Possibilities of education in times of Covid -19

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Abstract
This work addresses the themes of remote education, distance learning and hybrid education, combined with the resources of digital technologies. Our objective is to discuss the educational alternatives adopted by governments to minimize the education impacts/damage provoked by the suspension of face-to-face classes in the period of the pandemic of the new coronavirus – Sars-cov-2. We believe in the need of teachers and students to be physically present in the classroom, which is essential for the success of the process that involves the act of teaching and learning. In this perspective, we defend that non-classroom teaching should be an exceptional, as in this moment of pandemic that the humanity is going through.

Keywords: Remote Teaching. Distance Learning. Hybrid Teaching. Digital Tecnologies.

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Resumo
Este trabalho aborda as temáticas do ensino remoto, do ensino a distância e do ensino híbrido, aliados aos recursos das tecnologias digitais. Nosso objetivo é discutir as alternativas educacionais adotadas pelos governos para minimizar os impactos/prejuízos educacionais provocados pela suspensão de aulas presenciais no período da pandemia do novo coronavírus – Sars-Cov-2. Acreditamos na necessidade de professores e alunos estarem presentes, fisicamente, em sala de aula, o que é imprescindível para o êxito do processo que envolve o ato de ensinar e de aprender. Nessa perspectiva, defendemos que o ensino não presencial deve ser uma opção apenas em contextos específicos e de maneira excepcional, como neste momento de pandemia por que passa humanidade.

1 Introduction

In the midst of one of the biggest health crises in world history, schools needed to reinvent themselves and review their teaching models. At the end of 2019, media outlets around the world announced the emergence, in the Chinese province of Wuhan, of a new virus that was highly contagious and would later be named by scientists as Sars-Cov-2.

The context of a globalized world we live in, where people move from one place to another quite quickly and even with some ease, provided the necessary conditions for the virus to soon spread around the world. Brazil, even though it is geographically distant from China, has not been able to prevent the entry of the disease into its territory. At the end of February 2020, the Brazilian Ministry of Health officially announced the first case of the disease in the country, more precisely in São Paulo. In a short time, the virus spread across the country.

A Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS) and infectologists around the world realized that it was necessary, among other measures, to adopt social distancing as a way to prevent the rapid spread of the virus. This measure caused the closure of all activities considered non-essential for the population. Businesses, churches, schools and other services were suspended in Brazil, following the example of other countries.

With the closure of educational institutions, millions of students were left without studying, which required government officials to search for an alternative to minimize the impacts/losses caused to students due to the closure of schools.

In this context, the Federal Government edited Provisional Measure (MP) 934, published on April 1, 2020, which exceptionally established norms regarding the academic year of basic and higher education institutions. In its Art. 1st, this legal device reads as follows:

O estabelecimento de ensino de educação básica fica dispensado, em caráter excepcional, da obrigatoriedade de observância ao mínimo de dias de efetivo trabalho escolar, nos termos do disposto no inciso I do caput e no § 1º do art. 24 e no inciso II do caput do art. 31 da Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, desde que cumprida a carga horária mínima anual estabelecida nos referidos dispositivos, observadas as normas a serem editadas pelos respectivos sistemas de ensino (BRASIL, 2020).
From this initiative, the educational systems all over the country started to adopt distance learning as an alternative not to leave the students totally without classes while the pandemic persisted.

Teachers had the difficult task of adapting to this new context imposed by the pandemic. With the adoption of remote teaching, it was necessary to use the resources of digital technologies such as cameras, videos, audio devices, digital platforms, among others, to meet the demands of this new educational reality.

Suddenly, the "blackboard" was replaced by a cell phone or computer screen. The teacher was faced with an extremely challenging situation. Appropriate the new digital technologies, as pedagogical resources, is no longer just an option, and has acquired the status of an obligation for teachers. The resistance to the new, to the technological resources had to be overcome immediately.

In view of all these problems that education went through, and still goes through, we consider it important to bring into the debate the educational alternatives adopted by the governments in order to mitigate the damage caused by the total suspension of face-to-face classes, while social isolation lasts.

To this end, our discussion will revolve around the following topics: distance learning and the new digital technologies remote learning (as an alternative in times of pandemic) and hybrid learning (some definitions).

We clarify, up front, that we are not advocating the generalized replacement of classroom teaching by distance, remote or hybrid education. Our intention is to bring to the debate the possibilities that exist in the current context to avoid leaving students without their constitutional right to education.

2 Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative approach, exploratory (with a view to the objectives), and bibliographic, with regard to data survey techniques.
"Qualitative research is a means to explore and to understand the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem" (CRESWELL, 2010, p. 26). When it comes to exploratory research, this type of research aims "[...] to provide greater familiarity with the problem, with a view to making it more explicit or forming hypotheses. It can be said that these researches have as main objective the improvement of ideas or the discovery of intuitions" (GIL, 2002, p. 41). Furthermore, it is worth adding that exploratory research "[...] in most cases takes the form of bibliographic research or case study" (GIL, 2002, p. 41).

Regarding the use of technical procedures for data collection: "The bibliographical research is developed based on already elaborated material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles" (GIL, 2002, p. 44). "Bibliographic research is linked to the reading, analysis, and interpretation of books, journals, manuscripts, reports, theses, monographs, etc. (i.e., most often, the products that condense the making of scientific work)" (FONTANA, 2018, p. 66).

In our case, we opted for materials published on the internet. To this end, we conducted searches on Google Scholar and electronic journal websites. We searched for works that addressed themes related to remote learning, distance learning, and hybrid learning, allied to the resources of digital technologies, in the context of the pandemic of the new coronavirus.

Following the guidelines advocated by Gil (2008) about the stages of bibliographic research, we defined the following steps in the construction of this work: 1) definition of the theme/problem, 2) elaboration of the work plan, 3) survey of sources and obtaining the material, 4) reading the material, 5) fiching, 6) writing the text.

3 Results and Discussion: Weaving Ideas of Teaching in Covid-19 Times

In this section, we bring some considerations about the possibilities of non-presence teaching, during the phase of forced social isolation, which was the result of measures adopted in order to reduce the spread of the new coronavirus. The arguments
revolve around distance learning and digital technologies, remote learning as a possibility in times of pandemic, and hybrid learning and its definitions.

3.1 Distance learning and new digital technologies

Faced with this "new" reality imposed by the new coronavirus pandemic, educational institutions and teachers have had to resort to digital technologies to meet the demands of teaching in this new and difficult time for education.

As escolas estão sendo orientadas a aproveitarem em ampla escala as ferramentas de tecnologia educacional, como por exemplo as plataformas e ambientes virtuais de ensino, as redes sociais, aplicativos educacionais, para garantir os processos pedagógicos de aprendizagem. Materiais como, videoaulas, slides explicativos dos conteúdos, cronograma de estudos, utilização de rádio e TV com aulas programadas, listas de exercícios online, entre outras para manter os alunos em rotina de estudo, mesmo estando isolados e distantes do espaço físico escolar e do convívio com os colegas (NASCIMENTO; ROSA, 2020, p. 38516).

The technological resources available in modern society are diverse, but using them correctly and making the most of what they can offer is not always possible. Hence the need for reflection about this new reality and this new human being, the result of this turbulent context caused by the pandemic. In this perspective, it is opportune to point out that: "Educational action can do without a reflection on man and an analysis of his cultural conditions. There is no education outside human societies and there are no isolated human beings. Man is a being of space-time roots" (FREIRE, 2014, p. 35).

It was precisely thinking about this new human being, "born" from this chaotic context, that the school needed to reinvent itself and think of methodologies that would meet the real needs of the society in which it is inserted.

Nowadays, distance learning has taken a leading role in the educational environment, and its growth can be easily noticed in the flood of advertisements that reach us, carried out by several educational institutions, especially private ones, through television, radio, and especially through social networks.
In this new social dynamic, distance learning is no longer an option only for the most remote places on the planet, where the traditional school has no way to reach. EaD has become an option for many people who need to study and cannot attend a course in person.

"Distance education emerges in this framework of changes as another regular way of offering education, losing its supplementary, palliative or emergency character, and assuming functions of growing importance [...]" (BELLONI, 2002, p. 139). For Freitas and Carvalho (2011), the: "Distance Education (DE) emerges in the educational context as a modality that adds the use of digital technologies effectively and by its own specificity, requires that the teaching action uses differentiated strategies".

In an increasingly connected and technological world, where digital technology resources are gaining more and more space in the teaching-learning process, and society needs to be prepared to meet the demands of the current context, the: "Distance Education comes to meet these needs, providing that knowledge is built independent of time and space and enters the scene to "try" to help solve some problems of Brazilian education" (BEHAR, 2009, p. 16, emphasis added).

It is worth mentioning that, in Brazil, many students and teachers of basic education are inserted in this context of distance education. However, it is noteworthy that not all have the necessary resources to develop their pedagogical activities, in the case of teachers, and school, in the case of students. Regarding the adoption of methodologies mediated by digital technology resources, it is worth remembering that "[...] there are difficulties inherent to online interaction, since part of the population still does not have access to the internet and technological equipment (notebook, laptop, desktop computer) [...]" (ARRUDA; SIQUEIRA, 2021, p. 3, emphasis added).

In this new scenario in which the world had to submit to forced social isolation, this education alternative figured as a study option. Within this conjuncture, it is appropriate to remember that, on May 25, 2017, the Federal Government edited Decree 9,057 that brought, in its Art. 1, an institutional definition of distance education, which reads as follows:
Para os fins deste Decreto, considera-se educação a distância a modalidade educacional na qual a mediação didático-pedagógica nos processos de ensino e aprendizagem ocorra com a utilização de meios e tecnologias de informação e comunicação, com pessoal qualificado, com políticas de acesso, com acompanhamento e avaliação compatíveis, entre outros, e desenvolve atividades educativas por estudantes e profissionais da educação que estejam em lugares e tempos diversos (BRASIL, 2017).

Nunes (1993, p. 07) defines distance education as "[...] a resource of incalculable importance as an appropriate way to meet large contingents of students more effectively than other modalities and without risk of reducing the quality of services offered [...]". Another very interesting concept, which contemplates the use of digital technologies, states that:

[... a Educação a Distância pode ser definida como uma forma de aprendizagem organizada que se caracteriza, basicamente, pela separação física entre professor e alunos e a existência de algum tipo de tecnologia de mediatização para estabelecer a interação entre eles. Ainda que possa ser construída com base em diferentes modelos pedagógicos, [...] é preciso enfatizar que a EAD é a educação, ou seja, não é só um sistema tecnológico, nem mesmo um meio de comunicação (BEHAR, 2009, p. 16).

From this perspective, distance education, which was once viewed with much prejudice, has presented itself as a possible alternative in this context of global health crisis. Se antes existiam muitas resistências e pré-conceitos quanto à Educação a Distância, parece que a atual conjuntura encontrou nesta modalidade uma alternativa economicamente viável, uma opção às exigências sociais e pedagógicas, contando com o apoio do avanço das novas tecnologias da informação e da comunicação (PRETI, 2009, p. 26).

It is possible to see that distance education has gained, over time, credibility and has become a modality that has been incorporated by educational institutions, even in different periods than the one we are facing with the pandemic. If this modality is well planned and allied to the diversity of technological resources available nowadays, it can be an option at this time of social isolation.

Digital technologies are essential resources to enable distance learning and cannot be disregarded by the educational systems, especially by teachers. In times of social isolation, they are even more necessary. In this perspective, it is worth remembering that:
"Communication technologies do not replace the teacher, but modify some of his functions" (MORAN, 1995, p. 6).

Nothing is more opportune to appropriate the resources made available by the technologies of the digital world than this moment imposed by the health crisis that has devastated the world, forcing people into social isolation. It is up to the school to restructure itself, reinvent itself to be able to fulfill its so essential social role. "ICT make it possible to adapt the context and the situations of the learning process to the diversities in the classroom" (OLIVEIRA, 2015, p. 78).

In this sense, "Technologies allow a new enchantment in school, by opening its walls and enabling students to talk and research with other students from the same city, country or abroad, at their own pace. The same happens with teachers" (MORAN, 1995, p. 6).

It is known that even before the pandemic, modern technologies were already part of everyday life in schools, with less intensity, of course, but they were already a reality. However, during this pandemic period, it became imposing. Bezerra, Veloso and Ribeiro (2021) corroborate the idea that technologies are not recent and have a direct impact on the world of work, including the universe of education, and that introducing, disseminating and appropriating these resources suggest new behaviors and new actions from human beings.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that: "Technologies provide students to build their knowledge from communicability and interactions with a world of pluralities, in which there are no geographical, cultural limitations and the exchange of knowledge and experiences is constant" (OLIVEIRA, 2015, p. 80).

3.2 Remote Learning: an alternative in times of pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, governments needed to adopt measures in order not to leave students totally without the right to formal education. In light of this:
Mesmo resistente às recomendações de isolamento emitidas pela OMS, o governo brasileirosuspendeu as atividades presenciais em creches, escolas, universidades, institutos federais e demais espaços formais e não-formais de ensino, públicos ou privados, [...] e sinalizou o ensino remoto emergencial como alternativa para continuidade das atividades educacionais (MORAES et al., 2020, p. 182).

"With the advent of the pandemic, remote teaching strategies are important means of containing the effects of social distancing [...]" (GOMES et al., 2020, p. 01). In this period of social detachment, remote teaching has become the subject of much discussion in the educational environment.

A expressão ensino remoto passou a ser usada como alternativa a educação a distância (EAD). Isso, porque a EAD já tem existência estabelecida, coexistindo com a educação presencial como uma modalidade distinta, oferecida regularmente. Diferentemente, o “ensino” remoto é posto como um substituto excepcionalmente adotado neste período de pandemia, em que a educação presencial se encontra interditada” (SAVIANI; GALVÃO, 2021, p. 38, grifos dos autores).

It is possible to verify, in the words of the authors above, that there is a difference between teaching remotely and teaching at a distance. In this case, we see that DL is a consolidated form of education, adopted by several educational institutions in times other than the pandemic, at the same time that face-to-face teaching takes place normally. On the other hand, remote teaching is configured as an exceptional strategy adopted in order to minimize the impacts and/or damages in this time of health crisis caused by the virus Sars-Cov-2.

About the difference between teaching at a distance and teaching remotely, one must consider that:

Ensinar remotamente não é sinônimo de ensinar a distância, embora esteja diretamente relacionado ao uso de tecnologia e, nesse caso, digital. O ensino remoto permite o uso de plataformas já disponíveis e abertas para outros fins, que não sejam estritamente os educacionais, assim como a inserção de ferramentas auxiliares e a introdução de práticas inovadoras. A variabilidade dos recursos e das estratégias bem como das práticas é definida a partir da familiaridade e da habilidade do professor em adotar tais recursos (GARCIA et al., 2020, p. 5).
In any case, both are inserted in the culture of the digital world and can take advantage of technological resources to streamline teaching practices. We cannot deny, therefore, that from now on, educational institutions, and especially teachers, need to break down the barriers that prevent change and add, once and for all, the resources available in the technological world to traditionally consolidated teaching practices.

It is worth remembering that we do not make a defense of non-face-to-face teaching, but the observation that there is a need for teachers to add the resources of digital technologies to their teaching practices, regardless of the pandemic.

3.3 Hybrid education: what is it?

An alternative widely used by schools all over Brazil, in this period of health crisis, was to mix teaching mediated by technological resources with classroom teaching, the so-called hybrid teaching.

This model, which was already used by many schools even before the pandemic, became an option for education departments and private educational institutions all over the country after the critical period of the pandemic, when movements began to relax the social distancing measures adopted by mayors and governors throughout Brazil. This teaching methodology turned out to be an opportunity for teachers to further incorporate digital technologies as allies in the teaching-learning process.

"Hybrid means mixed, blended, blended. Education has always been blended, hybrid, always combined various spaces, times, activities, methodologies, audiences" (BACICH; MORAN, 2015, p. 45). In this same perspective, Horn and Staker (2015 apud GALVÃO; FERNANDES; GADELHA, 2016, p. 142) consider that "hybrid education is any
formal educational program in which a student learns, at least in part, through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace."

"Talking about hybrid education means starting from the assumption that there is no single way to learn and, consequently, no single way to teach. There are different ways of learning and teaching" (BACICH; MORAN, 2015, p. 45). Seeking multiple alternatives that can streamline and boost the teaching process should be a constant task for teachers. The hybrid model has this possibility of combining the teaching traditionally practiced in schools with the numerous resources of digital technologies available today. For this to happen:

Os alunos e professores precisam familiarizar-se com as tecnologias existentes e desenvolver a capacidade de manipular, interagir e produzir conteúdo dentro do ambiente virtual para que as atividades interativas on line tenham sucesso. Temos consciência de que, embora, muitos alunos tenham familiaridade com as novas tecnologias, é preciso que eles sintam a necessidade de utilizá-las voltada para os ambiente educacional. Os professores, por sua vez, precisam estar atentos ao uso das novas tecnologias, se apropriarem destas ferramentas buscando novas formas de lidar com os conteúdos de suas disciplinas a fim de que estejam mais próximos da realidade de uma geração que já nasceu utilizando as novas tecnologias e de outra bastante resistente ao uso delas (CASTRO et al, 2015. p. 48).

The use of digital platforms, in addition to electronic equipment can be an attraction for students. "Also worth mentioning is the fact that the hybrid teaching method enhances the positive specificities of those involved, and thus, the student will be more motivated to be active in his individual learning process" (SILVA, 2017, p. 152). It is important to highlight that the "[...] coexistence in the multimodal hybrid spaces of hyperconnection causes changes in the ways of interacting, representing thought, expressing emotions, producing and sharing information and knowledge, [...]" (VALENTE; ALMEIDA; GERALDINI, 2017, apud RIOS; BRANCO; HABOWSKI, 2019, p. 179).

According to Schiehl, Kemczinski, and Gasparini (2017, p. 8), the

"[...] metodologias de ensino híbrido propõem que o ensino-aprendizagem seja em parte por meio de os ambientes virtuais, tais como: plataformas, sistemas e
In this pandemic period, at a time when governments had already relaxed social isolation, renouncing more radical measures of social distancing, the hybrid teaching methodology appeared as a viable alternative.

4 Final considerations

Many teachers complain that students are not interested in their studies. This is an indication that the educational model practiced in schools no longer meets the expectations of the students. In view of this, it is necessary to insert new resources and methodologies that modify the teaching process, so that the students feel encouraged to actively participate in the process.

The insertion of new technological resources, without abandoning the successful practices already consolidated during a long time of work, opens new possibilities, new perspectives for teaching. Thus, the student can feel more motivated and, therefore, more active in the process that involves teaching and learning.

However, we have to argue that non-face-to-face teaching modalities should not be implemented in a generalized way, nor should they replace face-to-face teaching. We believe, however, that in this moment of social isolation, this was a possibility to minimize the educational impacts/damages caused by the total suspension of face-to-face teaching. The resources of digital technologies can and should be part of the teaching-learning process, regardless of the pandemic.

Outside the pandemic, distance learning, together with digital technology resources, are important strategies to provide study opportunities for students who, for some reason, are unable to attend a face-to-face course, or in specific contexts where it is not possible to implement a face-to-face course.

Having made this observation, we end by emphasizing the unquestionable need for the physical presence of students and teachers in the school environment. The figure
of the teacher, in the classroom, is indispensable for the success of the students. After all, we must emphasize that:

O professor não é descartável, nem substituível, pois, quando bem formado, ele detém um saber que alia conhecimento e conteúdos à didática e às condições de aprendizagem para segmentos diferenciados. Educação para se ser humano se faz em relações humanas profícuas (GATTI, 2016, p. 164).

References


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