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The virtual classroom as a space of power: Ethical and unethical educational leadership in online education

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Abstract

Online education has profoundly transformed pedagogical practices, while simultaneously making power relations within educational leadership both more visible and more invisible. This article examines the virtual classroom as a space where teacher leadership is exercised, with particular attention to the ethical dimensions that emerge in contexts marked by social, technological, and emotional inequalities, especially in Latin America. Adopting a critical and reflective approach, the paper analyzes how educational leadership in digital environments is enacted through seemingly technical decisions that carry significant pedagogical, psychological, and moral implications. Through four analytical dimensions the virtual classroom as a space of power, digital inequality and exclusion, ethical leadership grounded in the principles of non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, and justice, and unethical leadership when power becomes invisible the article argues that online education is not merely a technological issue, but fundamentally an ethical and political one. It is emphasized that teacher leadership in virtual environments can act as a source of support, care, and inclusion, or as a mechanism of control, silencing, and perpetuation of inequalities. Likewise, the responsibility of management, educational supervision, and digital public policies in shaping the conditions under which such leadership is exercised is highlighted.From a humanistic perspective, it is argued that strengthening ethical educational leadership in online education is essential to guaranteeing fair, dignified, and socially responsible learning experiences in increasingly established digital environments

Keywords: Educational leadership; Online education; Educational ethics; Virtual learning environments; Power relations in education

1. Introduction

The consolidation of online education and hybrid models in Latin America cannot be understood solely as a circumstantial response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but rather as part of a broader process of digital transformation driven by national and regional education policies. In countries such as Mexico, the digitalization of education has been promoted through institutional discourses that emphasize innovation, educational continuity, and expanded access. However, these processes have advanced with limited reflection on the ethical, pedagogical, and power-related implications that emerge in the virtual classroom, particularly in relation to teacher leadership.

Digital education policies in the region have tended to focus on access to technologies, connectivity, and the use of platforms, leaving in the background the analysis of pedagogical relationships that are configured in virtual environments. In the case of Mexico, initiatives such as Aprende en Casa and the accelerated incorporation of digital platforms in basic and higher education revealed both the potential and the deep structural inequalities of the education system. In this context, the virtual classroom became a space where the teacher assumed a central role as mediator, manager, and leader, often without specific training or sufficient institutional support (1).

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From this perspective, teacher leadership in the digital classroom cannot be detached from the frameworks of management and educational supervision that stem from public policy. The decisions that teachers make in virtual environments—control of participation, online assessment, management of time and digital presence—are conditioned by institutional guidelines that prioritize coverage, evidence, and accountability. As Freire (2) warns, every teaching practice maintains intrinsic and invisible power relations; in digital environments, these relationships are intensified by policies that prioritize technological efficiency over ethical and pedagogical reflection.

In Latin America, international organizations such as UNESCO and the Inter-American Development Bank have promoted digital transformation in education as a strategic axis for regional development. However, several reports agree that the region faces the risk of reproducing technocratic models of educational management, where supervision is oriented more towards process control than pedagogical support, which in current practice is a tangible reality. In this scenario, educational supervision in virtual environments is often reduced to the verification of digital indicators—connectivity, attendance, task completion—rendering invisible those forms of teacher leadership that may be exclusionary or ethically questionable (3).

Following Foucault (4), power today is exercised more efficiently when it is institutionalized through technology, devices, and norms. In the digital educational sphere, learning management platforms, monitoring systems, and administrative guidelines operate as dispositifs that regulate both students and teachers. Thus, the virtual classroom becomes a space where teacher leadership is exercised under a double logic: pedagogical and institutional. When this tension is not recognized by educational management, there is a risk of individually blaming the teacher for practices that are, in reality, the product of insufficiently problematized regulatory frameworks.

In the Latin American context, characterized by profound social and technological inequalities, this situation acquires particular relevance. Demanding constant participation, cameras turned on, or standardized online assessments without considering students' real conditions implies exercising a pedagogical power that may turn into unethical practices, even when they are formally aligned with institutional policy. As Selwyn (5) notes, digital education runs the risk of becoming dehumanized when subordinated to logics of control and efficiency, to the detriment of care and equity, which can indeed lead—and is already leading—to insufficient pedagogical processes.

Therefore, responsibility for leadership in the virtual classroom does not fall exclusively on the teacher. Digital education policies in Mexico and Latin America require educational management and supervision with an ethical focus, capable of guiding, supporting, and training teachers in the conscious exercise of pedagogical power. UNESCO (6) emphasizes that digital governance in education must place human dignity at the center, promoting regulatory frameworks that protect students' socio-emotional well-being and meaningful participation.

From this perspective, recognizing the virtual classroom as a space of power implies assuming institutional co-responsibility: the teacher leads the classroom, but education policy and school management lead the conditions of that leadership. Ignoring this relationship leads to the normalization of practices of control, surveillance, or exclusion; assuming it critically opens the possibility of building digital classrooms where teacher leadership is ethical, educational, and socially responsible. Within this framework, this article analyzes teacher leadership in the virtual classroom as a situated practice, deeply influenced by digital education policies and current management and supervision models in Mexico and Latin America.

2. Teacher leadership in the virtual classroom: inequality, exclusion, and weak institutional support

2.1. The virtual classroom in contexts of structural inequality

Analyzing the virtual classroom as a space of power gains particular depth when it is situated in the contexts of our Latin America, characterized by profound social, economic, and technological inequalities. Unlike global discourses that present digital education as a homogeneous opportunity for innovation and access, the regional reality shows that the virtual classroom is built upon deeply unequal material conditions that directly influence teacher leadership and students' educational experience (3,7). Several studies have pointed out that the digital divide in Latin American countries is not limited to access to devices or connectivity, but also includes differences in digital skills, family support, and study conditions at home (7,5). In this scenario, the virtual classroom becomes a space where structural inequalities are manifested in everyday, and in many cases, silent ways. These conditions place the teacher in a particularly complex leadership position. Each pedagogical decision—requiring synchronous attendance, asking students to keep cameras on, or penalizing absences—has a differentiated impact depending on students' real possibilities. As Bourdieu (8) argues, apparently neutral educational practices can act as mechanisms for reproducing inequality when students'

cultural and material capital is not taken into account; that is, the educational environment must now be contextualized and viewed from an individualized perspective.

2.2. Educational inclusion in digital environments

Digital education policies in Mexico often incorporate the notion of inclusion as a normative principle. However, in practice, inclusion in virtual environments faces multiple tensions derived from a lack of institutional resources and from poorly contextualized pedagogical models (6).

Educational inclusion in the virtual classroom implies ensuring conditions for meaningful participation and recognition of diversity. Nonetheless, recent research shows that many students choose digital silence as a strategy of self-protection against the exposure of their technological or contextual shortcomings (9). In this sense, teacher leadership can become a key factor in mitigating or deepening these dynamics of exclusion. From an ethical perspective, demanding homogeneity in virtual participation without considering students' real conditions constitutes a form of exercising pedagogical power that can lead to unethical practices, even when aligned with institutional guidelines (2).

2.3. Lack of institutional resources and its impact on teacher leadership

One of the most persistent problems of digital education in the region is the institutional precariousness with which many online teaching models were implemented. In numerous cases, institutions shifted the responsibility for digital adaptation onto teachers without offering sufficient training in digital pedagogy, ethical leadership, or inclusive education (1,9). This lack of institutional support generates an overload on teachers that limits their ability to reflect critically on the exercise of power in the virtual classroom. As Fullan (10) notes, educational leadership should not rest solely on individual will, since it requires a coherent organizational structure that supports pedagogical rather than merely symbolic change.

2.4. Digital educational supervision and the normalization of exclusion

Digital supervision runs the risk of becoming a surveillance device that regulates behaviors without questioning their human effects. As Ball (11) warns, accountability systems based on indicators tend to reconfigure teaching practice toward compliance, displacing ethical and pedagogical reflection. In many education systems, educational supervision in digital environments has favored an administrative approach centered on evidence, reports, and compliance metrics. Of course, these mechanisms serve an institutional control function that is understood as necessary for the proper administrative functioning of schools; however, they are insufficient for identifying exclusionary pedagogical practices that operate symbolically (4).

2.5. Teacher leadership as ethical mediation in the face of precariousness

Despite institutional limitations, teacher leadership retains a margin of ethical action. In contexts of scarce resources, the teacher can act as a mediator between institutional demands and students' realities, softening the effects of inequality through flexible and inclusive pedagogical practices (12). However, demanding this type of leadership without institutional support implies an unfair burden. As Freire (2) points out, transformative education cannot rely exclusively on individuals; it requires a collective project sustained by coherent policies and structures, since the logic of educational management should be to improve in order to raise the quality of education.

Yet the problem of inclusion in the virtual classroom cannot be addressed solely from teaching practice. It is essential to recognize institutional responsibility in creating conditions that either promote or limit the exercise of ethical leadership. Digital education policies that do not explicitly incorporate the ethical and contextual dimension end up reproducing inequalities under the discourse of innovation (6,7). In this sense, the absence of clear frameworks on digital ethics, inclusion, and dignified treatment leaves teachers in a zone of normative ambiguity that increases the risk of exclusionary practices. Reframing digital educational management from a social justice perspective requires shifting the exclusive emphasis on efficiency toward a logic of care, equity, and institutional co-responsibility. UNESCO (6) emphasizes that digital transformation without social justice can deepen existing gaps and erode the right to education.

Within this framework, teacher leadership in the virtual classroom must be understood as a situated practice, conditioned by education policies, supervision models, and resource availability. Educational management not only leads institutions: it leads the conditions of teacher leadership.

3. Ethical leadership in the virtual classroom: accompanying at a distance

3.1. Leading in virtual environments

In the face-to-face classroom, teacher leadership relies on direct interaction, physical presence, and emotional proximity. In contrast, the virtual classroom displaces these elements and forces the teacher to exercise leadership mainly through pedagogical, communicative, and assessment decisions mediated by digital platforms. In this scenario, ethics ceases to be an accessory component of leadership and becomes its structural core.

Accompanying at a distance implies recognizing that pedagogical power does not disappear in virtual environments; it is transformed. The teacher controls time, visibility, participation, and, in many cases, access to learning itself. As Freire (2) states, every educational practice is an ethical and political practice; in virtual environments, this dimension is intensified due to the technological and symbolic asymmetry between teacher and student.

From this perspective, teacher leadership in the virtual classroom cannot be evaluated solely by its technical effectiveness, but by the moral responsibility with which pedagogical power is exercised, especially in contexts marked by social and digital inequalities (7,5).If we speak of ethical precepts, the principle of non-maleficence establishes the basic ethical obligation to do no harm. In the virtual classroom, this principle acquires particular relevance, since pedagogical and emotional harm can manifest in silent, cumulative, and normalized ways.Practices such as requiring cameras to be turned on without considering the home context, penalizing connectivity failures, ridiculing errors in public digital spaces, or imposing constant surveillance can generate anxiety, stress, and academic withdrawal. Although these actions are often justified in the name of order, discipline, or efficiency, they constitute forms of symbolic violence that affect students' dignity (8,4).Recent research on online education indicates that experiences of excessive control and pedagogical rigidity are associated with deteriorating student well-being and higher rates of emotional disengagement and academic dropout (13). In this sense, ethical leadership requires a preventive reading of harm, where the teacher asks not only whether a practice is institutionally permitted, but whether it is morally responsible. While non-maleficence sets the minimum boundary of ethical leadership, the principle of beneficence introduces an active obligation: to do good, promote well-being, and contribute to the student's integral development. In the virtual classroom, this principle translates into the teacher's capacity to provide pedagogical and emotional support even under conditions of distance. Beneficence is manifested in practices such as reasonable flexibility in deadlines, respectful feedback, recognition of effort, and validation of emotions associated with learning in contexts of uncertainty. According to Noddings (14), the educational relationship is, above all, a moral relationship based on care; without this component, teaching loses its humanizing sense. From the perspective of educational leadership, accompanying does not mean lowering academic standards, but redefining the meaning of demand. Ethical leadership oriented toward beneficence articulates academic quality with empathy and contextual understanding, recognizing that learning does not occur in a vacuum but in concrete social conditions (10).The principle of autonomy also occupies a central place in educational ethics, especially in digital environments where control can be exercised in intensified ways. Respecting autonomy implies recognizing the student as an active subject, capable of making decisions about their learning process, and not merely a recipient of instructions.In the virtual classroom, autonomy is often threatened by practices of hyper-control, constant monitoring, demands for permanent presence, and single-format participation and assessment schemes. These dynamics reduce student agency and transform teacher leadership into a form of pedagogical surveillance (11).

Literature on self-regulated learning shows that digital environments can enhance autonomy when teacher leadership promotes self-regulation, decision-making, and metacognitive reflection (15). From this perspective, ethical leadership does not renounce guidance; it trusts students and builds co-responsibility in the educational process.

Finally, the principle of justice cuts across teacher leadership in the virtual classroom. In Latin American contexts characterized by deep digital divides, treating everyone the same can become a form of injustice. Educational justice in virtual environments does not consist of applying homogeneous rules, but rather recognizing unequal starting points and acting accordingly. Demanding the same level of connectivity, time availability, or technological resources ignores the structural conditions that limit access to learning (7,3).

From a social justice perspective, education must address both resource redistribution and recognition and participation (16). In the virtual classroom, this implies adapting pedagogical strategies without stigmatizing, contextualizing assessments, and defending students' right to learn in dignified conditions.

4. Unethical leadership in online education: invisible power and normalized harm

4.1. Specificity of unethical leadership in virtual environments

Unlike the face-to-face classroom, where the exercise of power is often visible and embodied, the virtual classroom fosters forms of leadership that operate through invisibility, technological mediation, and emotional distance. In this context, unethical leadership does not always manifest through explicit acts of abuse or authoritarianism, but rather through normalized decisions, administrative routines, and pedagogical discourses that conceal relations of domination under the guise of technical neutrality.

Unethical leadership in online education is characterized by the use of pedagogical power without ethical reflection, without considering the psychological and symbolic impact on students, and without recognizing the structural asymmetries that shape the teacher–student relationship. As Foucault (4) argues, the most effective power is that which does not need to impose itself directly but is internalized and normalized. In virtual environments, this logic is intensified: control is exercised through platforms, algorithms, participation metrics, and pedagogical monitoring devices.

In this sense, the virtual classroom becomes a conducive space for teacher power to become diffuse, impersonal, and unquestionable, making it difficult to identify and problematize unethical practices.

4.2. Invisibility, control, and normalization

One of the central features of unethical leadership online is the confusion between pedagogical control and technological control. The management of microphones, cameras, connection times, participation in forums, and submission of digital evidence is often justified as an organizational necessity; however, when these practices are applied without pedagogical or ethical criteria, they become mechanisms of domination.

Authors such as Zuboff (17) have pointed out that contemporary digital systems tend to consolidate logics of surveillance and control under the discourse of efficiency. In education, this logic translates into constant supervision of student behavior, where digital presence is mistaken for real engagement and visibility is confused with learning.

Unethical leadership emerges when teachers adopt these logics uncritically, exercising a power that is legitimized by technology rather than by the pedagogical relationship. The virtual classroom, instead of being a space for support, becomes an environment of permanent monitoring, where error, silence, or disconnection are interpreted as moral failings.

4.3. Psychological and ideological inequalities

Unethical leadership in online education has a direct impact on students' mental and emotional health, especially in contexts of vulnerability. The imposition of rigid demands, public exposure of mistakes, or symbolic disqualification creates climates of anxiety, fear, and self-exclusion. Recent studies on psychological well-being in online education show that teaching practices based on control and constant pressure are associated with higher levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, and academic demotivation (18). In the virtual classroom, where students lack informal spaces for containment and peer support, these effects are intensified. Psychological inequality between teachers and students deepens when leadership is exercised from a position of emotional and cognitive superiority. As an institutional authority figure, the teacher enjoys greater security, stability, and control over the digital environment, whereas the student often faces uncertainty, technological precariousness, and, in many cases, emotional overload derived from their social and family context. When this asymmetry is not acknowledged, teacher leadership becomes ethically problematic, as it ignores the other's vulnerability and reinforces dynamics of emotional subordination. In addition to psychological inequalities, the virtual classroom is also a space where ideological inequalities between teachers and students emerge. These differences may relate to conceptions of knowledge, authority, discipline, merit, use of technology, or even political, cultural, and generational positions. In online education, these differences are often managed implicitly, but they can become sources of conflict when teacher leadership adopts a rigid and unquestionable ideological stance. Giroux (19) warns that education is never ideologically neutral; however, the ethical problem arises when teachers use their position of power to impose worldviews, silence dissent, or delegitimize students' perspectives.

Unethical leadership is manifested when the virtual classroom becomes a space for symbolic indoctrination, where certain voices are privileged and others are marginalized. The inability to confront or challenge the teacher in digital environments, for fear of academic reprisals or public exposure, reinforces this ideological asymmetry.

4.4. Symbolic violence and digital humiliation

The concept of symbolic violence, developed by Bourdieu (8), is especially relevant for analyzing unethical leadership in online education. Symbolic violence does not require physical aggression or explicit verbal abuse; it operates through gestures, silences, unfair assessments, and institutionalized practices that legitimize domination.

In the virtual classroom, this violence is expressed in practices such as:

- Ridiculing mistakes in forums or videoconferences
- Systematically ignoring certain students' participation
- Associating technological problems with lack of commitment
- Using sarcasm or irony in public digital spaces

These practices generate digital humiliation, a form of psychological harm that affects students' self-esteem and academic identity. As Barlett and Gentile (20) note, publicexposure in digital environments amplifies the emotional impact of symbolic mistreatment, making its effects more lasting. Unethical leadership in online education cannot be understood solely as an individual failing on the part of the teacher. Educational institutions play a central role in normalizing, tolerating, or rendering invisible these practices. When educational management prioritizes compliance indicators, digital evidence, and administrative control over student well-being, it creates a conducive environment for the exercise of unethical leadership. The absence of clear protocols on dignified treatment, digital ethics, and complaint mechanisms reinforces institutional silence in the face of symbolic abuse. From a critical perspective, Ball (11) argues that contemporary education systems tend to shift ethical responsibility onto individuals, obscuring the structures that produce and legitimize control practices. In the digital context, this logic translates into management that demands results without assuming the human consequences of the process. Nuancing the analysis of unethical leadership requires recognizing that teachers are also subjects traversed by institutional, ideological, and emotional pressures. Professional burnout, job insecurity, and lack of ethical training in digital environments can contribute to rigid, defensive, or authoritarian teaching practices. Literature on teacher burnout shows that emotional exhaustion reduces empathy and increases the likelihood of punitive or dehumanizing behavior (21). In online education, where the boundary between work and personal life is blurred, these conditions are intensified. Nevertheless, understanding these conditions does not justify unethical leadership; rather, it contextualizes it to avoid simplistic explanations and to promote institutional interventions that address the well-being of both teachers and students. Psychological and ideological inequalities between teachers and students, far from diminishing in virtual environments, deepen when they are not explicitly recognized. The virtual classroom then becomes a space where harm is normalized, silence is interpreted as obedience, and exclusion is disguised as pedagogical neutrality. From an ethical standpoint, this scenario poses a central challenge for educational management and supervision: to make power visible, to name harm, and to build institutional frameworks that prevent unethical leadership. Without this work, online education risks reproducing and amplifying the most subtle forms of inequality and domination.

5. Conclusion

Reflecting on online education from the perspective of educational leadership compels us to move beyond technical and pedagogical discussion. It forces us to ask who leads, from where they lead, and with what consequences that leadership is exercised. Throughout this work, one idea becomes increasingly clear: virtuality did not transform educational leadership; it stripped it bare. It made visible—though often in uncomfortable ways—the conceptions of authority, power, ethics, and responsibility that were already present in our educational practices.Educational leadership, understood not only as a managerial function but as an everyday practice of influence, becomes particularly evident in the virtual classroom. In the absence of physical contact, spontaneous interaction, and immediate emotional cues, leadership is concentrated in pedagogical, communicative, and evaluative decisions. Every instruction, every rule, every silence, and every assessment decision becomes an act of leadership that shapes students' educational experience. From this perspective, the virtual classroom is not merely a teaching space, but a stage where leadership is exercised in its purest form: leadership mediated by language, norms, and technology. And it is precisely in this setting that it becomes urgent to ask whether such leadership is ethical, inclusive, and formative, or whether it reproduces logics of control, exclusion, and domination. One of the key lessons from this analysis is recognizing that leadership is not neutral. It is not neutral in face-to-face settings and even less so in virtual environments. To lead is to make decisions that affect academic trajectories, identities, emotions, and life projects. In online education, such decisions are often made without fully knowing the student's context, which increases the ethical responsibility of teacher leadership.Beyond lack of access or resources, leadership faces symbolic, psychological, and ideological inequalities that traverse the educational relationship. The teacher, as an authority figure, enjoys institutional legitimacy, control over the digital environment, and relative stability; the student, in contrast, is often in a position of emotional, technological, and social vulnerability.

Ignoring this asymmetry means exercising leadership from ethical blindness. From a personal standpoint, this work leads me to recognize that online education requires a much more deliberate ethical awareness than other contexts. It is not enough to know how to teach or to master platforms. To lead is to constantly question the impact of our practices. Am I leading to educate or to control? Am I using technology as a pedagogical tool or as an instrument of power? Am I accompanying or merely demanding? Ethics in education is defined precisely by this capacity for self-reflection. It is not defined by the absence of mistakes, but by the willingness to review one's own practices, to acknowledge limits, and to correct course. In online education, where power can be exercised invisibly, this self-reflection becomes indispensable.

One of the greatest risks identified in this work is the normalization of unethical leadership. When control is disguised as organization, when surveillance is presented as pedagogical follow-up, when exclusion is justified as academic rigor, educational leadership loses its formative sense and becomes a practice of domination. In these cases, the problem lies not only with the teacher, but with the education system that validates and reproduces these forms of leadership.

It is essential to emphasize that leadership is not exercised in a vacuum. It is deeply conditioned by management models, institutional policies, and supervisory practices. When educational management prioritizes indicators, digital evidence, and regulatory compliance over well-being and holistic formation, teacher leadership tends to align with these logics, even when they conflict with basic ethical principles. This leads to a key conclusion: ethical educational leadership cannot be demanded where institutional conditions are unethical. Knowing how to lead is not merely an individual trait; it is a collective construction that depends on organizational culture, managerial support, and the regulatory frameworks that guide educational practice. In online education, this institutional co-responsibility is even more evident. Placing the conclusions at the center of educational leadership also implies recognizing that every teacher leads, even when they do not hold a formal position. They lead when they define the climate of the virtual classroom, when they decide how to respond to a struggling student, when they choose between flexibility and sanction, between listening and ignoring. This everyday leadership has deep and lasting effects, even when they are not immediately visible.

From an ethical standpoint, leadership should be guided by four fundamental principles: non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, and justice. These principles do not operate as abstract rules but as practical criteria for decision-making in the virtual classroom.

Non-maleficence, in simple terms, means exercising authority with care. It means recognizing that harm in education is not always explicit and that seemingly normal practices can generate fear, anxiety, or exclusion. Ethical educational leadership constantly asks whether a given decision might harm, humiliate, or render a student invisible.

Beneficence, in turn, redefines the meaning of being a leader. Leading is not only managing processes; it is supporting people. In online education, where isolation and emotional exhaustion are common, educational leadership is expressed in the ability to accompany, recognize effort, and build meaningful pedagogical relationships, even at a distance.

Autonomy introduces a crucial and contemporary dimension. To lead is not to control every student action, but to create conditions for them to develop their own agency. In virtual environments, where the temptation of technological control is strong, ethical leadership opts for trust, co-responsibility, and dialogue. This kind of leadership does not weaken authority; it transforms it into a more legitimate and formative authority.

Justice, finally, obliges educational leadership to look at context. Not all students start from the same place, and leading justly means recognizing this reality without stigmatizing. In online education, justice is expressed in contextualized pedagogical decisions, in assessments that are sensitive to students' environments, and in defending their right to learn under dignified conditions.

One of the strongest conclusions from my perspective is that leadership in virtual environments confronts us with our own conception of power. It forces us to ask whether we understand leadership as service or control, as accompaniment or imposition. These questions are not theoretical; they are answered every day in practice.

The analysis of unethical leadership showed that many of the most harmful practices do not present themselves as abuse, but as routine. Here educational leadership faces one of its greatest challenges: making the invisible visible. Naming power, recognizing harm, and questioning what has been normalized. Without this critical capacity, leadership becomes a mechanism for reproducing inequalities.

At the same time, teachers are also subjects affected by institutional, ideological, and emotional pressures. Conditions of care are therefore needed for those who lead as well. We cannot demand accompaniment without offering support, nor ethics without institutional backing.

Focusing the conclusions on leadership implies recognizing that online education will not fail due to a lack of technology, but due to a lack of ethical leadership. Educational quality does not depend solely on platforms or content, but on how pedagogical authority is exercised and educational relationships are built.The goal here is not to offer recipes or fixed models of leadership, but rather to open a deep reflection on the kind of educational leadership we are constructing in virtual environments. A leadership that can choose control and efficiency, or care and justice. A leadership that can render students invisible, or recognize them as full subjects. Ultimately, leading in education—face-to-face or virtual—is an ethical responsibility that cannot be delegated to technology or regulations. It is a human practice that requires awareness, reflection, and commitment. If online education is here to stay, the challenge is not merely to adapt to it, but to lead it with humanity. In medicine there is a well-known maxim: Primum non nocere, which refers to "first, do no harm" to a patient. It seems to me that this should apply to education and to students in exactly the same way.

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