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Pedagogical Hope

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Abstract

This paper explores the experience of pedagogical hope from educators' viewpoints. Starting from a multidisciplinary study, it has been developed through the collection and analysis of descriptions of experiences lived by educators, which have revealed some essential points: realism, sense of wonder, patience, and openness, among others. The discovery of the powerful and fundamental influence of hope in the lives of teachers exercising their role, assistants, school counselors, as well as in the lives of the children and youth whom they have been entrusted, leads us to preserve and attest to it.

Introduction

> Richard has numerous learning and behavior difficulties. He does not follow a fixed schedule at home; most days he comes to school tired, late or unkempt. During class he is easily distracted. He often instigates conflicts with his classmates, especially during recess. Many days he arrives at school without having finished his homework, or he forgets his homework at home. He frequently misses class without a valid reason. It is hard for him to be accepted by his peers; and the like….I believe he is a child with great opportunities to succeed in life, and I remind this to him [*sic*] all the time. He is smart, he has imagination, and he is creative and street-wise. He has great potential, but needs help to develop it. (Second grade teacher)

Richard has numerous difficulties, and immense potential. His teacher's eyes cannot see them. How is it possible to discern them in a child with such poor performance in school? From where does this certainty of a promising future emerge? I have had my attention called to a phenomenon that has very often astonished me: hope. Why is the educational responsibility of many adults imbued with hope? What is the nature of hope?

What we call "hope" is exactly what arises in many interchanges with the children or teenagers for whom we are responsible. Hope acts. We perceive hope in the same way that our students perceive it. If it acts, we can discern it. If it fails, is lost or fades, we will know it. It is a type of knowledge that resides within the way we are perceived and known. It is hard to conceive of a good educator without hope. But do we really know what pedagogical hope is? Do we understand its essential nature? Have we discovered the secret to the hope that many educators are able to offer? Can this secret be revealed?

This research focuses on pedagogical hope as the driving force that motivates educators to talk the way Richard's teacher does, that explains the kinds of thoughts and feelings that grow and emerge, that lies within certain attitudes and behaviors towards students, school, and teaching, that is the "motive" of certain accomplishments and achievements. It is about revealing the meaning of hope, which is "one of the qualities that most sustains teachers in their work" (Nieto, 2003, p. 83).

In the present educational context the work of teachers at all educational levels is persistently driven towards despair. As Bullough (2011) states:

> Across much of the industrial world teachers are under attack as incompetent, selfish, and self-serving. Aggressive reform—not renewal—efforts are underway based on a set of generally false assumptions about teacher motivation (increased competition promises higher levels of teacher and school performance), intentions (teachers are selfish and self-serving), the nature and difficulty of the work of teaching (aims can be prescribed in advance and almost anyone can teach), evidence of performance (test scores are meaningful representations of the essential school aims), the power of schooling (that setting standards and tinkering with curricula can resolve persistent social problems), and responsibility (teachers are wholly responsible for student learning)….Hope weakens and teachers are left increasingly anxious, fraught with self-doubt, and lacking control over their work-lives. (p.16)

In the school context, which seems increasingly plagued with globalized problems, several other reasons for stress arise: bullying or harassment (in person or online), immigration, exponential growth of the information available on the web, diet problems, national education reforms, and so on. But within each classroom and educator, within that microcosm, also emerge continuous disheartening reasons: the generation gap between educators and digital native students (which seems hard to bridge), the presence of devices (such as phones) that capture the students' attention more than the learning activity, the lack of support or complete absence of the students' parents.

In recent years, various authors have devoted time and effort to reflect on phenomena such as teacher burnout (see Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007; Loonstra, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2009), and also, more precisely, on teachers' hope (see Edgoose, 2010; Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). However, despite the valuable contribution that the abovementioned and many other works posit, their analysis does not go down—at least not entirely—to the substratum from which the lived meaning of pedagogical hope emerges: the simple ephemeral everyday moments of interchange between educator and pupil in the classroom context or beyond it. Conversely, this article puts forward some of the main findings of a phenomenological-hermeneutic research focused on the experiences of educators, ordinary in their educational duties, but extraordinary in the ways they live them, filled with hope. They were selected considering the positive remarks made by their colleagues, parents and education authorities who described them as hopeful educators.

Herein, this article aims to contribute to the phenomenology of the practice that "operates in the space of the formative relations between who we are and who we may become, between how we think or feel and how we act" (van Manen, 2007, p. 26). This research[1] was undertaken using descriptive methods to record experiences

and reflect upon those experiences by continually proofreading and rewriting this research paper (see van Manen, 1990). For the study of pedagogical hope, the basic descriptive methods (also known as empirical methods) applied were *lived experience descriptions* (LEDs) and *conversational interviews*. The descriptions which served as the basis for the research were taken from written texts of a group of educators (mainly teachers) as they reflected anecdotally upon the real experience of having personally lived hope (see Ayala, 2009).

Other sources used in this study include sections of novels and movie scenes. However, we must admit that the meaning of life is not easily understood by our thought process and consciousness. In fact, to understand them one must exercise a kind of intellectual discipline to dominate the instinctual way of thinking about experience (which is usually prejudiced with respect to day-to-day occurrences). But it is not only our unfounded prejudices that can impede us from obtaining this understanding. On many occasions, especially when we approach pedagogy in a theoretical way, we bury lived experience under layers of abstraction, which also impede us from reaching a fundamental understanding. That is why the role of analytical (reflective) methods inspired by phenomenology and hermeneutics are appreciated as they have the double purpose of unraveling the way in which prejudices and theories are distanced from the lived meaning of phenomena, and revealing their essential meanings. With use of a long reflection-writing process, mainly through thematic analysis, eidetic reduction and hermeneutic reduction, this study of pedagogical hope has progressively discarded several ideas and theories that proved inadequate or arbitrary for grasping pedagogical hope.

However, the starting point was a multidisciplinary study: the theology, psychology, philology, biology, pedagogy and philosophical anthropology of human hope in general and pedagogical hope in particular. But the aim herein was to find traces of lived meaning.[2]

The nature of pedagogical hope

A pedagogical relationship is an intense personal relationship that is characterized mainly by the fact that it can be neither managed or trained, nor reduced to any other human interaction (Nohl, as cited in van Manen, 1994, p.6). In this intentional relationship what interests, or worries, me is that the children entrusted to me mature, that they develop their skills in a better way, and that they make progress in their learning. This is why I dedicate myself to them (cf. van Manen, 1991a) and it is why I pin my hopes in them, upon them and for them.

Hope is pedagogical only when it has been born and has grown in the fertile ground of this relationship. Indeed, it is the hope born upon the banks of the deep waters of human hope that runs abundantly through the deepest hollows of our being. Human hope "allows life to take the form of a process steadily moving towards the future" (Bollnow, 1961, p. 3).

"I hope to arrive soon…"; "I hope to see her…."; "I hope he understands…"; "I hope to finish this project…"; "I hope they learn to read…"; "I hope you behave well…"; "I hope we finish this lesson…"; "I hope they pass the exam…." We live in hope-expectation (cf. Laín Entralgo, 1984), from moment to moment, in tension towards what we are waiting for. Because "hope is the basic and essential ingredient of human existence…it is a habit written in man's basic nature, consistent in the vital need to desire, to plan and to conquer the future. He who hopes aspires to continue being" [author's translation](Laín Entralgo, 1984, pp. 570–571). Hope as a habit is

renewed every instant in expectation. Nonetheless, why is it that we live constantly hoping—expecting instead of living in hope? Only trust can convert the act of expecting into hope. He who lives in hope "has become accustomed to trusting the successful conquest of the future; conquest which, as in the original nature of its earthly existence, tends spontaneously and necessarily to expect life. *Hope is trusting expectation* [emphasis added; author's translation](Laín Entralgo, 1984, p. 162).

Hope is realistic

> I had to work with an extremely heterogeneous group. Every student had some sort of difficulty. They were between 12 and 16 years old; many of them had been diagnosed with Special Needs; others had difficulties adapting to the school environment. There were 14 boys and 2 girls and I could barely work with them….
>
> All of our attempts to guide the group to some sort of good, or to some sort of work, ended in disasters. One boy kept making strange, almost savage noises; another would lean against the wall and would do nothing "I don't want to do anything" he would say….At some point I had to deal with one 12 year old boy who tried to escape from the classroom and then the school. In the group there was also a 14-year-old girl who was completely deaf and also very suspicious. She had a propensity for picking fights with any and all of her classmates that did not bow to her will…. Another child was apathetic, passive, bored and continuously drowsy. I had all the reasons to be discouraged. And at some moments during the first trimester I was discouraged. These "ingredients" were the main characteristics of my students. But perhaps as much as the characteristics of my students, my discouragement was also influenced by my inability to do anything to reach my students or to find immediate solutions. Weeks passed and I wasn't able to change anything, and as I wasn't able to do anything, the situation didn't change. I experienced the sensation that the expectations I had when I selected this institution were not being met. The day to day work was "cruder" than I could have imagined. (Psychologist from a public secondary school)

Discouragement and, possibly, desperation: the impossibility of doing something with somebody every day. No answers, no changes, no solutions day in day out, week after week. Nothing. Total darkness.

Certainly it was not about a lack commitment or interest, as the psychologist himself had chosen the institution, indeed he knew it in advance. His students did not collaborate, their problems were highly serious, their needs were extremely different, and they were numerous. Can one really think of having hope in this situation? Can one really have hope being immersed in a reality like this day after day? This psychologist knows his students' range of problems and his own as he fails to advance learning; he cannot pretend to be blind so as not to see reality in all of its crudeness. Having hope does not mean that he shines a rose colored light upon his students or the situation of the school or his lesson plans, which will not make any difference. Having hope is not equal to interpreting reality naively, or denying concrete facts. Isn't the field of education, especially for the school-age child, often arid and dry? And yet, where else can an educator anchor his or her hope? Where can

he or she find a more solid handhold? It is exactly this anchoring into reality that prevents hope from being wiped out by the difficulties that it encounters.

But can so much frustration be a prelude to hope? This psychologist did not receive what he expected despite his best efforts. But, experiences of pedagogical hope confirm that frustration could be the waiting room: "Being hopeful… involves the belief that something good, which does not presently apply to one's own life or the lives of others, could still materialize, and so that something is yearned for as a result" (Halpin, 2001, p. 395). If hope is rooted in reality, it sees not only the dark side but also the bright side: everything positive, potential, good, and favorable that these situations, people and resources have to offer. Limitations appear easier to overcome; learning difficulties, for instance, can be evaluated, detected, and diagnosed up to a certain point. But what detains a child or youth's maximum learning capacity? Paradoxically, the bright side of reality (contrary to common belief) is broader than the dark side: where do we draw the educability limits of each child or youth? How can we foresee the real learning potential of a certain educational experience? Who would dare to determine the amount of influence that we as educators have on our pupils? Moreover, possibility belongs, essentially, to children and youth. A pedagogical gaze is hopeful when it is realistic. A child who is seen with this gaze is very lucky!

In this vast world of possibilities, many times one cannot utilize all of the available means to educate. It is clear that beyond the creative use that one can make of these varied means, beyond our interest and our dedication, these means and resources have their limitations: time, material, strategies, organization, and professional support from other educators. Whether or not we are prepared like this, with abundant or limited resources, with a lot or a little support, we are the ones who have to be present.

Hope aspires to the pedagogical good

When we enter the classroom and stand facing our students, we always bring concrete expectations and goals with us. On many occasions we form these aspirations beforehand: a lesson plan can help us to anticipate and define the activities and educational moments that we will carry out with our students. Our teaching method is intentional and conscious, guided by goals; or at least we would like it to be.

> I had little teaching experience and very difficult working conditions. Michael was 11 years old and I didn't know what else to do to keep him interested in the classwork so that he could learn something. I had exhausted all the resources I had. I had ignored him, yelled at him (and I have a loud voice!), I had punished him, I had sent him out of the room, to the hall and into the courtyard….I had spoken to him, I had tried to understand him, but after three or four minutes he continued to show his complete disinterest for everything that was proposed to him. One day, without thinking, I threatened him: "I will go and speak with your mother". I didn't like to threaten him like that because I knew how these problems weighed down many of the mothers in the neighborhood and I have always thought that school problems should be resolved in school.
>
> Nonetheless, I kept my promise. That same day I went to his house. I rang the doorbell and a short woman full of character opened the door.

> "Good morning" I said, and introduced myself:
> "I'm Michael's teacher." I said his name instead of saying "your son's". She dried her hands on her apron and asked me directly:
> "What did my son do?"
> Without knowing how or why I responded:
> "He is beginning to read."
> The expression on her face changed. She led me into the living room, had me sit on the couch and told me that she had realized that he was learning to read because he would read the words on TV commercials…
>
> In the afternoon Michael came into the classroom, looked at me and sat down after smiling at me (only a little, but it was a smile). He picked up his book and began to read in silence. (Fourth grade teacher)

Can we say that this teacher's intentions were pedagogical? Apparently, especially at first, his teaching methods are doubtful. He was really tired of dealing with the child. Did he visit the child's house out of true interest for the child or rather out of weariness? He went to the house with a clear objective, but surprisingly enough—without knowing how or why—he did just the opposite: "Michael is learning to read!" The mere presence of the mother was enough to change all of his preconceived ideas, forcing him to act in a different way: praise flowed forth from his mouth instead of his planned complaints. In the face of that child's mother, another aspect of Michael's traits was reflected: the loved child, the child that is patiently looked after, the child that made someone else suffer. That maternal face, basically hopeful, could not be disappointed in the way the teacher had planned, and since the teacher sought the good of Michael, he did what was best for him. The ethical depth of that which is pedagogical in our educational aspirations goes beyond our plans.

The experience of Michael's teacher shows us that the discernment of what is good for children and youth under our responsibility, if we have the intention to do what is best for them, can always help during unplanned educational moments. This discernment is like a compass that prevents us from losing our way while navigating through the million-and-one ups-and-downs of every day school life. More importantly, this striving for good pedagogical practices make the birth and preservation of hope possible.

For many educators, however, hope has run out. It has been reduced to a wait-attain practice determined by certain goals (that they finish the unit, that they hand it in by the deadline, that this technique turns out well): a practice penetrated perhaps by an impatient cry for efficiency and control. "Effective schools", "quality evaluations", and "educational system indicators"—where does this terminology lead us? What does this language reveal? Efficiency, quality, learning levels, we are very familiar with these concepts and indeed they appear to thrust us into action (cf. van Manen, 1991b). We can certainly not reduce our hope and expectation to this.

But what happens when one obtains—or does not obtain—the so desired object? Units finished, grades handed in, students moved on to the upper grade, deadlines passed, and activities accomplished. What is the vital importance of an agenda carried out more or less efficiently, more or less encouraging statistics, test results indicating that basic skills have been acquired? We can certainly not reduce our hope and expectation to this.

How might we escape this reduction when it has caught us?

> The situation was becoming more and more complicated because this child absorbed almost all of my attention and I could barely dedicate myself to the rest of the class….In those days I thought, above all, that I had to "win him over" with my authority, although I also felt that I wasn't going to be able to. I didn't see any other option. I was worried about the rest of the class because they also needed attention, a lot of attention, and I wasn't able to give it to them. I treated the child with distance, rigidly, harshly although I never laid a hand on him. I felt violent, I noticed that when I chastised him my heart would accelerate and my face would become hot and flushed…: "Calm down Andrew" "Don't do that again or I will punish you", "I'm sorry but you will have to stay late to finish your work", "That's enough!!". The rest of his classmates appeared more or less used to living with him, but for example when they would approach him to read he would become upset and when he would read by himself he could barely pronounce the first three words of the most basic text: "boy", "girl", "table"… He would smile, become distracted then become ashamed and would apparently have a mental block…sometimes he would end reading time making noises to call the attention of his classmates or perhaps to call my attention in a different way as intellectually he was not successful, although all he gained from me was my concern.
>
> So I changed strategy. I thought that what this child really needed, much more urgently than to learn how to read, was someone who really loved him and for whom he could feel important. From that point on I didn't hope that I could fix the entire problem, but rather a part of it. If it is true that parent's affection is fundamental to a child, then this child was lacking something fundamental and I proposed to substitute his parents's affection with my own, with my understanding, becoming his friend and perhaps his "father". I was hopeful. (First grade teacher)

Andrew's teacher bottomed out. Not only because his concrete efforts were useless, but because his affection and emotions turn progressively negative and unpleasant and his relationship with the boy extremely tense. Andrew did not improve at all and therefore we can imagine the guilt the teacher must have been experiencing, since (according to the interviews) he had described himself as a committed educator. But one day a change occurred. Why insist on curricular learning objectives, even to the point of violently imposing them, if what this child needed was love? Why try unfruitfully to accomplish academic goals and fail to cope with what was essential for the small boy, which nobody was providing him with?

This shift in the prioritization of objectives as a teacher—of course he would continue giving importance to reading—he explains, was a major change. As we will see when we later return to this true story of Andrew, there are certain times in our pedagogical exercise when we have to—almost compellingly—go deeper into the meaning of our practices: What good deeds can and do I have to do so that this child can fully develop as an individual? The effort put on finding the answer to this key question is the beginning of hope.

A hopeful educator changes from "what will become of this child or youth?" to "what could he become?" Even more so, the teacher's link with the pupil's possible future is so intimate and effective that it implies "what I hope he will be" or even more "what I am going to make possible and contribute to happening".

Hope is the expectation of the future

> Mathieu had sent the boarding school kids under his care to bed. While he changes his clothes to lie down as well, he whistles under his breath the music that Corbin had been singing and playing on his harmonica (when he entered their room and discovered that they were playing…). Finally the children are sleeping. He lies down on his back, his arms crossed behind his head, his gaze lost in reflection… He thinks: "I can't get their ditty out of my head. They're not very good at it, but they are singing… I even spotted a few good voices…" He gets out of bed and opens the drawer where he keeps his sheet music and at the same time asks himself, between disbelief and hope: "Are those kids really a lost cause?..." He sits down to write music on the staff paper. "And I had sworn never to touch my music again! Never say never…" he thinks to himself. His shadow is backlit upon the window that opens into the room where the children sleep. He is hunched over as he fervently works on the music scores, illuminated by a weak light. "Nothing is ever truly lost", he says to himself, convinced. (A scene from *The Chorus*, Cohn, 2004)

An unexpected event is the beginning of hope for Clément Mathieu, caretaker and teacher of a boarding school where unfortunate children are "educated" without greater expectations. With his imagination he intuits the possibility of a different reality; he envisions that with these boys something can change—perhaps using music? His eyes sighted possibilities in small signs. But, as a musician, he knows that with practice and patience a lot could be achieved: a melody invented by a naughty child, the detection of certain promising voices, their own experience and their relegated dreams. Clément's eyes can see beyond, inside him something is coming into existence; he is bringing something into existence with his imagination.

How often do we surprise ourselves daydreaming about our children or our students? Do we hope before hand, for them and of them, that they have a different and better situation? Daydreaming is essential. Hope "can visualize a state of affairs not yet existing and, more than this, it can both anticipate and prepare the ground for something new" (Halpin, 2001, p. 395). The experience of hope, as the teachers told in their stories, occurs when one grants oneself time to dream. This implies treasuring inside the small signs that, like pieces of a magic jigsaw puzzle, fit into each other to generate that positive future hitherto unnoticed. Ah! But if only the encounter with reality could awake us sadly from this dream. Nevertheless, hope has no other choice than to continue down the two way street: the expected excellence returns to what is expected from each child and youth during a *concrete educational moment*. And now new signs will feed my daydreams. But it will not be the same: a present full of desired dreams into a sensible present. Thus, hope fine-tunes the measure of a concrete reality.

Hope is the ability to wonder

Like Clément Matthieu with his choir of rejected boys, there are teachers who seem to have the special sensibility to be able to capture the most minimum sign of progress, of effort, or of collaboration among their students. Their expectation keeps them awake and alert. It is easier for them to recognize the arrival of what they have been waiting for. Hope has opened their eyes.

Because in the everyday school routine—which is apparently negative, however trivial—a marvelous, unstoppable process occurs: discover, learn, grow, and mature. This is a reality that could pass unperceived by many adults whose eyes have not been wizened by hope. A reality that could be, which in the worst of cases is neglected:

> I was an anxious child, and yet I am sure I was also disobedient, as children are, I am sure that Mother spoilt me too, but I cannot believe that I was particularly difficult to handle, I cannot believe that you, by directing a friendly word my way, by quietly taking my hand or by giving me a kind look, could not have got everything you wanted from me. (Kafka, 2008, p. 21)

Unfortunately this father neglects the million-and-one little worries and victories of his son. His insensibility contributes to darken the world of possibilities, hesitant and delicate, of Franz's childhood.

The intimate and subtle connection between hope and the ability to wonder cannot be ignored. Pedagogical hope facilitates one's receptiveness to the possibility of recognizing positive expressions of learners. A drawing, a well-pronounced word, a gesture of collaboration, a well-done homework assignment—are these things not worthy of our spontaneous and welcoming wonder? The everyday victories of little children are so evident. It is easier to be surprised by them on a daily basis. Nonetheless, all of them—children and youth alike—need to see and feel our wonderment. If we allow ourselves, if we are willing and able to let ourselves be surprised, in the end if we hope to hope.

Hope is open and closed time

> The gypsy boy, who was 16 years old, had a lot of trouble writing, did not obey the rules, and had been very clear that—he said—his secondary school books were useless for him. The teachers said that during class he would sometimes pay attention (rarely), but when they asked him questions about the subject he had no idea how to answer. He didn't learn, and his behaviour barely improved.
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> I had to try something new so that at least while he was in the school system he would feel comfortable and would learn something useful… I had to put aside traditional academic goals to be able to emphasize the boy and his needs.
>
> I had an idea. One day he came to class with an application form for a motorcycle licence that he didn't know how to fill out. I helped him… After a few hours we finished the application; writing in large block letters… It was a very profitable afternoon, for him and for me… At

> the end of the year, as I am a psychologist, I left the family's case in the hands of Social Services so that the family and the boy could continue to be supported, as the boy had finished compulsory education and had left the school system. The boy had finished the year calmer, better integrated and less aggressive. (Psychologist from a public secondary school)

The teachers who only waited for the school year to finish had embraced, without knowing it, the default future of the student: when he finished compulsory schooling he would leave the school system and that would be that. They hoped that the future would resolve the current problem by simply arriving. And in the meantime what happened? In the present they thought that they could not do anything else for him. In this case the present and the expected future were closed. On the other hand, the hope of the psychologist does not allow him to resign himself to allowing the educational present of the adolescent to elapse into the future without adding some sort of substance. He refuses to allow the present moment to be a waiting room for academic failure. His aspiration for the future of the student turns into concrete action in the present.

In what future does hope dwell? That, to some extent, the boy "would feel comfortable and would learn something useful" is a form of this future. It is what my hope glimpses in what might be to come, later today, tomorrow or the day after. Nonetheless, hope also dwells in the more distant future; in an open time (cf. Bollnow, 1961): *What will become of this adolescent? What will happen to him?*

Close time of our daily expectations that are later overcome. Open time of our greater hope that integrates our daily expectations. Our hope guides us through the obstacles that block the immediate future—a future that traditional lesson planning tries to ensure—towards the distant future that we envision for our students. And as we usually live somewhere between the present and the near future, the road is not always easy.

What happens to mothers and fathers is so different. At the first signs in the present they are drawn inexorably into the distant future. They link the present and the future with extreme ease: *This is a sign that when he grows up…"; "Now he is beginning to show that…"; "Could it be…?"* Indeed, living in hope, both for parents and teachers, brings with it the experience of a constant tension between the present and the future. That is why being able to hope does not mean that you have the antidote against the insecurity and uncertainty that so often penetrate our lives as teachers. Rather you move forward blindly, advancing then retreating, you change in the shadows or you move forward, following a dim light. You begin to search. And many times you are full of doubt: what to do, how to help, why to dedicate so much effort, how to know what is best.

Also, you sometimes feel that you are powerless, tired and discouraged. You feel that your relationships are too complicated, that you have too much responsibility, or that your link to your students is too weak. Worry is your constant companion. Worry is not only a preoccupation for the multiple problems you need to resolve with and for your students, but worrying is suffering. "Worrying is painful and troubling. But it is also necessary, because in this care-as-worry, I experience the other who calls on me. Worrying keeps me in touch with the presence of this other" (van Manen, 2002, p.276). Is not this preoccupation an essential ingredient for the life of all teachers who have ethics of a certain profundity? It is the response to the need and vulnerability of the child or youth for whom you are responsible. Exactly because we are affected by

what happens to them, this painful connection between teacher and student is inevitable. We have hope for the people for whom we really care. And we worry truthfully about the people in whom we place our hope.

How does hope act?

Hope brings openness

> In the boarding school courtyard, Clément directs the choir in front of an audience filled with important guests. All of the boys sing with the complete seriousness that the event deserves. But Morhange – the "terrible" boy – stands a little bit apart, leaning against a column close to the choir, watching the presentation in which he was not participating. Clément had excluded him, saying that his role (and not only his role) was not needed (Clément wanted to make the boy understand that he should value the chance to participate in the choir). When the presentation arrives at the point where, during the first rehearsals, Morhange sang a solo, Clément directs the boy and with one hand calls him "come forward, it is your turn". Morhange looks at him incredulously, not knowing if what he sees is really what it appears to be.
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> Once again Clément gestures to the boy "come forward, you may begin". Morhange braces himself and begins to sing under the guidance of his teacher. His teacher, as he conducts the song with his hands, looks at the boy with admiration…. His face is full of wonder at the magnificent occurrence…. His lips move, accompanying the boy's voice. Clément shows a shadow of a smile, and the boy smiles in return. Meanwhile, the rest of the choir begins to sing, accompanying Morhange's voice. "…." Clément thinks. (A scene from *The Chorus*, Cohn, 2004)

Clément treats his rebellious student with great tact. In addition to helping him cultivate his prodigious voice, he provokes him to experience a new way of being. During this scene he lives one of those moments: the teacher creates the circumstances for reconciliation (as the student had acted very disrespectfully a few days before), allowing his recognition in front of the other students and helping to awaken his gratitude: a new experience for a boy who was full of resentment towards adults.

Would all this have been possible without the openness that hope brings? It is unlikely. Having hope opens the possibility that the learner is able to communicate the novelty that he has inside. In fact, hope encourages this possibility. It allows you to be willing to let the other tell you something, something that is his; that is his or hers, this is what it means to be open (Gadamer, 2006). As Gadamer (2006) notes:

> In human relations the important thing is…to experience the Thou truly as a Thou—i.e. not overlook his claim but let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. But ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. (p. 355)

Because if we think that the other does not have anything to say then we already know what he is going to tell us, we are closed. We do not expect anything new. When this happens we reject the child or youth in his true way of being!

Hope offers opportunities

In all pedagogical situations, the educator is the one who has the authority to create opportunities. The educator is also—we hope—the one who has the maturity, the knowledge and the experience to use the given circumstances to create educational opportunities. The educator's very own attitude provides the opportunity to his or her pupils.

Opportunities, which are fruits of hope, are always new. A newness in a certain gesture, a fresh attitude, the invention of a strategy that genuinely helps a child or youth to have the opportunity to start over, to show—as if it were the first time— who he or she really is and what they are able to do. But what time and place, concrete opportunity, give the hope needed to educate? It is the time invested by the educator-time spent looking for answers and solutions, in effort, and in patience. It is the time donated for a change, for an answer, to show that one can really learn.

The place is the concrete learning situation. It could be a situation that helps a child or youth overcome an experience of failure, and the inevitable exclusion from school opportunities. By creating a place, educators are also identifying the space that corresponds to them in the fabric of human relations. In fact, if desperation is excluding and marginalizing— "they are difficult children", "you can't do anything for them", "no one can handle them"—hope offers the pupils a possibility for a place in the attention and the consideration of the people that surround them (teachers, parents, classmates, etc.). When a teacher gives into desperation for the students, when the teacher gives up on them, it is implied that these students no longer have a place in the relationship or actions of the educator and of the other people with whom the students have a relationship.

Hope is patient

Marcel (1954), when he reflected upon how one can have patience with another, writes:

> Part of having patience is surely not offending the other or not treating him badly, or more precisely, respecting the other's rhythm instead of violently imposing one's own. You do not have to treat him as destitute thing without rhythm that can be forced and folded on whim. We can say affirmatively that patience consists in trusting in a certain process of growth and maturation. [author's translation](p. 44)

Persons have their own learning rhythm and maturation process that is not only theirs, but is also unique to them. When one is convinced that their rhythm is respected—as my own rhythm must be respected—trust is generated and hope is born. This hope lets one live with patience the effort to reach it, and the time needed. Hope gives us patience.

Hope is not only the ability to wait when one really longs for something, but also the ability to suffer and endure remaining unchanged. To have patience is to endure the unpleasant, the bothersome, the uncomfortable, implied by a lived relationship with a student, or a situation in which we are involved. Hope could be "knowing how to wait while patiently bearing the burden" that each situation or student brings.

This is not an apparently attractive image of hope. Nonetheless, the alternative to accepting this is the danger of falling into an empty optimism—which is disheartening in the end—where "everything will be ok" and "I won't have to suffer at all". If pedagogical hope accepts the difficulties involved in education, then one could, even unwillingly, deny this of oneself. Pedagogical hope does not automatically change difficult situations; rather it infuses these situations with meaning.

Hope has expectations and is demanding

Thanks to Kafka's writing (2008), we have gotten to know the dramatic and negative influence that, according to Kafka, his father had on him. This text presents some of the intimate moments of the personal transformation that he underwent beneath his father's hard gaze. But why didn't Kafka's father trust him? Was it because he chose not to trust his son or because his son had done something to make him untrustworthy? Did the boy act in an untrustworthy way because he perceived that his father did not trust him? Pygmalion in action. In some way the son responds to his father's low expectations.

The pygmalion (Rosenthal, 1997) is also active in all our classrooms. It is normal that we as educators find what we are looking for where we are looking for it. Or better said, we are able to create it, if it does not exist. More accurately, our children and youth create it for us. It is the mystery of human influence that we can touch every day. Not all expectations are hopeful. For instance, Franz's father had many expectations that were not the mirror image of parental hope.

Not all our expectations carry a seed of hope, but all hope generates expectations. Expectations, which are essentially positive, and upon which somebody else can imagine and construct. When teachers pin hope upon their students, they activate the most subtle and efficient mechanisms so that the children really believe they can succeed. A gaze, a gesture, a smile, a few words from the teachers come together in an active search for resources, with persistence and patience, open to the children or youths in front of them. Teachers' expectations allow for hope to be kept alive in the students from whom they hope. Expectations are a tremendous responsibility that hope helps us to bear.

> I tried to insist with her as I insist with her classmates, although I had to be careful because Christina was a little aggressive when things didn't go as she wanted.
>
> Having patience and serenity but being firm with what I said generally had good results with her. I expected her to do the assignment I had given her and I told her: "Look, I will give you till tomorrow morning, but you have to finish this if you want to pass the course."
>
> I insisted that she do all of the assignments, just like everyone else, although she had arrived at the institution after the recess. If she told me "I forgot" or if she didn't want to do what I asked her to do I would tell her: "I need this grade: if you don't hand in the assignment I will have to give you a zero. I hope that you give it to me, but you have until tomorrow". I was firm and I had to get after her so that she would

> hand in the work. As she was very capable, I saw that she could pass the grade and even finish secondary school. (Secondary level teacher)

Hope materializes itself in "I expect that you…", "I hope for you…", "I hope of you…". The most that you are able to be and to do. What was a "maximum" for Christina would be a "minimum" for many other students. Christina had to at least finish secondary school. Her teacher knew that it was absolutely necessary, as it was also necessary to control her aggression and to learn to treat others with respect. All teachers know that to ask the most from someone is to ask for something concrete from a concrete person.

This teacher told the student: "I hope you give it to me, but you have until tomorrow". If you stop insisting, stop setting goals and in a certain way stop "pursuing" you are simply saying: "I don't hope anymore".

Hope is lost but not forever

Something repeatedly happens in our lives as teachers, but we are so used to it that we do not notice it very often. Every few months the students we are in charge of are changed for others. At the beginning of every year we create new relationships, there are new ups and downs, there are new responsibilities because we are educating "new" people. What happens when the students are no longer "our" students?

As we try to remember the sweet young faces that at one point were so familiar, we could be saddened to find that they are a little blurry around the edges. And what about our hope? It is likely that time has erased it, little by little. We need the students to be present in our memory because it is exactly the memory of them that allows us to "live the past in the present, and build, in the present, the projects and the hope of the future" [author's translation](Laín Entralgo, 1984, p. 61). That is why when we forget those students our hope for them is forgotten as well. When the children first arrive they quickly become our priority, they absorb our attention and require our effort.

It is true that not every child that we educate can be so easily replaced. Some leave a deeper mark; especially when one suffers more for them. The educator's worry has made the memory of the child more persistent. The other pupils, who will "surely be ok", are the first ones to be forgotten. Nonetheless, even if we remember them well, do we still have hope for them? Their memory is not enough. An educator (teacher, monitor, chaperone etc.) needs to be in contact with his or her students: get to know them, influence them, accompany them, establish an educational relationship, be able to really help them. Otherwise it is impossible to have hope for him or her. On the other hand, mothers and fathers have hope that goes beyond the limitations of time and space. They always hope for their children.

Although hope sometimes seems short lived, at least for teachers, every day experiences shows that genuine hope is transcendent. It leaves a mark. Lessons learned are fountains of inspiration to face current challenges. They testify that everything done has meaning and is worth the effort, that one can learn to be hopeful.

Hope acts out of affection

> Andrew loved to play, but, above all, he loved to play with me, to be the center of my attention, to run up and down hill in the yard as if he were flying and ask me to fly with him. I also flew…. At first the boy looked at me with a mixture of suspicion and happiness. He had a

> smile on his face but sad eyes….He would let himself go as he played, captured in the sensation of wellbeing. The past and the present weighed him down, but I am sure that he was truly happy, that he experienced the happiness of being important for someone. I believe that he felt that someone trusted him and so he too could trust this "someone". (First grade teacher)

Here is Andrew again, who had caused several negative feelings in his teacher a few paragraphs above. Their relationship turned into something pleasantly different when the teacher had hope—it became warm. Hope acts out of affection, and affection is the way to reach one's pupil. At the same time the educator is more secure knowing that it is easier to demand that which hope has conceived: affection for a student is the evident proof of the teacher's hope.

The way hope acts out of affection has other characteristics when we are talking about the relationship between fathers and mothers and their children. Normally a parent's affection does not need to be ensured. A father or a mother does not need to worry about developing ties of affection as a teacher does. A teacher's affection is a prerequisite if he or she hopes to have any educational influence. That is why many teachers aspire to live their pedagogic mission *in loco parentis* (van Manen, 1991a) in certain circumstances where children are lacking this essential affectionate link which is so necessary for their personal development.

As it happened for Albert Camus (1996), a professor's affection can be the biggest and most decisive hope that a student experiences during his or her entire life. Above all, when this adult incarnates genuine hope penetrated by love…

> "You don't need me anymore," he said, "you'll have teachers who know more. But you know where I am, come see me if you need me to help you."
>
> He went out, and Jacques left alone, lost among the women; then he dashed to the window and looked out at his teacher who waved at him one last time and who was leaving him alone henceforth, and, instead of the joy of success, a child's immense anguish wrung his heart, as if he knew in advance that this success had just uprooted him from the warm and innocent world of the poor… to be hurtled into a strange world, one no longer his, where he could not believe the teachers were more learned than the one whose heart was all-knowing, and from now on he would have to learn, to understand without help, and become a man without the aid of the one man who had rescued him; would have to grow up and bring himself up alone, and it would be at the highest cost. (pp. 175–176)

The stories of Andrew and Albert are repeated every day all over the world. We know that there are still many children marked by misfortune and suffering who carry a world on their shoulders that is too heavy for them to carry. We also know that there are teachers who put themselves on the line to reach them and help them have a better future. They are adults who actively work to maintain their hope knowing that, perhaps, they are the only ones who have any hope for these children and young people.

The work towards the cultivation, nurturing, protection, or recovery of our hope as educators is still pending. The lived experiences of so many educators reveal that

hope is learned. It takes root and grows as one faces concrete momentous events of hope and reflects on them. These events shape our experience and character. It feeds on certain vitalizing pedagogical convictions such as the possibility of change and improvement of individuals, especially children and youth, or the belief in one's influence as an educator.

Learn and give hope because "real hope...can never be proven or shaped or calculated...one can only bear witness to it" [author's translation](Duch, 1998, p. 116). But if we approach hope's mystery with amazement, if we become familiar with its essence, if we get to understand its importance and the need for it, we are prepared to take the path of a pedagogy of hope.

[1] From the dissertation for obtaining the degree of Doctor (Ph.D.) in "Education and Society" by the Department of Systematic and Social Pedagogy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain (see Ayala, 2009).

[2] All statements in this article are the result of reduction work in its various forms, which was conducted by the author.

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