Chapter 8

The Challenging Scenario of Brazilian Education in COVID-19 and Post-COVID-19 Times:
Adaptive Transitional Online Learning and Teaching to Suit Mandatory Social Distancing

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the Brazilian education system has been able to adapt to respond to new teaching demands because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Brazil had to offer quick responses to the epidemic times, with the restriction of many activities of social contact, to avoid the risks of infection and morbidity. During the global pandemic period, online education brought new meanings to knowledge mediation, as well as ways to provide didactic-pedagogical content, evaluation methods, and ways to encourage permanent learning. The new educational normal has forced Brazilian educational institutions to think of new resilient pedagogical models to preserve health and life. However, the drastic educational solutions showed the levels of socioeconomic inequalities regarding access to quality education. Social disparities in the Brazilian educational field revealed the world of the digitally included and excluded. Thus, some aspects of improvised online educational strategies will be analyzed in terms of pandemic and post-pandemic challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Education in general had to undergo rapid changes in relation to daily human-social interaction. Many

discussions have awakened the educational field to the emergency of pedagogical approaches based on digital high information and communication digital technologies. Undoubtedly, technologies bring many advantages to the online teaching modality.

Among them, we can point out: lower costs with personnel and physical infrastructure, greater consistency in the student-centered learning experience, the appreciation of different cognitive styles, less time expenditure on staff training, greater flexibility in meeting educational demands, greater possibility of retaining student´s learning, as well as the employment of a greater diversity of didactic-pedagogical resources, among other meaningful elements.

Another crucial point related to this aspect refers to the share of professional responsibilities and academic backgrounds in relation to teaching content production (didactic authorship), teaching practice (teaching attitudes and abilities) and complementary pedagogical guidance via distance tutoring process.

In addition, online education also brings new fundamental questions for the meaning of mediation of knowledge, in its different characteristics and daily social practices, mainly in the improvement of high-qualified pedagogical actors in order to build symbolic constructions of knowledge.

Other issues should also be considered as also relevant, such as, for example, the pedagogical strategies for presenting the teaching content, the strategies for engaging students, the modes of systematic assessment of learning, as well as the ways of delivering content services and didactic-pedagogical guidance.

The so-called New Normal (resilient behavior during the covid-19 period and after what comes) is forcing human beings to rethink various forms of social behavior that ensure the health and survival of humankind all over the world.

In addition, the New Educational Normal highlights the assumptions of a new digital turn for the development of online distance education, with the inevitable acceleration of hybrid model of education, the valorization of gamification and playfulness processes as pedagogical approaches, as well as the use of active teaching pedagogies, and the concept of flipped classrooms.

However, in terms of Brazilian context, many issues are still challenging and worrying in the current educational scenario. In Brazil, public schools had quickly to implement their online teaching strategies, with poor technology resources and teachers' training.

Nevertheless, many Brazilian students enrolled in public schools do not have effectively computers, cell phones, printers, or high-speed broadband, which means that they are being excluded or neglected by the educational system as a whole during the coronavirus pandemic period, which can be characterized as a kind of digital ethnocentrism or digital apartheid.

Thus, the mandatory need for social isolation has served to demonstrate the level of social inequality in the Brazilian educational environment. In addition, students' parents had to start playing the role of several teachers at the same time, as well as the distance tutor in the distance learning process. As if that was not enough, in Brazil there is a high rate of semi-illiteracy and functional illiteracy, profoundly reproduced among many parents of the students who study in the public schools.

There are, therefore, two worlds in constant conflict, which show their differences with greater transparency at coronavirus period: the world of digitally included people and the world of digitally excluded ones, as well as the world of the educationally included people and the world of educationally excluded ones. Nonetheless, other relevant issues overlap with these ones to be seriously faced, for instance, as the educational training needs in a globalized, multicultural and interconnected emergent knowledge society. In this way, students and teachers should urgently receive adequate technical training, which concern not only aspects of digital literacy and fluency.

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