

## TEACHING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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**ABSTRACT.** This study aimed to understand the transformations caused by the advent of Distance Education (EAD) in the Brazilian educational context, particularly in teaching practices. For this, the historical-theoretical reference describes the emergence of EAD learning mode in five different stages to the present, as well as a conceptual characterization of this educational practice. This was a qualitative research with semi-structured interviews with three subjects, teachers who worked in face-to-face and distance education. Data analysis was performed on the testimonies of the teachers' professional history, comparing the practices of face-to-face and non-face-to-face teaching, and highlighting the problems, the limits and the perspectives of EAD. As a partial conclusion, we point to the risk of higher education in the distance learning modality losing fundamental characteristics of this educational stage: strict and systematic monitoring of the student, diversity of perspectives in the content taught, critical thinking and dialogue about the conditions of life in society.

**Keywords:** Distance education; teaching work; professional practice.

## A DOCÊNCIA NA EDUCAÇÃO A DISTÂNCIA: UMA ANÁLISE CRÍTICA DA PRÁTICA PROFISSIONAL

**RESUMO.** O estudo ora proposto tem por objetivo compreender as transformações provocadas pelo advento da Educação a Distância (EaD) no contexto educacional brasileiro, particularmente nas práticas da docência. Para isso, o referencial histórico-teórico descreve o surgimento da modalidade da EaD em cinco diferentes fases até a atualidade, bem como uma caracterização conceitual dessa prática educacional. Metodologicamente, optou-se pela pesquisa qualitativa, com a realização de entrevistas semiestruturadas com três sujeitos, professores que atuaram no ensino presencial e a distância. A análise dos dados foi realizada sobre os depoimentos do histórico profissional dos docentes, comparando as práticas do ensino presencial e o não presencial, e evidenciando as problemáticas, os limites e as perspectivas da EaD. Como conclusão parcial, foi assinalado o risco de uma formação superior na modalidade da EaD perder características fundamentais dessa etapa educacional: acompanhamento rigoroso e sistemático do estudante, diversidade de perspectivas no conteúdo ministrado, pensamento crítico e dialogado sobre as condições da vida em sociedade.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação a distância; trabalho docente; prática profissional.

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## ENSEÑANZA EN EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA: UN ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO DE LA PRÁCTICA PROFESIONAL

**RESUMEN.** El estudio propuesto tiene como objetivo comprender las transformaciones provocadas por el advenimiento de la educación a distancia (EAD) en el contexto educacional brasileño, particularmente en las prácticas pedagógicas. Para ello, la referencia histórica-teórica describe la aparición del modo de aprendizaje en cinco diferentes etapas hasta la actualidad, así como una caracterización conceptual de esta práctica educativa. Metodológicamente, la investigación cualitativa con entrevistas semiestructuradas con tres sujetos, profesores que trabajaron en modo presencial y en la educación a distancia. Análisis de los datos fue realizado en la historia profesional de testimonios de docentes, comparando las prácticas de aula educación y falta de asistencia y destacar los problemas, los límites y las perspectivas de la EAD. Como conclusión parcial, señaló el riesgo de una educación más alta en el modo de aprendizaje pierden características fundamentales de esta etapa: estricto control y educación sistemática del estudiante, diversidad de perspectivas sobre el contenido, crítica pensado y hablado acerca de las condiciones de vida en la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** Educación a distancia; labor del docente; práctica profesional.

### Introduction

Currently, it is possible to observe the growth of Distance Education (EAD) in Brazil in terms of the number of students and geographic coverage. According to data from the Ministry of Education (Referenciais de qualidade para educação superior a distância, 2007), the number of newcomers varied positively in both the face-to-face and distance learning modality, but with a significant increase in the latter. Several studies (Slomski, Araujo, Camargo, & Weffort, 2016; Tonelli, Medeiros, & Almeida, 2015; Luz & Ferreira Neto, 2016) discuss the pedagogical process involved in distance education, showing the relevance and currentness of the investigation of media-pedagogical processes. These are studies that assess the quality of teaching and interaction in the non-presential modality.

França, Matta e Alves (2012) analyzed Brazilian publications linked to the EAD topic in the field of psychology between 1999 and 2009. The research demonstrates that psychology addressed themes related to “[...] models of learning theories, cognita, behavioral and socio-constructivist development” (França et al., 2012, p. 7). Publications were categorized in the following axes: educational technologies with psychological foundations, affection, role of the tutor/teacher, psychological theories, interactivity, dropout, experience reports, evaluation of training, development and the distance education. Research in the educational technology axis highlight themes that provide the development of the teaching and learning process; on the axis of affection, they examine the relationships established in online forums and discussion chats. Regarding the role of the teacher and tutor, the related issues refer to the knowledge and skills of these professionals to favor student learning. Psychological theories, on the other hand, discuss the contributions of Piaget and Vygotsky to educational processes. With respect to interactivity, studies relate interactions between tutor and student. There are study themes related to the dropout of students in distance learning and Organizational

Psychology discussing the training and development of actors involved in the distance education process (França et al., 2012).

In this context, this study sought to understand the transformations caused by the advent of Distance Education (EAD) in the Brazilian educational context, particularly in teaching practices. This research is organized in the following sections: characterization and historical context, which includes the conceptualization, description and historical development of EAD; the methodological path of data collection, where the adopted procedures are exposed and discussed; then follows the presentation and analysis of data focusing on the history and professional connection of teachers with EAD.

At the end of the study, it was possible to systematize the emerging issues in this type of teaching, highlighting the limits arising from the educational practice of EAD, the submission of this educational strategy to the market, as well as the implications in the context of the relationship between teachers and students.

### **Distance Education: characterization and historical context**

EAD is understood as an educational modality in which didactics and pedagogical mediation occur through information and communication technology, having as characteristics the use of online platforms and virtual resources. In the EAD modality, the teacher is presented as a mediator of the learning process. These professionals face a new reality in their work, in which the student is no longer present, but connected through information and communication technologies. On the other hand, if we think about presential education today, the student, during a class, can also be connected to the world network, adding or questioning the content taught. Thus, distance education becomes a new reality at the same time that face-to-face education also undergoes transformations resulting from the computerization of society.

It is a teaching strategy through which a teacher can teach the same subject to an unlimited number of students with the interaction mediated by technologies and teaching platforms, not limited to a physical space and can be made available through access to the world wide web, that is, the internet (Tonelli et al., 2015). On the other hand, in a face-to-face classroom, we experience a limited capacity in the number of students, as it is a closed environment.

Concomitantly, a new actor is inserted in the teaching and learning processes: the electronic tutor. This professional plays an important role in the learning process, as they are responsible for the pedagogical mediation between the student and the teacher (Lapa & Pretto, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the functions and differentiation of these two professionals who make up EAD: tutor and teacher. The teacher is responsible for teaching classes using information or communication technologies. These are online classes, or web classes, whether they are broadcast live or recorded. On the other hand, the electronic tutor accompanies the student's learning process through the use of technological resources, such as the virtual learning platform. Thus, we see a restructuring in the role of the teacher in distance education. And with that, the teacher:

[...] takes the risk of looking at the new, in an education mediated and dependent on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), but has as a reference and practice the reality of face-to-face teaching, in which they are relatively at ease, because it has parameters and history therein. References of it were built from its experience as a student, later, in teacher training courses

and, mainly, in teaching practice in the school context. It is with this background that they are challenged to look at the new (Lapa & Pretto, 2010, p. 82).

The construction of knowledge about any topic has as an essential step its inscription in a historical context. In the case of distance education, this step also implies naming its precursors, which have different forms, and following their transformation to current configurations. The definitions for EAD present some conceptual variations, maintaining the axis of teacher-student mediation being carried out by the intense use of information and communication technologies, with or without using face-to-face meetings. For Moore and Kearsley (2008, p. 1):

The basic idea of distance education is very simple: students and teachers are in different places during all or most of the time they learn and teach. Being in different places, they depend on some type of ccc and provide them with a means to interact.

Looking back on history, Moore and Kearsley (2008) describe five generations of distance-oriented studies. For the authors, EAD began in 1728 when the newspaper Boston Gazette published an advertisement for tutoring by correspondence (Moore & Kearsley, 2008). It is considered the first record of the distance teaching and learning process, supported by the post office structure already consolidated. Throughout the 16th century, we can observe that teaching maintained the use of correspondence. Therefore, with the development of the postal service in different parts of the world, we see the advent of distance education:

Beginning in the early 1880s, people who wished to study at home or at work could, for the first time, obtain instruction from a distance teacher. This was due to the invention of a new technology – cheap and reliable postal services, resulting in large part from the expansion of rail networks (Moore & Kearsley, 2008, p. 25).

The second generation of EAD, in the 20th century, is characterized by the use of radio and television. In 1928, the BBC channel turned to the radio to provide courses for adult education (Nunes, 2009). However, radio as a technology for EAD was short-lived due to lack of interest from teachers, in addition to what “[...] commercial broadcasters wanted the courses as a means to get advertisements” (Moore & Kearsley, 2008, p. 32). Consequently, in the mid-1960s, with the development and expansion of television, distance education advanced. With the initial purpose of training the workforce, in 1984, in California, the state university transmitted computer courses for employees of the Hewlett-Packard company. These courses aimed at adults and broadcast on television are called telecourses and have also gained importance in the Brazilian context (Moore & Kearsley, 2008).

In the third generation, the consolidation of teaching through the television system favors the beginning of Open Universities. As a result, “[...] the British government established a committee to plan a revolutionary new educational institution. In the beginning, the idea was simply to use radio and television to allow access to higher education for the adult population” (Moore & Kearsley, 2008, p. 36). Thus, using the EAD method, Open Universities courses were available to anyone wishing to attend higher education with the intention of studying at home. In the United Kingdom, the Open University was created and the base used by it was the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). After a few years, the Open University and the BBC became partners. The Open University of England is considered a reference in studies and in the innovation of distance education until today, as follows:

With more than 2 million graduates since 1972 and more than 200,000 students taking the courses every year, a staff of 2,800 full-time employees and a team of more than 5,000 part-time advisors and advisors, with 13 regional learning centers and 330 locations in Britain and abroad, the UA is one of the most successful examples of a comprehensive systemic approach to distance education (Moore & Kearsley, 2008, p. 55).

The fourth generation began in the United States with the use of teleconferencing. The beginning of this generation was marked by the use of audio-conferencing in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, the communication process between students and teachers was modified, as what was previously carried out by correspondence later became video transmission. Through a telephone, the student was able to respond in real time to the teacher. It was during this same period that large corporations used distance learning for corporate training, such as IBM and Kodak (Moore & Kearsley, 2008).

The fifth and current generation comes from the advent of the internet, which makes it possible to broadcast classes over the world network. This last generation will be systematically addressed in sequence, when we analyze EAD in the Brazilian higher education.

So far, we have described vocational and secondary education as cases of continuing education. And in the Brazilian higher education? In the context of universities, in 1979 the University of Brasília (UnB) began offering extension programs translated from the Open University (Saraiva, 2008). In 1992, the Open University of Brasília was founded and, in 1998, the Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT) presented the first distance university program, a Degree in Basic Education.

In 1996, the national government established Law 9394, Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), in which it determined that teachers must have higher education, in addition to the need for continuous and permanent training for professional practice. This was the starting point for the expansion of distance learning, since, in this LDB, training with the distance model was planned. In 2005, the Open University of Brazil was implemented, which aims to meet this demand for teacher education (Lapa & Pretto, 2010).

Thus, the great milestone in the beginning of EAD in higher education occurred in 2005 with the regulation of this type of education through Decree 5.622, of December 19th. At this point, the characterization and definition of distance education in Brazil is elaborated, as described in Art. 1:

For the purposes of this Decree, distance education is characterized as an educational modality in which didactic-pedagogical mediation in teaching and learning processes occurs with the use of information and communication means and technologies, with students and teachers developing educational activities in different places or times (Decreto nº 5.622, 2005).

It is clear that the decree defines the teaching and learning process through the use of information technologies. And at that moment, we noticed the agreement of the initial definitions of EAD regarding the separation of time and space in the relationship established between the student and the teacher. This decree enables the establishment of the Open University of Brazil (UAB), in partnership with the MEC, which aimed to offer distance higher education courses and programs. UAB is an educational with an articulated network between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and face-to-face support centers located in municipalities. In this way, the UAB does not have an institutional headquarters, constituting a system that integrates a tripartite partnership that encompasses the Federal Government,

Universities and municipalities. UAB does not follow the traditional patterns and hierarchical organization of higher education institutions structured with deans, professors, headquarters or administrative technicians. In this scenario, the MEC is responsible for regulating the UAB system, while the HEIs offer professors, administrators, secretaries, that is, pedagogical-operational support, while the Federal Government introduces regulations and assessments. The third sector, participating in the system, is composed of the states and municipalities responsible for the physical structure: the so-called face-to-face support centers. The structure developed by UAB works until today, even though it is questioned about the effectiveness of its social inclusion program offered by EAD (Pimenta, Rosso, & Sousa, 2019).

Education, in the context of distance learning, gains flexible contours, meeting the demand of the labor market, that is, the courses are designed for the need to train qualified labor. In EAD, with the discourse of expansion and availability of education, the student becomes responsible for their own educational formation, that is, they start to be considered an active subject in the process. Belloni (2002, p. 15) says:

[...] in the same way that in the work processes the individual would be held responsible for their success or failure to adapt to the new rules of work and technology, for being or not among the minority of privileged workers with jobs, also in the educational field, the individual would be responsible for carrying out their own training, à la carte, according to a wide menu offered by a group of institutions that produce and distribute courses and materials.

Distance education has adopted since its inception the configuration of a system that supports the massive provision of services, even though it intends to maintain quality (Belloni, 2002). To achieve this goal, it makes use of new technologies, articulated to enable the use of electronic means in the relationship with students. We are referring to printers, post offices, telephones, television and the internet. Thus, we started from correspondence education to start the educational process through television and, later, the internet. It is an educational process reaching different territories and expanding its target audience. Also, according to Belloni (2002, p. 120):

In the current context of capitalism, especially with the undisputed success of media systems with a worldwide vocation (television and internet), the educational field appears as an extremely promising new market share, in which technical advances in telecommunications allow for a global expansion and high rates of return for transnational private investments.

Therefore, it is worth questioning how this system is consolidated and what are the changes caused in the teaching work in this scenario. More specifically, we analyze what were the acquisitions for teaching practice arising from the shift to EAD, also focusing on possible losses suffered in relation to the previous model, based on the teachers' discourse. We placed as a strategic issue the understanding of the way in which higher education professors experienced the shift to this new model.

## Methodological path

The entry into Brazilian society of the EAD modality provoked profound changes in the main social roles present in the educational context. It is worth highlighting the role of the professor who, submitted to the division and specialization of work, is faced with the challenge of reinventing their professional practice, experiencing a series of new situations and modifying the subjectivation processes related to professional practice.

For such apprehension, the choice of method was made through qualitative research that seeks to understand the subject's relationship with their context. Social determinations and context are data subjected to analysis; therefore, we seek to understand the relationships and dynamics of the professor in the context of EAD. As exposed by Minayo and Sanches (1993, p. 243):

It is in the field of subjectivity and symbolism that the qualitative approach is asserted. The understanding of human relationships and activities with the meanings that animate them is radically different from the grouping of phenomena under generic concepts and/or categories given by observations and experiments and by the discovery of laws that would order the social.

Since the configuration of the teacher's work in the transition from classroom teaching to distance education has undergone variations in quality, qualitative research will provide the study of these variations. As a strategy for the research, we adopted the case study through semi-structured interviews. These were carried out at a place and date defined by the participants after their approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee, opinion 2.730.173.

The unit of analysis consisted of three participants selected based on the following criteria: having at least one year of experience in face-to-face teaching and one year in distance education. Such criteria allowed to go through the subjects' experience in the transition from face-to-face teaching to distance learning. The participants, hereinafter referred to as Emília, Paulo and Rosa, had their names changed in order to avoid their identification.

Data were compared between the two experiences, based on the theoretical framework Social Psychology in its interface with the work transformations that critically address distance education, such as the studies by Mansano (2009), Belloni (2002), Silva (2015), Benini, Fernandes and Araújo (2015) as well as Tonelli et al. (2015). Subsidies from this theoretical field aimed at the educational institution and its present problems were used, in order to comparatively evaluate the two models.

### **Presentation and analysis of data: professional history**

In the EAD, the operating structure is different from that found in the face-to-face education system. In the latter, professors and students are in the same physical space and at the same time, whereas in distance education, professors and students are physically separated, being only connected by the teaching platform, but not always at the same time. As Moore and Kearley (2008, p. 2) consider:

Distance education is planned learning that normally takes place in a place other than the teaching location, requiring special course design and instructional techniques, communication through various technologies, and special organizational and administrative arrangements.

In order to understand the professional relationship of the interviewees with distance learning, we started with the analysis of the details on the professional history and with the differences that the interviewees point out between face-to-face teaching and distance education. From there, it will be possible to identify the difficulties of teaching work in both models.

At this point in the data analysis, we detail the difficulties and satisfactions reported by professors at work in face-to-face teaching, the beginning of work in distance learning and the impact of this format on the work process, including difficulties and the differentiation

of teaching models in the structure of the teaching work. The classroom experience is considered as an exchange with the professor in the teaching and learning process. This exchange is possible through the permanence of subjects in the same physical space and at the same time. For Paulo, satisfaction in face-to-face teaching is:

The relationship with the student, the interaction with the student. The fact that you have the student there in the classroom. This is satisfying. What for others is a burden. But I like the student, I like being close, I like their presence. That is the satisfying part, yes, the recognition is greater. You see in the student's face the satisfaction or not. Some who are satisfied, good, those who are not, we look for the reason to try, to improve class or anything like that (Paulo, participant, 2019).

The participant also emphasizes that satisfaction is in the interaction with the student. This interaction, for professors, is seen as a possibility to change and improve the teaching work. Regarding face-to-face teaching, the possibility of modifying the progress of the course according to the performance of the class is reported. Participants were asked about the difficulties that face-to-face teaching has. Below are the reports:

So, I realized that nowadays, with all these changes... I come from a well-programmed formation; not that it's not today. However, I see the younger professors, I have some colleagues in the classroom, who I see they don't have, you know... They don't have that concern with the construction of the student's knowledge. I don't know if it's because the institution is private. And they think... I think I needed to be a little more demanding. I think the technology is there and we have to keep up with all of this, but I think there still have to be criteria, rules: it is present, it is present and it gains presence and if it isn't, it won't win (Rosa, participant, 2018).

We can observe that the disciplinary society still presents its signs in face-to-face teaching. The professor was seen as an authority figure before the students. The relationship established was hierarchical, confined to the physical space of the classroom, delimited by the length of the course, aimed at producing "[...] disciplined workforce inserted in the production system" (Mansano, 2009, p. 31). When this authority is not fully exercised, the report demonstrates the teacher's frustration with non-compliance with the rules. For Emília, the difficulties of the classroom are presented in a similar way, as we can see below: "Difficulties... Also, most of it was with discipline, with... Their indiscipline... In the beginning, the classes were still a little older, of age. Then, the years went by and the age went down" (Emília, participant, 2018). The participant attributes the indiscipline of her students to the young age. There is some dissatisfaction with the lack of authority of the professor in front of a classroom in the face-to-face model.

In Paulo's account, the absence of authority is also highlighted, however, he adds other factors to be analyzed, as can be seen below:

Well, today the concept of student has changed a lot. The concept of... The respect from the student, the commitment of the student... Today they do everything to move up grade. So, failing a student today is more complicated. Then you take a totally undisciplined student and that power we had there in the beginning, for example, leaving the classroom, today we no longer have it. Everything reaches the ombudsman office, everything reaches Facebook, the group is in a WhatsApp group... Everything. There, there are always those three truths: mine... My truth, your truth and the truth. The guy posts on Facebook, for example, anything they want. And that goes viral in such a way... And that makes us reticent. And another thing, you can't say anything else inside the room that turns into a conflict... No political ideology, nothing, nothing. A joke like games that used to be silly things, like... It takes on frightening proportions. So, it limits our work. And then the student brings their own ideological biases. Some addictions that, if you say something against it, the attack is imminent, so it's imperative. And the company itself too, I know, which is structural, the company itself, it doesn't want conflict. So, today, you prefer to be... You choose to be more flexible, to be... I would say, even more careless. That's the



truth. You lower the level of evidence to not generate this noise, not to generate this conflict. This is the biggest difficulty today within the classroom (Paulo, participant, 2019).

The professor no longer works in a disciplinary society only. It is possible to verify the presence of traces of the society of control, in which “[...] through the emergence and expansion of information networks, we are becoming agents of unlimited surveillance and immediate control over one another” (Mansano, 2009, p. 47). At this point, professors are now controlled by the possibility of what may happen due to the dissemination of videos on social networks.

As we have seen, it was from 1980 onwards that education underwent a change in focus from the professor’s main actor to the student’s figure (Belloni, 2002; Silva, 2015). This focus changes the relationship of teaching work when we consider that the report refers to a private university. The student as a consumer of an educational service does not want difficulties in consuming the product for which they are paying, and the company seems to ask the professor to facilitate this consumption. Participants were asked about their first impressions when they went to work as professors at EAD. See the reports below:

So, for me it was very nice that I was able to use a lot of material that I had, bringing it here. So that’s how I enjoyed it a lot. And it’s that thing I always say: I go into the studio and you have no idea how many people, I look at that camera and I just always ask to be lit and for me to be clear (Rosa, participant, 2018).

The first impression, recurrent in EAD, is the result of contact with the non-presential and results from the professor not knowing how many students are actually attending classes. See Emilia, in the stretch below:

Because first you didn’t have some students, right... You didn’t have interaction, just with a camera there and with the camera, the guy who was there. I even asked him to put a cap on camera on the first day, to get the feel, the impression that someone was watching me. That was the first sensation, like... But the first time I almost gave up... Which is very different. You don’t have the quick answer, in terms of knowledge. To have feedback on what you taught... So... That... It was like that... A curiosity, an opportunity... The first class was very bad. But when I started to understand, I thought it was good. Today, I don’t feel like going back to face-to-face. Would not return. If I have the opportunity, I will not come back (Emília, participant, 2018).

The estrangement reported by the interviewee highlights the difference between the two educational models. A difference that, at first, can hardly be supported, leading her to change her new work situation, putting an element of the previous situation in it (the cap used by students) as a strategy for insertion in this new reality. The absence of students, in a professional practice that is characterized as interpersonal, has subjective implications, causing the reconfiguration of the work accompanied by a new valuation. The first impression, given the change, was negative, but the transformation inherent in the subjectivation processes allows the new format not only to be assimilated but also to be positively valued, as long as a transition period is experienced in which she reinvents herself as a worker. Emilia, today claims that she would not return to the face-to-face system. For her, being a distance learning professor is satisfactory.

On the subject of first impressions of EAD, Paulo says: “Really? I arrived very excited. I thought the studio thing was delicious... The fact that I didn’t have to proofread. But, it’s just that I didn’t know the whole reality. So, today, the studio is much more challenging than the classroom itself” (Paulo, participant, 2019). As we can see, in EAD, the professor’s

functions were modified. Participants were asked about the difficulties in the distance education model. Look at the reports below:

I think I never know, I'm not sure if I'm making myself understood by all students because of the diversity of audiences we have. So, this is a difficulty, despite the fact that we have reports, but... It's very different. You're looking at the person and talking to the person and you get that answer through reports. So, I think that, like, I wanted to have a... An instrument that would tell me exactly... But this instrument exists. But let's say that it does not cover all students, it does not cover all courses (Emília, participant, 2018).

She believes that through an instrument that included all students, she would get feedback from students. The absence of contact with the diversity of students seems uncomfortable for her, but, at the same time, she is adapted to the EAD model when she states that the instrument meets at least partially her demand.

Comparatively, face-to-face teaching and distance education change the teaching performance. Below the reports on this differentiation:

Here I think it's heavier. Because then, what happens in person? If you use the didactic part, the strategies for you to work on have very nice content. There are techniques that you do that people participate in. Here you can't, here you don't have this option. Here the point is for you to be as clear as possible. Be prepared to be able to explain, to exemplify, to seek. And what you're going to use is your speech. They will have the video right there and some questions right away. But, they will have your explanations. In person it is different. In person, you do a series of activities. You suddenly ask the student to bring something. You raise a question... You're going to open a subject and you do a diagnostic evaluation. So, in person you have a series of variables. And outside, you can tell if people are aware or not. If it's not... If you're thinking about life, if you're talking, they are saying: Wow, this woman is spacing out, where is she? Even because the body speaks. (Rose, participant, 2018).

In the speech of this participant, it is clear that the relational dimension of face-to-face teaching is a strategic part of the educational process, and its suppression or even reduction can be considered a loss in this context. The relationships established between the members of the classroom support the acquisition of knowledge. In particular, the dialogues that take place there, within the scope of these relationships, have the potential to considerably enrich the content that the student appropriates. In the words of Tonelli et al. (2015, p. 155):

Dialogicity plays a key role in the teaching-learning process. It can be said that it is the genesis of the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, when the student develops affection and consideration for colleagues and professors, more stable interpersonal relationships are formed, which favors cognitive expansion and the need to socialize acquired knowledge.

The interviewee's record also focuses on another strategic dimension of teaching practice: the plurality of resources to be used in the classroom and the professor's autonomy to choose to use each one, according to a demand of the moment. In this sense, it is possible to consider that the shift to distance education entails an impoverishment of teaching, forcing the professor to renounce the prerogative of continuously evaluating the learning process in order to modify their own performance, in order to use the acquisition of knowledge. In fact, it is a loss of autonomy (Benini et al., 2015). EAD, with its physical separation, makes it impossible for professors to use methods that facilitate the student's teaching and learning process. The professor's performance consists exclusively of an expository class which, however, was expropriated from the relationship that presupposes it. Emília reports:

When we talk about EAD, at least what I experienced, the scale is very large. So, for me, this contact is really needed. And to really know what they are thinking about my class... And we can't have interaction... There's a little, there's a part, you know? What bothers me is that we don't have the whole, and we have a part. When you are in the classroom you are looking at 30, 50 or 100 students. In EAD they will complain. But, it won't be at that time. You don't know exactly at what point you left a flaw. So, this is the comparison I feel like... I don't know if I'm making myself understood in EAD. This is the biggest difficulty... Make me understand for diversity. It's like I said, despite the fact that we have instruments to assess this, I don't feel the completeness of it as in the presence: you're there, you'll socialize, see the person... I had high scores and, suddenly, they fell. There was a problem and you identify... Coexisting here... I think it's also very different (Emília, participant, 2018).

The exchange process between professor and student in face-to-face education multiplies and these exchanges are not preserved in non-face-to-face education. In the subject's speech, we can see a loss in the interaction process between professor and students. This portion that is lost becomes evident when we consider that there is non-verbal communication in the classroom. As reported, in distance education, if the student yawns with sleep, the teacher will not know. The limits of the EAD modality evidenced in the speeches transcribed above definitely do not authorize a quick and unconditional adhesion to this new educational context. On the contrary, "[...] they call for an analysis of the work activity, not only due to changes in the activities prescribed in the profession, but especially in the clashes produced in the 'real activity' of work" (Silva, Falcão, Torres, & Caraballo, 2017, p. 685, authors' emphasis).

It is noteworthy that any limitations of EAD are transformed into demands addressed to professors of this modality, demands that are always placed under the imperative mode. In such a way that the distance learning professor must "[...] be able to meet the demands and challenges imposed by the world of work and by the knowledge and information society" (Slomski et al., , 2016, p. 142). The limitations and eventual losses that the shift to distance learning brings with it do not prevent this educational modality from winning the preference of professionals who have tried both models. See how this happens for Paulo:

So, the material today... The content is the same, the material is the same... And the inflexibility, it equals. And then I would still prefer it here. I would prefer EAD because I don't have attacks. So there, I said anything: I said a blue car and the student likes the red car, they attack me and I have to take nonsense. Most of the time so as not to create those conflicts I mentioned at the beginning... I don't have that here. The student, for example, they do not reach me, will reach the tutor at most. So, this filter makes me more comfortable. This filter makes me comfortable (Paulo, participant, 2019).

For the participant, the lack of contact with the student makes EAD a more comfortable teaching modality. The relationship with the student mediated by the look and the reformulation operated by the tutor make the teaching practice more satisfactory. The reports show that the difficulties encountered in face-to-face teaching are expressed as the indiscipline of students. Another point discussed is the discomfort of professors in favoring the approval of students to avoid conflicts. Respondents present classroom teaching as a form of work in which the professor has, through interaction, an immediate response about the quality of their work. But what about EAD students? They appear as being distant and as a diverse audience.

## Final Considerations

EAD represents a possibility of controlled education in its content and relationships. It creates the conditions to exercise control over what is being discussed and taught in higher education to a greater degree than in face-to-face education. Its expansion, rooted in economic and business discourse, has political consequences. This format is a teaching modality that allows the separation of bodies. Students do not relate to their fellow students. The system mediated by information technologies isolates students from debates in the classroom, makes it impossible to live together on campuses and prevents them from experiencing a more direct relationship with professors and other students.

In the case of professors, it was noted, through the statements, that these professionals do not have access to the students' life stories and do not know their socioeconomic context. Along with this, the communication carried out between the professor and the student is crossed by tutoring and by the teaching platform characterized by information technologies. The professor already presents the discipline internalized and, in addition to this, we verify that visibility, made possible by communication technologies, is present as a power exercised over bodies, in the form of control. The possibility of someone checking or even censoring the point of view presented by the professor makes the worker a mere reproducer of the subjective components that circulate in the social environment. The teaching platform allows the recording of all communication carried out in this teaching system. This technological component with subjective effects maintains a state of permanent evaluation, commonly used in the society of control as part of personnel management.

The replacement of conviviality by the mediation of the relationship by information technologies produces, in today's society, a docility of bodies. The splitting of bodies prevents subjects from participating in a process of politicization, as there is no chance in this format to get to know each other and debate issues of common interest. In fact, this impedes the development of critical thinking in students and, consequently, inhibits reflection of a political nature.

EAD expanded the inhibition of contact, the end of the relationship between those involved in the educational process, the control over the content format and the concepts taught. Are these points that make us wonder what is the contribution of distance education in today's society? In the society of control, EAD favors capitalism in the provision of standardized labor, offering materials without in-depth content, providing a multitude of students with content formatted and controlled according to capitalistic interests. The same teaching pattern, with the same content multiplied to an infinite number of people. A controlled higher education provided to students without the possibility of questioning the content. EAD impedes educational interaction and represents an obstacle in the relationship and interaction between professors and students, in addition to contact between the students. We are, therefore, facing an educational strategy that isolates and makes bodies docile, opening spaces for future studies aimed at the social, political and affective effects on students.

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Received: July 18, 2019  
Approved: Oct. 16, 2020