From Metapresentiality to Emergency Remote Education: What Will Higher Education Look Like in a Post-Pandemic World?*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to investigate, through discourse analysis, the proposal of metapresence in the Project of the Federal University of Southern Bahia as a possible antecedent of emergency remote education in the face of the new coronavirus pandemic, since it disregards the parameters stipulated by Distance Education in Brazil, but advocates an "intensive" use of digital technologies, reinforcing the centrality in the action of the teacher in the use of these technologies. Two normative documents were analyzed, which mark historical moments of the foundation and of the current moment: The Orientation Plan (2014) and Resolution 15/2020 (2020), connecting the proposals of metapresence and emergency remote teaching, verifying that the pedagogical proposal in screen has been ratifying the use of digital technologies and the control of the teaching work within a liberal model of education.

KEYWORDS

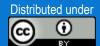Digital technologies. Higher education. Pandemic.

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1

Da Metapresencialidade ao Ensino Remoto Emergencial: Como Será o Ensino Superior num Mundo Pós-Pandemia?

RESUMO

O objetivo deste ensaio é escrutinar, por meio da análise do discurso, a proposta da metapresencialidade no Projeto da Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia como possível antecedente do ensino remoto emergencial frente à pandemia do novo coronavírus, já que este prescinde dos parâmetros estipulados pela Educação à Distância no Brasil, mas defende um uso "intensivo" de tecnologias digitais, reforçando a centralidade na ação da/o professor/a frente ao uso destas tecnologias. Foram analisados dois documentos normativos, que marcam momentos históricos da fundação e do momento atual: o Plano Orientador (2014) e a Resolução 15/2020 (2020), conectando as propostas de metapresencialidade e de ensino remoto emergencial, verificando que a proposta pedagógica em tela vem ratificando o uso das tecnologias digitais e o controle do trabalho docente dentro de um modelo liberal de educação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Tecnologias digitais. Ensino superior. Pandemia.

De la Metapresentialidad a la Educación Remota de Emergencia: ¿Cómo Será la Educación Superior en un Mundo Pospandémico?

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este texto es analizar discursivamente la propuesta de metapresentialidad en el Proyecto de la Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia como posible marcador de la educación remota de emergencia ante la pandemia del nuevo coronavirus, ya que prescinde de los parámetros estipulados por la Educación a Distancia en Brasil, pero defiende un uso "intensivo" de las tecnologías digitales, reforzando la centralidad de la acción del profesor en relación con el uso de estas tecnologías. Se analizaron dos documentos normativos, Plano Orientador (2014) y Resolução 15/2020 (2020), que conectan las propuestas de metapresentialidad y la enseñanza remota de emergencia, verificando que la propuesta pedagógica en pantalla ha ratificado el uso de tecnologías digitales y el control de trabajo docente dentro de un modelo liberal de educación.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Tecnologías digitales. Enseñanza superior. Pandemia.

1 Introduction

Since the beginning of the New Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic in Brazil, the Federal Universities, authorized by Ordinance no. 343/2020 (BRASIL, 2020a), of March 19, 2020, of the Ministry of Education, later revoked by Ordinance no. 544/2020 (BRASIL, 2020b), of June 16, 2020, have been taking different attitudes towards what we call "emergency remote learning", a modality specified for the use of digital technologies for the specific moment of facing the impossibilities of face-to-face learning in their institutions. By mid-June 2020, Federal Universities were in different stages of discussion on the subject, according to the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (ANDIFES, 2020), with some of them having implemented remote teaching only in graduate studies, but none of them in undergraduate education, although all institutions remained with their activities, by remote means, of research and extension.

The "emergency remote teaching" differs from Distance Learning, a teaching model regulated in Brazil since 2005. Distance Learning in Brazil, regulated by Decree No. 5622/2005, which amends Law 9.394/96, the LDB, is defined as:

> Art. 1. For the purposes of this Decree, distance education is characterized as an educational modality in which didactic and 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. (BRAZIL, 2005).

Thus, through this path, a large number of proposals (initially experimental, then consolidated from state regulations) have been developed in order to provide distance education or education mediated by technologies. I do not intend to make a detailed history of DL in Brazil. However, it becomes necessary to register its normatization for the understanding of this specific corpus of analysis of the proposal of metapresentiality, as an unfolding of the use of technologies in education, which underlies a construction of discursive arguments that I will focus on next.

Long before this emergency period, and in parallel with the discussions about technological innovation and the need to save resources in Universities, within the proposal of the New University, there was the proposal of teaching through digital resources that also differed from Distance Learning:

> The metapresentiality proposal is defended as a pedagogical possibility in the Guiding Plan of the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia (UFSB), within the defense of the use of technologies:
> The political-pedagogical project of UFSB is founded on three aspects: first, curricular architecture organized in cycles of formation, with progressive modularity (offering independent certifications, but interdependent by choice, at each cycle); second, four-monthly teaching regime, with optimization of equipment, facilities, personnel and financial resources; lastly, in complement, a combination of pedagogical pluralism and intensive use of digital teaching-learning technologies (ALMEIDA-FILHO et. al., 2014, p. 341).

This proposal is legitimized as the educational project of the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia in a document called Guiding Plan, which aims to guide the implementation of the University, providing theoretical and epistemological guidelines for the pedagogical performance of the new University. Thus, it is possible to point out in the referred document that:

> In attention to the common pedagogical objectives, all UFSB curricular components that do not require face-to-face participation offer the student, fully enlightened as to the responsibility implied in each choice, three methodological options:
> a) Face-to-face learning (classes, seminars, workshops, labs, etc.);
> b) Metapresential learning, voluntary presence in pedagogical practices with face-to-face evaluation and monitoring;
> c) Stepwise learning (Keller Method), with self-programmed and hetero-assessed instruction (BRASIL, 2014, p. 66).

Some research has already been done on the follow-up of the implementation of UFSB (ROMÃO, 2015; TEIXEIRA & LARREA-KILLINGER, 2015; BRITO, 2017; ALMEIDA-FILHO, BENICÁ & COUTINHO, 2017; BARRETO FILHO, 2019; FERREIRA, 2020), which may allow us some breadth of views on the process. The objective of this article is to discursively analyze the proposal of metapresentiality in the Project of the Federal University of Southern Bahia as a possible beacon of emergency remote education in Federal Universities facing the pandemic of the new coronavirus, since it waives the parameters stipulated by Distance Education in Brazil, but advocates an "intensive" use of digital technologies, reinforcing the centrality in the action of the teacher facing the use of these technologies.

2 Theoretical and Methodological Guidelines

The corpus of the analysis proposed in this article is composed of: a) document Orienting Plan of the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia (BRASIL, 2014), and b) Resolution 15/2020.

I consider discourse analysis, from a Foucauldian perspective, as guiding this analytical work. As the author points out:

> I suppose that in every society the production of discourse is at the same time controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose function is to conjure up its powers, to dominate its random occurrence, to evade its heavy and fearsome materiality (FOUCAULT, 2007, p.8-9).

The author dedicates himself, in this work, to what interests us most here: the will to know, which has an effective incidence on which discourses are evidenced and the way they are. Given what the author called the will to know, which effectively influences which discourses are evidenced and the way they are, Foucault (2007) calls attention to the exclusion procedures: 1. through interdict, and refers to discourses made taboo and made invisible, and 2. through distinction and rejection when the discourse of a certain subject is rejected for a supposed lack of rationality. Beyond the institutional inclusion of concepts (metapresentiality, remote learning and its derivations and arguments), it is also of interest for this study how the exclusion procedures in the discourse take place.

In order to disentangle the discursiveness present in the document and in the participations of current managers in the referred Congress, I dedicate myself to contextualizing, through reflections on the New University (LEHER, 2012) and Operational University (CHAUÍ, 2003), as well as giving special attention to critical studies that did not have the participation of current or former managers in the analyses (BRITO, 2017; FERREIRA, 2020), even though there is a contextualization with the other studies previously also mentioned.

Based on this analysis, I compare the current proposals of "emergency remote learning" as a proposal for the return to classes in Federal Universities, highlighting the centrality of the teacher's action in both the metapresentiality proposal and the emergency remote learning. I seek to evidence how the discourses are intertwined within a procedural logic of neo-liberalization and operationalization of Higher Education that the pandemic moment only cooled down, as Barreto and Leher (2008) had already indicated, through individualized accountability and digital control of actions, which delimits the entire current liberal statist society. At this moment, in the Federal Universities, the attempt to implement this emergency model is being shaped, and in the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia lies fertile ground for its development, not only as an emergency model but, from a very close perspective, as an innovative, economical and supposedly inclusive educational proposal.

3 From the New University to the Post-Pandemic World: New Modes of Surveillance and Control

The UFSB project, affiliated to the "New University" proposal, is understood as a proposal that unites the traditional and the innovative in Higher Education:

> Conceived, created and developed in the ambiguity of being, at the same time, traditional and innovative, elitist and emancipatory, effective and affective, only by knowing its objective conditions of existence and the concrete social demands to which it must respond, will UFSB build its own concept and socially referenced academic efficiency (BRASIL, 2014, p. 28).

> In short, the key words of the UFSB pedagogical model are: commitment to qualified knowledge, encounter, choice, autonomy, critical sense, and plurality. It remains to add the methodological and technological aspects. In this project, the use of ICT is articulated to a dialogical pedagogical conception that seeks the autonomy of the cognizing subject in the construction of possible paths, in an expanded learning space, beyond the classroom (BRASIL, 2014, p. 60, my emphasis)

To guarantee the intensive use and connection between the University Units (head offices and interior units, called University Colleges), the classes have, as a methodological possibility, the synchronous transmission of the activities, with participation, via digital technologies (image and sound transmission over the internet from cameras and microphones). The optimization and the intensive use of digital technologies mentioned above are present in this proposal. Let us now deal with two important aspects for the analysis of what this pedagogical project institutionalized for Higher Education: the analysis of this project in the context of educational policies for Higher Education and the dimension of teaching performance put under analysis.

5

As counter-discourses, there are points of clash. In this discourse of optimization, it is necessary to consider the lightening and the precariousness of the teaching work:

> A recent draft government decree (New University Plan for the Restructuring and Expansion of Brazilian Federal Universities, March 2007) spelled out the issue in a very clear way. (...) In the terms of the draft decree, the generic - massified - courses would have to be partially distance learning, making use of the UAB consortium (BARRETO; LEHER, 2008, p. 433).

This type of massification of education, its arrival to the interior of Brazil by digital means, from an operational perspective, places bodies of teachers conditioned to the use of ICTs, removing from these professionals the creative possibility in the teaching-learning process. It is, above all, about what is set as the best operationality, from an economic-managerial point of view. As Marilena Chauí refers to these processes:

> Governed by management contracts, evaluated by productivity indexes, calculated to be flexible, the operational university is structured by strategies and programs of organizational effectiveness and, therefore, by the particularity and instability of means and objectives (CHAUÍ, 2003, p. 7)

Following this logic, Roberto Leher helps us understand that:

> In every text (from the New University Project, my addendum) it is assumed that the market is an agent. When it is not the market, the actors inducing the transformations are non-human, inanimate (the new technologies) or nominalized (the transformation, the change). The most prominent actor is the "new globalized world". There is no human protagonist. From these assumptions the document of the New University concludes that the Brazilian university is out of step with these "transforming agents" (LEHER, 2012, s/p, my emphasis).

The metapresence model suggests operational norms of conduct: rules, itineraries, formations, as in a business organization. There are, present, external agents of the teacher's actions: the market, the ICTs, the world. In the educational process, the educator's role as a creative agent of mediation conditions is not identified, this place of dialogue is silenced. The dialog of the student-bodies is reduced to bodies that relate to their computers and media mediations that follow rules of conduct, through definitions that come from the project and that relate directly to a market perspective, of operationalization, of management, of the flexibilization of work relations, and of teaching-learning processes stuck in virtualized/massified time-spaces.

How to speak, in this scenario of classrooms transmitted to other classrooms, of consciousness, of experimentation, of the possible metapresence (even if in an unstable environment, typical of human-machine relations)? Active metapresence, with a "presence" of a teacher commanding the more traditional conditions of a classroom, being "followed" by projectors from other classrooms, equally positioned.

6

The choices are not made by teachers, but mediated by a homogenizing process of the University, of education, of the teaching-learning process, it is not a potency for the affirmation of an educator's place, nor a space for creation. It is also related to an organization that discourses from the outside, it is ICT that organizes the classroom, the bodies in it, and not the opposite, but it is important to deepen that those who promote this discourse put into practice a project of control. The mediatization of ICTs, in this sense, serves, in a very explicit way, the panopticon:

> It is polyvalent in its applications: it serves to mend prisoners, but also to care for the sick, instruct school children, guard the insane, supervise workers, and make beggars and idlers work. It is a type of implantation of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to each other, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centers and channels of power, of definition of instruments and modes of intervention, which can be used in hospitals, in workshops, in schools, in prisons. Whenever a multiplicity of individuals is involved to whom a task or behavior must be imposed, the panoptic scheme can be used (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 181).

I understand that the metapresentiality proposal is nothing more than a simulacrum of what an innovative education is. This is what the Guiding Plan (BRASIL, 2014) discourses us, in the "ambiguity" and in the epistemological and pedagogical pluralism that takes to the external world the objectives of Higher Education, under the aegis of ambiguous ideas of freedom and autonomy. Bodies unidirectional to the cameras that reproduce the place of television.

The place of the teacher's action, in this scenario, of the consciousness of who acts as teacher and student, can only be about an awareness of being constantly watched, being submitted to rules of conduct, to places in space, to an organization of pre-established spaces and times consistent with a process of massification. Marilena Chauí (2003, p. 13) reminds us that there is "current confusion between the democratization of higher education and massification," which can lock us into the spaces of the personal computer, since all students, seated at their circular desks, have, in front of them, no more than a computer, for registration, control, follow-up, and experience of this process.

Under the aegis of the construction of creative itineraries, students in the process make formative choices and expose themselves to homogenized environments, where mediations by ICTs happen, reproducing innovative simulacrums, where discourses about autonomy, democratization and active learning are discursive artifices that silence the exteriority of what effectively aims this model, which is the operational perspective, the market and the massification of knowledge through the disciplining of bodies that establish a unidirectional and homogenized relationship of education. Brito (2017), when analyzing specifically the pedagogical projects of the undergraduate degrees at UFSB, helps us understand that, in the proposed model, 20% of the workload can be done out-of-class, which makes room for the use of metapresentiality and other activities, promoting what we have already indicated above: lightening of training and space for precariousness at various levels, including confluence in the four-semester regime proposed by the institution, with curricular components that have the same workload performed in other institutions in semester regimes.

7

The work of Barreto Filho (2019), who was even a member of the University's management, indicates an important point about the discursive logic of the University's arguments in favor of an innovative inclusion and the centrality in the "adherence" of teachers to this type of perspective called "inclusive", even being mentioned as "decolonizing" (ALMEIDA-FILHO, BENICÁ & COUTINHO, 2017). In the conclusions of his Doctoral Thesis, Barreto Filho (2019) indicates that one of the resistances faced for the development of the University project as it was initially thought was related to metapresentiality. For the author, one of the reasons for this was the culture of Higher Education being marked by traditional perspectives:

> Evidently, this reaction was facilitated by the fact that the management did not manage to garner the broad support of the community to quickly consolidate the implementation of structuring aspects of the project, on which it was predictable that there would be reaction from teachers, coming from a culture marked by an educational process that has the figure of the teacher as its center (BARRETO FILHO; 2019, p. 192).

We have already denoted here that it is exactly the opposite, since metapresentiality, under the discursive manipulation of "student-centeredness", reiterates exactly the centrality in the teacher's action: it does not matter much the conditions to which the teaching work is exposed, such as a large number of classes, surveillance, need for exhaustive preparation of teaching materials to cope with such a proposal, but the individualized "resistance" of each teacher in "adhering" or "not adhering" to the project, since, in the discourse that is established, this project is "innovative", "inclusive" and "decolonizing". The logic of exclusion, through the order of discourse, referring to other discourses that may question what is established as the norm, within the project, is evidenced when we reach 2020 and the confrontation of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Distributed among the Academic Units on June 25th, 2020, and later approved by the University Council, the following can be noted: 1. Resolution 15/2020, attached to an emergency calendar for the year 2020, continues to reaffirm the existence of meta-presential teaching; 2. There is an attempt, in said resolution, to establish differences between "academic activities with the use of media and information and communication technologies, due to the pandemic of the new coronavirus (COVID-19)" (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA; 2020, p. 2) without, however, defining exactly these differences, and 3. To reiterate the discourse, already present in the Orientation Plan of the University, especially regarding metapresentiality, of defining the actions for implementation and control of teachers' activities (centrality in the teacher).

The document intends to legislate, institutionally, how teaching and other academic activities will be at the University, even though the main focus of the document is related to undergraduate teaching. Proposed by the Dean of Academic Management, it is headed

> Provides for the offer of activities and Curricular Components by technological intermediation, due to the suspension of classes and classroom activities due to the new Coronavirus pandemic (COVID 19) (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA, 2020, p.1)

Among its first two articles, the Resolution presents the need to regulate the use of "information and communication means and technologies", then complementing that "face-to-face and meta-presential activities are suspended". At no point does the document make explicit what would be the main differences between meta-presential teaching (synchronous activity via technological means, as already defined in this article) and the new proposal of technological intermediation. This leads me to infer that the main difference would be the specific place from where the teacher would transmit his/her classes - from a space at the University or from his/her home since the sanitary conditions do not allow the (meta) teaching presence in the space of a classroom.

It is evident, then, what I have been trying to make explicit within this discourse: meta-presential teaching is a condition very close to the condition of classes through the use of technologies in an emergency period that the University refers to, when proposing, even, a calendar of classes for the entire academic year of 2020. The University has already been operating, since 2014, under the aegis of a lack of definition of its "inclusive" and "decolonizing" model, which had been noticed by many people in the academic community. Barreto Filho (2019) refers to faculty members as if they were resistant to innovation, due to a kind of traditional education culture, which seems, according to his findings, to have been internalized by these faculty members. Ferreira (2020), through interviews with professors from the same University, verifies that, in their narratives, there is a motivation to affirm inclusion in the University, however, through a more plural project, which the University seems to be unable to do.

What we observe in this moment of pandemic (a Public Health Emergency) is a discourse that reiterates the foundations of mass education, as proposed from the beginning, recalling Chauí's notes (2003). The operationalization, via internal legislation, is a programmatic and programmed perspective of making the teaching work precarious - assigning to the teacher the role of adherence and accomplishment of tasks -, having for this the aid of technological mediation as a "decolonizing" and "inclusion-promoting" "innovation".

The document proposed for this moment integrates strategies for the control of academic journals, Teaching-Learning Plans, and control of teachers' remote activities, by means of filling out reports and other documents, so that they become evidence, elements of surveillance. Since the metapresence is composed of a set of cameras (panoptic) that are not being used in the emergency period, other technological devices will be used to evaluate the "adherence" to the University project that is being reified, through the control strategies that are being created, in a continuum between the metapresence innovation project and the emergency remote teaching that, as I observe, is a free adaptation of what was initially proposed as one of the great assets of this University to save human resources.

9

4 Final Considerations

The Federal University of Southern Bahia may be the first in the federal education system, in graduation, to resume activities by remote teaching, and this is scheduled for August 17, 2020. I verify here, through the analysis of these complementary discourses, that the will to truth (FOUCAULT, 2007) operates institutionally with coercive force, in order to exclude other discourses, to diminish contextual elements of the educational reality, ratifying a monolithic system of "innovative education", which operates in conjunction with other discourse markers, such as "inclusion" and "decolonization". In this sense, even if it is not the first to return to classes, but, through these strategies that discursively constrain any person or collective of the community that, by opposing such an innovative model, would be, for sure, a reactionary counter position, the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia will be an example, a model of action, in the liberal molds, to face the emergence of the pandemic. What was already being experienced becomes possible, technology shapes the teaching action, centralizing this figure as an operator.

Thus, I understand that, in the webs of the Operational University (CHAUÍ, 2003), the "globalized world" referred to by Leher (2012) is (meta) present in the institution itself, which constructs its discourses through linguistic juggling without definition, such as metapresentiality and remote teaching, under the aegis of an embarrassment of teachers facing a policy that claims to be decolonized, popular and inclusive, but that, on the contrary, operates with the logic of the control of the teaching work, changing only the strategies from one moment to another, marked by the use of technologies. The erasing of the human occurs in the construction of an operational centrality of the teacher, who has tasks, times, spaces watched over, either by a large number of cameras that transmit his or her classes to other classrooms or by control of his or her period of "state of emergency", due to the health situation. Taking care of oneself becomes onerous, considering the number of strategies of work control, and these same strategies seem to strengthen the survival of the University that, since its beginning, has been connected to massification models.

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10

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11

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