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**CONTRIBUTIONS
OF THE ETHICS,
DEMOCRACY AND
EDUCATION SEMINAR
TO PROFESSIONALS
PURSUING A MASTER'S
DEGREE IN EDUCATION**

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Abstract: Contributions from the Ethics Seminar, Democracy and Education to professionals who study Master in Education. Ethics and its inter-relationships with democracy and education for citizens are the main topics of a seminar aimed at professionals who are pursuing a Master's Degree in Education.

One of its objectives is to contribute with theoretical elements to reflect on ethics and democracy in today's world, as well as its influence on formal education. The teacher was interested in investigating what was the contribution that this offered to its recipients. As Ausubel and Mezirow's theoretical support to the teaching methodology employed, they sought to provide meaningful and transformative learning. Starting from the initial assumption that the seminar contributes to the professional training of the participants, the specific objective of the study that is presented is to identify and analyze its contributions, that the binding theoretical conceptual framework, between the ethical field, the democratic principles and practice educational, we will offer the participants of this seminar the second of their manifestations.

Inscribed in a qualitative paradigm, the investigation follows an exploratory, descriptive line. I use the open response question as an instrument for collecting information.

The responses are analyzed through qualitative content analysis. The result obtained is the major recognition of two participants in the contribution, a reflection that is possible in the seminar on personal values, in the topic studied, in the role of professional practice, in socio-educational policies. We also acknowledge contributions to understanding, self-validation and a new perspective on the topic and its interrelationship with professional practice.

Keywords: seminar, ethics, democracy, professional training.

INTRODUCTION

In the international consultation carried out by UNESCO IESALC in 2021, 25 higher education experts were asked for a key message on the future of this level of education until 2050. The messages were merged into the following four statements. Higher education:

- Takes active responsibility for our common humanity.
- Promotes well-being and sustainability.
- It is nourished by intercultural and epistemic diversity.
- Defends and creates interconnections at multiple levels (Op.Cit., p.19).

Added to these statements is that one of the purposes of higher education, conceived as a public good (UNESCO, 2009), must be to "promote the well-being of the planet" (UNESCO. IESALC, 2021, p.20).

In light of these intentions, it can be stated that ethics, democracy and education become relevant as central contents of a subject that integrates the curriculum of the Master's Degree in Education at the Universidad de la Empresa, Uruguay. In this sense, the teacher who develops it in 2022 is motivated to discuss the impact that her course can generate on students, both in the personal and professional dimensions.

This race is described as follows:

It is a postgraduate program, international in nature with an emphasis on research, aimed at strengthening the skills of teachers and educational managers in order to effectively face the new development demands of regional educational systems. Its regime is face-to-face with the support of virtual learning spaces, and is taught in the January

and July periods of each year in Montevideo. (UDE, FCE (s/d) Description of the Master's Degree in Education).

The graduate can enter the following areas: the research, innovation and development system and in the educational system, both public and private, as well as in research, training and extension organizations and centers and in companies and organizations that have responsibilities for training and training human resources. (UDE, FCE (s/d) Benefits of studying this career).

This program has a workload of 524 hours. Its curricular structure includes three levels. These are: Socio-educational context and foundations level, Socio-educational specialization level and Transversal level, Research Training. The subject Ethics, Democracy and Education integrates the Socio-educational Specialization Level.

In the general presentation of the subject Ethics, Democracy and Education (EDE 2022), the program raises the interrelation between Ethics and democracy expressing: "in democratic societies, ethics is built in and from intersubjectivity, which occurs as condition of the configuration of a democratic citizenship." The relevance of pedagogical action is also exposed as it favors the construction of values that contribute to forming personality, character, ways of facing life, their ability to choose, their criticality, among others. The importance of learning to live in society and living in democracy is affirmed. "For this reason, this subject aims to encourage reflection and with it, the necessary criticality, to be part of a relevant social and educational context" (UDE, FCE, 2018 General presentation of the subject).

The program of the subject Ethics, Democracy and Education proposes the following objectives:

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- Contribute to the training of professionals, researchers of the different problems of educational development, strengthening their capacity to identify and solve problems of social equity and inclusion.
- Provide the theoretical elements necessary to reflect on ethics and democracy today and the influence of formal education.

Specific objectives

- Introduce the analysis of the main modern ethical conceptions, contemporary challenges and their possible relationships with education.
- Contribute to deep reflection on the contemporary challenges of education in relation to democracy.
- Provide basic conceptual and theoretical elements to be related to the educational field.
- Review the theory and its approach from educational practice.
- Reflect on the mental conditioning of patriotism and nationalism in education. (UDE, FCE, 2018, Objectives)

The contents to be discussed are grouped into the three axes that are transcribed below:

1. Ethics and Morals. Modern ethics. The discussion of subjects about Education. Ethical challenges of postmodern society. Education for what citizenship?
2. Democracy and Education. Modern approaches to the relationship. Globalization and Alterity: Technological leaps and the ethical challenge of proximity.
3. Education for citizenship and income; education and moral feelings;

education and argumentative ability. Politics, democracy and education, challenges of post-industrial societies. (UDE, FCE, 2018, Agenda/Contents)

The course is implemented in the blended learning modality composed of a face-to-face seminar that is combined with audiovisual resources, bibliography and online activities on the university's Moodle platform. The seminar takes place in 16 clock hours of face-to-face classes, distributed over two days of 8 hours each, in which the intensive study of the topic is carried out in a small group, through reading, analysis, interpretation of academic sources and documentary research. "The activity, participation, preparation of documents and conclusions characterize the seminar" (Santillana, 1995, p. 1264).

Regarding the contents discussed, an initial review is made regarding the main theorizations on Ethics that have developed between the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st (moral judgments and language of morality by R. M. Hare, theory of justice, notion of common good and equal basic freedoms, equality of opportunities and principle of difference proposed by J. Rawls, communicative ethics of K.O. Apel, skepticism about ethics in the face of relativism and ignorance about what being must be human proposed by A Macintyre). In years of pandemic derived from the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, currently underway, it is believed pertinent to analyze and interpret the conceptualizations: "ethics of the human race" by E. Morin, "fragmentary ethics" by V. Camps, "cosmopolitan ethics" and "ethics of care" according to A. Cortina, alterity according to the perspective of transmodernity defined by E. Dussel and didactics and curriculum of proximity in the educational field proposed by A. Abelleira and I. Abelleira. The conceptualizations on democracy and its current crisis

have their documentary sources in the Universal Declaration on Democracy and in Rosanvallon; on education for citizenship are provided by current Unesco documents.

The didactic methodology used is aimed at promoting meaningful and transformative learning. In this sense, the teaching and learning proposal consists of setting instructions for reading texts, watching videos, listening to and interpreting the lyrics of a musical piece, discussing and answering questions, developing conceptualizations and putting them into practice. common (with the graphic support of programs for the creation of presentations with slides and videos), identification of opportunities and challenges, perceived by the participants in the educational fields of their contexts, for the achievement of an education based on human rights, in citizenship and civic participation. The work is organized in a collaborative group manner with instances of individual approach to resources. Also included are oral presentations by the teacher as a presentation of contents and authors, initial questions and conclusive closures of the sharing carried out at the end of the tasks.

The educational research presented responds to the interest of the teacher who subscribes to it to know the contribution of taking this subject to the professional training of its participants who, for the most part, work as education professionals and come from different cities in Brazil.

THE DISCUSSION OF SUBJECTS

THEORIES, CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

Educational research is understood to be research that is related to the teacher's practice in which the researcher is the teacher and the object of research is his or her own teaching with the objective of improving it (Stenhouse, 2007).

The didactic proposal that guides the EDE 2022 course is based on Ausubel's theory and Mezirow's theory for the proposal of situations that generate significant and transformative learning in students.

"The distinction between learning and teaching is the starting point of Ausubel's theory" (Pozo, 1989, p.210). Because it is focused on the learning produced in the educational context, in internalization situations that are generated from instruction, this theory "only gains authentic meaning in its application to teaching" according to Pozo (Op.cit., p.222). It emphasizes the organization of knowledge in structures and restructurings that are generated as a product of the interactions between new information and the student's existing structures. When this occurs, that is, when the new information gains meaning for the student by having related it to previous knowledge, significant learning occurs. It is necessary that both the student and the new information to be learned meet certain conditions. The student must be motivated to learn and have ideas in their cognitive structure that can be related to that new information, inclusive ideas.

The new information must be organized in a structure in such a way that its components relate to each other logically.

Consequently, the transformation of logical meaning into psychological meaning is not assured by simply structuring the materials. According to Ausubel, psychological meaning is always idiosyncratic and is achieved when a concrete person assimilates a logical meaning (e.g., a scientific concept) into his or her own individual cognitive structure. In other words, meaningful learning is always the product of the interaction between new material or information and the pre-existing cognitive structure (Pozo, 1989, p.215).

Depending on the knowledge acquired, there are three basic types of meaningful learning; From the simplest to the most complex they are: representations, concepts and prepositions; the latter imply relationships between concepts.

There are also various forms of meaningful learning. According to Ausubel, they are the following: a) subordinate learning, when the new idea that is learned is hierarchically subordinate to another existing idea; In this case, there is a progressive differentiation of already existing concepts into others of a lower level; b) superordinate learning, the opposite of the previous one, since in this the existing ideas are more specific than the idea to be acquired; An integrative reconciliation is then produced between the specificities of the concepts that gives rise to the generation of a new, more general concept; c) combinatorial learning, when the new idea and those that are already established have no hierarchical relationship, they are at the same level of concepts.

The theory of meaningful learning proposed by David Ausubel in the 20th century "is not an obsolete theory. On the contrary, it is current and necessary as a reference for the organization of teaching" and "can be complemented and enriched by other visions that position it with greater potential as a reference for organizing teaching focused on the understanding, meaning and pleasure of learn" says Moreira (2017, p. 1), who reviews the principles of the classical perspective of this theory and more recent perspectives on meaningful learning.

The particularities of these perspectives that interest the course teacher based on their possible implications for teaching and learning are:

- the integration of thoughts, feelings and actions that Novak confers on meaningful learning with a humanistic

approach; These are what favor the predisposition for learning. According to this approach, the so-called four common places of education: learning, teaching, curriculum, social environment and evaluation, are integrated into meaningful learning; they are interdependent;

- the negotiation of meanings involved in the teaching and learning situation according to the social interactionist perspective of meaningful learning, proposed by Gowin. This process is prior to meaningful learning. It is up to the student to capture the meanings and verify if these are what the context of the discipline of study accepts; The teacher must gather evidence about whether the student is grasping meanings;
- the perspective of progressivity and complexity that characterizes meaningful learning, according to the theory of conceptual fields provided by Vergnaud that Moreira (2017) describes. A conceptual field is understood as “a set of problem-situations that requires the mastery of several concepts of a different nature and progressively more complex situations” (Moreira, 2017, p.8). In these “Students’ knowledge is shaped by the situations they encounter and progressively master. But these situations are increasingly more complex” (Ibid.)
- the critical vision that Moreira (2017) develops from the assumption that in contemporary society it is not enough to acquire knowledge in a significant way but that it is also necessary to acquire it critically. For this, he proposes that teaching take into consideration, that questioning

must be facilitated instead of giving finished answers, using a variety of resources and strategies, learning by correcting errors; also consider that the student represents everything he perceives; the meaning is in the people (“semantic consciousness”) not in the words; Knowledge is uncertain and evolutionary and sometimes when it comes to prior knowledge it can act as an epistemological obstacle; everything we call knowledge is language.

The theory developed by Mezirow provides the concept of transformative learning in adult education. This is understood as the transformation of frames of reference, that is, perspectives of meaning and ways of thinking. The frames of reference, as preconceptions, establish our “line of action” according to Mezirow (2006) and include the following elements:

interpersonal relationships, political orientations, cultural prejudices, ideologies, schemes, stereotypical attitudes and practices, work habits of the mind, religious doctrine, moral - ethical norms, psychological preferences and schemes, paradigms of science and mathematics, frameworks in linguistics and social sciences, and aesthetic values and standards. (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59).

Transformative learning is comprised of critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions and rational dialogue that involves evaluating beliefs, feelings, and values.

Taking as a basis the types of learning called by Habermas, in the 70s, technical, practical and emancipatory, Mezirow identifies the following: a) instrumental, when learning within the schemes of meaning; b) dialogic, consisting of learning new meaning schemes and c) self-reflective, which involves learning through transformation. (Kitchenham, 2008).

A current study (Damianakis et al. 2019,

p. 5, “analyzes students’ perceptions of their transformative learning, the process by which they moved through their learning toward transformation, and the key factors that facilitated growth and the change”¹. Among the implications for teaching and curriculum development that the findings of this research reveal, it is interesting to know that students define their own transformative learning journey when they were impacted emotionally, cognitively, relationally, socially, spiritually-existentially, physically by their learning process.

However, they were able to achieve greater personal and professional knowledge, clarify personal and professional values, and acquire practical skills important for individual and social change in their future practice.

Likewise, it is necessary to conceptualize the key expressions that support the research question: What was the contribution of the Ethics, Democracy and Education course to your professional training? These are: contribution and professional training.

Contribution, a word derived from contributing (from the Latin *apportāre*, from *ad-* ‘towards’ and *portāre* ‘to carry’) is defined by the Dictionary of the Spanish Language (RAE, 23rd ed.) in its second meaning as “Contribute, add, give”. The Oxford Lexico dictionary defines contribution as “Delivery or supply of what is necessary for the achievement of an end” and as “Thing or set of things that are delivered or supplied to contribute to the achievement of an end.” Taking these definitions into consideration, contribution is understood as the contribution that the topic covered, the resources and the methodology provided, in terms of significant and transformative learning, to the professional training of the course participant.

To conceptualize the expression vocational training, the analysis carried out by Cuadra-Martínez, Castro and Juliá (2018) on the role

¹ Spanish translation by the undersigned.

that scientific, professional and subjective theories have in vocational training by competencies is taken as a basis. In the present work, it is considered that this type of training consists of the educational stage of voluntary studies, in which the professional learns scientific and technical knowledge that arises from the scientific method, professional knowledge that guides professional work, and subjective knowledge through which he or she interprets the world and himself, organizes and directs his action. This knowledge is integrated and combined in the situated context of his experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Considering the general objectives of the EDE 2022 course and the profile of its recipients, who are mostly education professionals in the exercise of various roles (teacher at different levels of the educational system, pedagogical coordinator, manager, advisor), the problem of The research is focused on the following question: What was the contribution of the EDE 2022 seminar to the professional training of the participants?

Starting from the initial assumption that this seminar contributed to the professional training of its participants, the general objective of the study is to know this contribution.

The specific objectives are to identify and analyze the contributions that the conceptual theoretical framework, developed in the EDE 2022 seminar as a binding axis between the ethical field, the principles of democracy and educational practice, as well as the resources used and the methodology, they offered to the participants according to their own statements.

Within the framework of the qualitative paradigm, a descriptive exploratory research design is followed. Using the survey technique,

the following open-response question is applied as an instrument at the end of the seminar: What was the contribution of the Ethics, Democracy and Education seminar to your professional training? An extension of one to two pages is requested in the response, with Arial 12 font, 1.5 line spacing.

A total of 40 responses are obtained from the 4 groups that took the course with the same didactic and teaching proposal.

A qualitative content analysis is carried out adopting the corpus of content of each response as the object of analysis. The indicators used to select the units of analysis are the following verbs: contributed, contributed, provided, brought, gave, added. Two rules of analysis are followed: a) select the expressions that explicitly express contribution; b) discard expressions that develop conceptualizations, describe contextualized work situations, propose opinions or ideas oriented towards what must be. The latter would give rise to another study regarding the integration of concepts, reflections and contributions of authors treated in the course and the inclusion of substantiated arguments. The paragraph as a unit of content is taken as the unit of analysis.

The inductive work of pre-analysis and analysis allows the content units to be grouped into emerging analytical categories that respect exhaustiveness, exclusivity, relevance and objectivity. In effect, all the analyzed responses are classified; each unit of information only corresponds to one category; The categories are defined according to the objectives of the study, these are to identify and analyze contributions of the course; Each category is defined precisely so that units can be reclassified into the same categories.

As an ethical consideration, it is pertinent to mention that the segmentation of the responses and their coding in the analysis process guarantee anonymity.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

As a result of the qualitative content analysis carried out, six categories are defined in relation to the area of study, which is the interrelation of ethics, democracy and citizenship education. They are presented together with their definition in Table 1 and Examples are transcribed.

Although a frequency analysis is not carried out, it is worth mentioning that most of the content units analyzed mention contributions to reflection (AR Category). These units are grouped into four subcategories, depending on whether the reflection is carried out on: a) ethical principles and social values, b) theorists and concepts studied, c) professional role and practice, d) socio-educational policies. As an example, a unit of content corresponding to each of these subcategories is transcribed in Table 2.

Table 1. Categories and their definition

Contributions to reflection (AR)	Contributions to understanding (AC)	Contributions to self-assessment (AA)
Contribution to careful and careful thinking on a topic or problem in the area of study of the course.	Contribution to the understanding of a topic or problem in the area of study.	Contribution to the evaluation of own knowledge about the area of study.
Subcategories	Example: <i>One of the main contributions that the Ethics, Democracy and Education course has in my professional training was to understand the meaning of the word "alteration". (AC26)</i>	Example: <i>The motto Ethics, Democracy and Education was of great value for a deep professional and personal reflection, where many actions were clarified, and confronted (AA14)</i>
a) Ethical principles and social values		
b) Theorists and concepts studied		
c) Role and professional practice		
d) Socio-educational policies		
Contributions to a new perspective (ANP)	Contributions to training and professional development (AFDP)	Valoración del aporte sin especificarlo (VA)
Contribution to the perception of a different point of view than the one held before the course, on a topic or problem in the area of study of the course.	Contribution to the process of continuous, permanent professional training.	General estimate of the contribution without specifically explaining what the contribution was.
Example: <i>To understand the concepts of ethics, for example, what was one of the topics studied, makes possible a transformation in the vision that I have about certain events. (ANP16)</i>	Example: <i>As an Education professional who daily needs to face the challenges that the present brings to education, the discussions presented in the discipline Ethics, Democracy and Education were fundamental in our permanent training (AFDP3)</i>	Example: <i>It is of utmost importance to contribute to the Ethics, Democracy and Education course for our professional training. (VA7)</i>

Table 2. Subcategories of the Category Contributions to reflection (AR)

Subcategories of the Category Contributions to reflection (AR)
a) Ethical principles and social values Example: <i>Reflecting on cosmopolitan ethics in the educational field requires that we look for cooperation and that human beings have that capacity. (ARPr2)</i>
b) Theorists and concepts studied Example: <i>The course has brought about a maturity of ideas that, even now, exist in my thoughts, but do not possess a protection of theoretical reference (ARTe27)</i>
c) Role and professional practice Example: <i>All the topics worked on in the classroom contributed... to make me reflect on how I am currently doing my work as a professional (ARRo20)</i>
d) Socio-educational policies Example: <i>It is necessary to rethink educational policies (ARPo3)</i>

DISCUSSION

The results obtained fully answer the research question: What was the contribution of the Ethics, Democracy and Education seminar to your professional training? allow you to identify and analyze the contributions received and support the initial assumption that this seminar contributed to your training and professional development and it is important to take into consideration, the importance of professional training” (AFDP22)]

Starting from what was postulated in this discipline and corroborated by renowned authors, we allow ourselves to make a self-assessment of what role we want to play in society, both in the professional field and in the non-personal field, once regarding ethics and our northern precepts as a human being. and its actions for public policies, as well as liberating existing and latent assumptions of the globalized world (AA10)

The recognition of students for having received contributions to the understanding of concepts and experiences [“A material contributed in my training as it brought a greater understanding of the need to look at others, peers and understanding diversity (AC35)], of have carried out self-assessment and the predominance in the evaluations of the reflection on ethical principles and social values, theoretical and concepts studied, the role and professional practice in the field of formal education, as well as on the socio-educational policies of the students’ work contexts, seem be a product of the organization of teaching based on the theory of meaningful learning (Moreira, 2017).

It can be assumed that the didactic methodology, generating questions (Are there modern ethics? What relationships can be identified between ethics, morality and education? Does today’s society pose ethical challenges? Towards what citizen

education is current education oriented? ?) together with the documentary sources used and the collaborative work group activities collaborated in the integration of thoughts, feelings and actions, which Novak grants to meaningful learning, allowing both the elucidation of the aforementioned questions [“A discipline of Ethics trouxe a relevance of the role of ethics for a current society” (AR1)] as the generation of others with a critical vision (Moreira, 2017) [“We understand that as reflections from two theorists addressed lead us to rethink our ethical values. As reflections on the ethical dimension press questions that are based on expectations of the future; or what do you want? How do you reach it? (AR6)]

In the contributions to a new perspective that were made explicit, it can be considered that there was a transformation of frames of reference and therefore transformative learning [“During the course there was an opportunity to strengthen my positioning due to two challenges that arise on a daily basis, just as, to have a new look at my work practices” (ANP34)]

It is thought that the identification and analysis of the contributions that the seminar provided to professional (and also personal) training is the main strength of this study. Among the limitations, the impossibility, for reasons of time, of another coder carrying out an analysis to study its degree of reliability through inter-coder agreement and of carrying out a triangulation of techniques, through participant observation and interview, for the analysis of the students’ perceptions of their learning (Damianakis et al. 2019).

This study can give rise to a new research question of an explanatory nature: In the learning process that they experience during the course of the subject, do they perceive the achievement of significant and transformative learning? If the answer is affirmative, what

factors do you interpret as influencing this? If the answer is negative, to what factors do you attribute the causes?

CONCLUSIONS

The study carried out allowed us to corroborate the starting assumption: the EDE2022 seminar contributed to the professional training of its participants. This conclusion allows us to revalue the importance of educational research as an instrument to improve the organization of teaching and promote meaningful and transformative learning. When this practice is developed in higher education, with professional education students, the possibilities of collecting valuable information about learning increase depending on their training and school career.

The research carried out made it possible to expand teaching knowledge about those aspects that students value at a cognitive

level, such as reflection, understanding, self-evaluation, the adoption of a new perspective and its impact on training and professional development.

The content of the responses obtained makes it possible to observe that the mental processes that give rise to both the conceptual theoretical framework developed in the course, as a binding axis between the ethical field, the principles of democracy and educational practice, as well as the methodology and resources Employees facilitate the expression of intentions aimed at active responsibility for social well-being as citizens and as educators for citizenship, in the various roles they play.

It can be concluded that the EDE 2022 seminar was aligned with one of the purposes of higher education, formulated in 2021, consisting of promoting the well-being of the planet.

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