy for addressing teacher education.

Honduras Student 6: "It has gone totally virtual because, for example, the workshops are workshops where classes must be taught, so what the colleagues are doing is teaching virtual classes or supporting the teachers in the management of the virtual class, always online, so the practice has continued, but in a virtual way."

Honduras-Student 9: "Eh, well, in a nostalgic way, to a certain extent, I would have loved to be able to have these types of activities in person where we have contact with people (...) let's remember that this is a pedagogical practice where, as students, we make that link with society using what we have, our resources, our skills, abilities to be able to return a little, right, to society. In this case, it was not possible, so we had to do it through virtual means of communication."

ACADEMIC AND ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS IN A PANDEMIC CONTEXT

Regarding academic limitations, the Chilean students stated that the lack of preparation in educational practice to face the return to face-to-face education, poor connectivity and academic overload were the main obstacles faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Honduran students differed, the majority indicating that difficulties in communication and interaction with teachers were the greatest limitations faced in the distance education modality.

Chile Student 1: "I find that I am not going to be as prepared in the practical area when I have to go back to class and I will have a deficit that to overcome when I start working in the classroom, if we do not have on-site pedagogical practices between now and the end of the course."

Chile Student 2: "I think that, academically, one of the things that has been the most difficult may be the connectivity that this year has become hard. I think most people go through the same situation and it's because we're all connected to the internet, so I think it's been difficult for me."

Honduras Student 6: "(...) there is something that has been very difficult during the pandemic and it is communication with the teacher because it used to be instant

communication, right? In real time, there, face to face with the teacher, and now... I write to a professor and I don't know when he or she is going to answer. He or she answers back, and then I write to him or her too and so on. To be able to contact a professor and ask him or her a question, sometimes you have to wait for a day or two." Honduras Student 10: "Communication with the teachers is not the same and the availability to answer certain questions is not the same or is not very effective."

On the other hand, parallels were made between the restrictions falling on the times when the topics were taught, and one of the participants claimed she did not experience any academic restrictions in the context of the health crisis.

Chile Student 2: "I could also say the schedules, because not all of us have the same amount of time available. It has been easier for me than for other colleagues because I don't have children, but for my other colleagues, who do have children, it has been quite complicated."

Honduras Student 6: "It would be the fact that the classes are not offered in the same way that they were given in person because, at the beginning of the pandemic, for example, I was behind a class for three periods. So that meant for me to be another year late to be able to finish all the courses."

Chile Student 4: "The truth is that I haven't had any major difficulties academically, well, the subjects are not very easy in that regard, but everything else has gone well for me. It hasn't been difficult for me because I have always been able to communicate with my classmates, with the whole class, I have a good relationship with everyone."

Regarding economic constraints, most students in both countries reported that they had not faced any difficulties. However, some Chilean students faced the situation of not having technological devices. On the other hand, some of the Honduran participants had to shoulder the financial obligations of their families as their parents lost their jobs. Similarly, paying for internet service was another issue presented.

Chile Student 3: "At least, I was not bad financially and, in some way, I also received support from my grandparents, and from my mother."

Honduras Student 6: "Well no, I can't really complain, and I can't say that I have had any kind of limitation."

Chile Student 1: "The first year was a little more difficult because I didn't have a good computer, I used to go everywhere with my cell phone for classes and that was more difficult, obviously I couldn't buy a computer or anything (...)."

Honduras Student 7: "Economic limitations are the strongest, the main ones, because we don't always have (money or work). In my case, last year, when the pandemic began, my whole family was unemployed, that is, only I was employed (...), but then it was no longer so important to get money for the internet, for me, as it was to leave it to supply food in my home."

BENEFITS OF DISTANCE LEARNING

The students from both countries agree that the main benefits of distance education implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic were: the use of new technological applications, the development of autonomous learning, the process of learning to work as a team despite being located in different geographical areas, and the reduction of transportation costs that normally occur when attending higher education institutions in person. These factors played a key role in maintaining the drive for academic success despite the worldwide health crisis.

Chile Student 1: "I have learned to work with my classmates through these platforms, to organize ourselves, to work collaboratively and to support each other."

Chile Student 5: "By using many digital tools that I didn't know about, learning, realizing that I can connect instantly with someone on the other side of the world has been fascinating. Also, in the past, I used to spend a lot of time commuting to college. As a result, working from home allowed me to save both time and money on transportation."

Honduras Student 6: "Well, self-discipline because I have had to schedule myself and organize myself in a better way than when I received on-site classes."

Honduras Student 9: "Well, one benefit, in my opinion, is that not having to travel, leave home, or go to the institution where we attend classes helps to bring costs down a little".

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DURING AND AFTER COVID-19

Most of the participants offered similar opinions regarding the actions that should be undertaken by universities to support the continuation of the educational process during the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions are related to the support in connectivity and the distribution of technological devices that should be offered by Chilean and Honduran public universities, in order to reduce the digital gap revealed by this health emergency.

Chile Student 1: "Basically I think it is crucial to have a good internet connection and that the university supports those who do not have such connection. I know that this has been done here."

Honduras Student 8: "From my perspective, I think they should worry a little more about providing students with the necessary tools, such as the internet connection, giving them access to a network, and I think that would be an important issue."

The idea to train and update instructors in the use of new technologies is another point of agreement between students from the two nations. This will enable them to execute strategies that result in more significant learning in the various learning environments they are in charge of.

Chile Student 2: "I would like them to pay more attention to the teacher educators. It is necessary to analyze the type of activities they carry out. I think it is necessary to share the work among instructors in teacher education, to discuss the variety of strategies to know what they are doing well and how they can improve. I think this is also necessary."

Honduras Student 9: "The university should work with the teachers. Remember that there is a technological illiteracy that can be absolute or proportional. (...) I have experienced that some teachers are not using the virtual campus in the best way or in the right way, so I think it should start from there to provide training and continuous training. I mean, those who perhaps are from another generation and are not updated with these tools (should receive this training)."

Some contrasts found in each of the interviews can also be noted. The Chilean students argued that, if the pandemic and the spread of infections continued, progress would have to be made through distance learning with didactic improvements. On the other hand, to a lesser extent, they referred to attending university again, as well as developing various health protocols for this possible return. Likewise, a large number of the Honduran participants advocated a face-to-face return, particularly for practical subjects, once a vaccination process had been completed. It should be remembered that the interviews were carried out between July and August 2021, when the strategies for on-site

return to higher education centers in both countries were not yet clear. During the years 2022 and 2023, different stages were surpassed until classes came to be held in face-to-face mode in colleges around the world, and most specifically in the countries dealt with in this study. The virtual mode is, however, always considered for special occasions in which on-set classes cannot be held normally.

Chile Student 2: "One action would be to continue with virtuality, I believe that we should continue with these virtual classes and what perhaps needs to be improved is how to make the classes more didactic, using new strategies, perhaps in virtual classes there are more opportunities for dialogue."

Chile Student 5: "To continue with this work methodology, I think we are well adapted and the university should have the protocols ready for any emergency."

Honduras Student 6: "Well, first of all to validate that all students, teachers, administrative personnel have had their vaccinations, in fact with two doses of vaccine because in a way that is a percentage that guarantees that we are taking care of ourselves, that we feel safer and I believe that we can return to classes in a progressive manner, in a gradual way, little by little."

Honduras Student 10: "(...) to adapt the plans so that everyone can have the opportunity to have access to face-to-face education, but I think that an in-depth analysis of the benefits it would bring would have to be done in the first place."

The majority of participants from both nations are committed to a hybrid educational paradigm for their post-COVID-19 university study. This concept would include both theoretical distant learning and in-person practical instruction, either at the numerous educational facilities designated for their development or in the university buildings where they take classes.

Chile Student 3: "Perhaps for the first periods after the pandemic, it could be considered that we were locked up for a very long time. For this reason, maybe offering hybrid classes, where we can take some classes from home, for example, and take other classes in college, that are partially face-to-face and partially virtual for at least a while. (...) the programs need to be adaptable because we would still need to take care of ourselves even if the epidemic stopped tomorrow (...) some online classes, some face-to-face, and others that truly require a face-to-face approach can be done face-to-face."

Honduras Student 9: "(...) we can now have both virtual and face-to-face classes, and I think it is necessary to evaluate which are the subjects that could be strictly offered in the curriculum as virtual."

Finally, a number of Honduran participants said that, due to structural issues in the Honduran context, such as high poverty rates, inequality, and unemployment, the training of professionals in university fields like pedagogy and educational sciences could be threatened if face-to-face classes were to be resumed. The entire population of the educational system, including university students, is directly impacted by the issues mentioned above.

Honduras Student 7: The return, I personally feel that we are very far from this return to face-to-face classes (...) because we do not live in a country where our context supports us to do so."

Honduras Student 9: "(...) the university should also analyze what can be done to help students in one way or another, especially those who had to go to their places of origin because they couldn't study here, and in one way or another to make this a beneficial experience."

Honduras Student 10: “(...) because it will be tough, particularly in terms of health or finances, for a student who is unable to attend class because he lost his job due to the pandemic and now needs to figure out how to get money to get back to his classroom. A lot of students, in my opinion, will just discontinue their university courses and won't be returning. There may have been another possibility, or they may have experienced other crises. It will undoubtedly change; it will be like another world.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this article was to analyze the meanings that students of pedagogy careers in Chile and Honduras attribute to their formative processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although both countries are geographically located in Latin America, the participants share different opinions that highlight the conditions faced in each of the contexts mentioned.

The means used by university faculty to implement the development of synchronous meetings in the education of pedagogy professionals were: a) *Zoom* video conferencing software applications, developed by Zoom Video Communications, and *Google Meet*, Google's well-known video conferencing application, and b) *Microsoft Teams*, a collaboration application created for the connection and organization of work teams. On the other hand, it is argued that the most instant communication was mediated by the instant messaging application for smartphones *WhatsApp*, developed by Meta Platforms, Inc. and the institutional e-mail. These results are consistent with those of other research conducted on the media and applications used in university teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic (Acevedo-Duque *et al.*, 2020; Acosta Álvarez, Ortega González and Díaz Cruz, 2020; Mohamad Nasri *et al.*, 2020; Quezada, Talbot and Quezada-Parker, 2020; Flores-Girón and Paz-Maldonado, 2021; Paz-Maldonado, Flores-Girón and Silva-Peña, 2021; Sobaih *et al.*, 2021).

Likewise, it was agreed that, with distance education, it was possible to achieve the same learning and therefore develop the same capacities as with the face-to-face modality. The Chilean students stated that the subjects with a practical work component were carried out through activities quite similar to those implemented in the face-to-face modality. However, the Honduran students expressed feelings of nostalgia, since most of these subjects were virtualized, giving importance only to the theoretical aspect and leaving the practical elements aside. Some studies carried out worldwide show that, with the onset of the pandemic, uncertainty increased regarding the duration of the teacher education process through distance education, the demands regarding the use of information and communication technologies to achieve significant learning and the concern regarding the devaluation of teachers when using a new teaching modality (Cutri and Mena, 2020; Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot, 2020; Flores and Gago, 2020; Van der Spoel *et al.*, 2020; Gajardo-Asbún, Paz-Maldonado and Salas, 2021).

The academic limitations faced by the Chilean students were related to the lack of academic preparation prior to the return to face-to-face classes, lack of connectivity and high academic load. On the other hand, the Honduran students had to face the difficulties of communication and interaction with the professors teaching the different subjects. Scientific evidence suggests that this transition to distance learning through the use of technological devices generated inequity in the education of students and problems in teacher-student interaction (Carrillo and Flores, 2020; Flores and Gago, 2020; La Velle *et al.*, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison, 2020; Aristeidou and Cross, 2021; Flores-Girón and Paz-Maldonado, 2021; Gajardo-Asbún, Paz-Maldonado and Salas, 2021).

In spite of the fact that Chile and Honduras are Latin American nations with significant rates of economic inequality, the majority of participants said they had not encountered any economic challenges. This may be because many of the families of the pedagogy student body made financial sacrifices in order to provide the students with the supplies they needed to continue the education

process throughout the health crisis. No matter the circumstances brought on by the epidemic, the families placed a higher priority on helping their sons and daughters with their studies.

On the other hand, this study shows that distance education, through the use of technological devices, encourages the development and use of new technologies, autonomous learning processes, collaborative work and the reduction of economic costs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher education processes were carried out that evidenced positive experiences regarding the development of distance education, as long as the necessary resources were available to advance in such modality (Kim, 2020; Mohamad Nasri *et al.*, 2020; Rahiem, 2021).

Within the university actions to continue with the educational process during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was mentioned that it would be vital to receive support to achieve internet access and obtain technological devices that facilitate the education of teachers in Chilean and Honduran public universities, to prevent the operation of teacher education programs from being affected again (VanLone, Pansé-Barone and Long, 2022). In addition, these supports will be vital in reducing existing inequalities and will benefit the training of pedagogy professionals in both Latin American countries.

For the post-COVID-19 era, the participants envision university teaching based on a hybrid educational model, combining the development of synchronous, distance sessions and face-to-face practices. Several world universities decided to set up mixed teacher training models to guarantee learning during the pandemic (Osman, 2020; Valeeva and Kalimullin, 2021), due to the satisfactory results obtained (Skulmowski and Rey, 2020; Pressley and Ha, 2021). It becomes necessary, then, that higher education institutions rely on mechanisms that facilitate the development of distance education in this new stage of higher education worldwide. This could be achieved by adapting the format of the institutional platforms existing in each educational center, since a large part of the student body only has access to mobile devices (Jiménez Guerra and Ruiz González, 2021).

Given that this study was carried out with a qualitative approach, the representativeness of participants from both countries was not sought, nor was it intended to generalize the results, which could be pointed out as a limitation. However, this is one of the few studies on teacher education that has been carried out in Latin America from a comparative perspective, which could serve as scientific evidence for further research. Future work may focus on teacher education programs, the positive experiences carried out with future teachers during the pandemic, teaching methodologies, evaluation systems, the approach to pedagogical practices, and other aspects related to the topic.

By way of conclusion, this comparative analysis shows that there are more similarities than differences between Chilean and Honduran students attending public universities, despite the fact that Chile offered a better response capacity to the educational needs raised during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Honduran students express concern about the future of the education of pedagogy professionals in their country, which is threatened by the precarious conditions of the context and the scarce support offered by university authorities.

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