

**Challenges of teaching in higher education in times of pandemic: experience report***Retos de la docencia en la educación superior en tiempos de pandemia: informe de experiencia**Desafios da docência no ensino superior em tempos de pandemia: relato de experiência***Juliana Mendes Marques<sup>1</sup>**

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**Submission:** 03-12-2021**Approval:** 03-30-2021**Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced significant numbers of infected people and deaths in the world, influencing changes in social behavior, including in the educational sphere. This is a descriptive study, of the experience report type, carried out in 2020. Although there are conceptual differences between distance learning and remote teaching, the criticisms received by these modalities and pedagogical actions are somewhat similar, as they focus and precisely impute an inherent precariousness to the use of digital tools as intermediaries in the teaching and learning processes. Remote teaching does not replace the face-to-face method; however, it is the only alternative for those who have access conditions to maintain their activities, both in terms of qualification (students) and work (teachers).

**Descriptors:** Quarentine Education; Teaching Challenges; Pandemic; Remote Teaching.**Resumén**

La pandemia de COVID-19 ha producido un número significativo de personas infectadas y muertes en el mundo, lo que ha influido en los cambios en el comportamiento social, incluso en el ámbito educativo. Se trata de un estudio descriptivo, del tipo relato de experiencia, realizado en 2020. Si bien existen diferencias conceptuales entre la educación a distancia y la enseñanza a distancia, las críticas recibidas por estas modalidades y acciones pedagógicas son algo similares, ya que enfocan y atribuyen precisamente una inherente precariedad en el uso de herramientas digitales como intermediarios en los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje. La enseñanza a distancia no reemplaza al método presencial, sin embargo, es la única alternativa para quienes tienen condiciones de acceso para mantener sus actividades, tanto en términos de calificación (estudiantes) como de trabajo (docentes).

**Descriptores:** Educación en Cuarentena; Desafíos em la Enseñanza; Pandemia; Educación Remota.**Resumo**

A pandemia de COVID-19 tem produzido números expressivos de infectados e de óbitos no mundo influenciando mudanças no comportamento social, inclusive no âmbito educacional. Trata-se de um estudo descritivo, do tipo relato de experiência, vivenciado em 2020. Embora existam diferenças conceituais entre ensino EaD e remoto, as críticas recebidas por essas modalidades e ações pedagógicas são um tanto semelhantes, pois focalizam e imputam justamente uma precarização inerente ao uso de ferramentas digitais como intermediadoras nos processos de ensinar e aprender. O ensino remoto não substitui o método presencial, porém, é a única alternativa para que, aqueles que possuem condições de acesso, mantenham suas atividades, tanto de qualificação (alunos) quanto laboral (professores).

**Descriptores:** Educação na Quarentena; Desafios da Docência; Pandemias; Ensino Remoto.

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced significant numbers of infected people and deaths worldwide. According to a report by the World Health Organization, up to February 12, 2021, 107,423,526 confirmed cases had been reported, and of these, 2,360,280 had progressed to death due to the new coronavirus. The American and European continents are the most affected by the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

The speed with which COVID-19 has been spreading has influenced the daily lives of billions of people on the planet<sup>2</sup>. Preventive measures such as the use of masks and 70% alcohol gel, as well as restrictive measures such as social distancing - including suspension of religious cults, parties and in-person classes - were implemented to reduce the spread of the disease, however, we currently face the flexibility of some of these measures taken in private higher education institutions, where classes in the classroom system have returned.

Author indicates that studies referring to the impact of COVID-19 pointed to the deepening of inequalities in various orders, be they economic, social, educational.<sup>3</sup>

The pandemic had serious impacts on education. According to UNESCO<sup>4</sup>, in 2020, the closure of educational institutions impacted around 70% of the world's student population. In Brazil, the number of affected students is around 52 million. The conditions of education in times of pandemic present a set of important factors to be considered, such as the inequality of access between different classes to online pedagogical resources, cultural inequalities when considering the computer and other distance learning tools as capital cultural objectified.<sup>5</sup>

According to a study<sup>6</sup>, remote teaching cannot be considered an educational modality, but a pedagogical action, in which a certain transposition of classroom teaching to teaching mediated by digital tools, predominantly.

The biggest challenge of remote education falls on educators, precisely because of the adaptation required between the active and passive protagonism of the classroom<sup>7</sup>. Silva<sup>8</sup> generated reflective questions about the adaptation of contents, classroom dynamics, lectures, and assessments to understand the remote teaching-learning process. For the author, keeping students interested and engaged is the greatest difficulty.

In the case of remote learning, there is no specific and prior planning or theoretical-conceptual models for its practice; there is only the transposition of the work in person to a digital or printed space. Digital resources or materials delivered to students are used to enable what was pedagogically planned to be carried out in person, without the explicit enunciation of a pedagogical didactic plan articulated with the tools.<sup>8</sup>

Such a definition is close to what is presented by Bozkurt and Sharma<sup>9</sup>, when referring to emergency remote teaching, characterizing it as a temporary solution to a problem that sets in immediately. Taking this as a fact, the aim of this article is to report the experience with remote learning during the pandemic of a teacher at a private higher education institution.

## Methodology

This is a descriptive study, of the experience report type, carried out from the experience of a higher education teacher who experienced the modification of the classroom teaching method for the remote from March 2020 to the present day. This study used a bibliographic framework to support the discussion on the main theme. Twenty-one articles were retrieved from SciELO, PubMed, LILACS, Google Scholar, of which 12 were used.

## Experience Report

In early March 2020, with the pandemic being instituted by the World Health Organization, private higher education institutions were faced with a new challenge to keep their courses running and education professionals found themselves in a new one, the of remote learning.

Higher education professors from private institutions did not have time to know the teaching method, this familiarization occurred with their own daily practice. In this context, teamwork was essential, where the exchange of experiences between professionals was a great help in restructuring the teaching methodology.

The two biggest challenges of remote learning were the concern to capture the students' attention and the application of active teaching methodologies.

For the first challenge, the weapon used was relaxation, as the same anxieties and concerns that came from the students were the same as those of their teachers.

Creating a relaxed setting remotely was a challenge that was gradually overcome, with trials, errors, and successes, and one of the most effective ways for this experience was the use of animated teaching material (GIF, videos) that made an analogy to the theme of the classes and the inclusion of short dynamics of objective questions with the theme of the day at the end of classes.

For the second challenge, active teaching methodologies, the use of Team-Base-Learning (TBL) was the best strategy, even from the perspective of the students. This method can be used in several ways and consists of a dynamic where students are the main actors in the teaching x learning process. We used the method by asking ten objective questions about a certain topic, the students answered individually and then in small groups, where they had to discuss the questions. The dynamic yielded productive and relaxed discussions, even in the remote context.

After adapting to remote learning, the current challenge is to return to in-person classes, even with the number of deaths growing every day.

Working in this context is a dichotomy, the happiness of being in the classroom in person, of being able to leave home to work and, at the same time, the fear of the pandemic situation.

## Discussion

Although there are conceptual differences between EaD and remote teaching, the criticisms received by these modalities and pedagogical actions are somewhat similar, as they focus and precisely attribute a precariousness inherent



to the use of digital tools as intermediaries in the teaching and learning processes.<sup>8</sup>

Changes in the educational system had to be carried out quickly, so that, overnight, teachers had to transpose content and adapt their classroom classes to online platforms, without preparation for this, or with superficial preparation, in character emergency.<sup>10,11</sup>

Researchers<sup>7</sup> developed a study that aimed to identify the challenges and learning of university professors related to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research showed that the interviewed professors reported several challenges related to remote learning in this pandemic period, such as: adapting and flexibilizing in relation to a new way of teaching and learning and using technological tools for teaching, which generates a feeling of insecurity, doubts and work overload; the motivation and engagement of students in the virtual environment; the difficulties faced by students that also impact the pedagogical relationship; the demands and institutional charges.

Remote education requires expertise from the professional that is acquired in the medium and long term. Being inserted in this teaching modality abruptly can damage the educational process, in addition to being another trigger of psychosocial processes, such as the anxiety crisis. It is also worth emphasizing the importance of applying continuous training regarding the use of remote learning tools and active learning methodologies that are better adapted to remote learning. For this statement, Silva<sup>8</sup> comments that it is the role of the educational institution to support and instruct the teacher, through technical support and objective and well-defined methodologies.

As mentioned in the case report, the methodology used to circumvent one of the biggest challenges of remote learning was TBL, which is defined as Team-Based Learning, which has a collaborative approach, which uses a student-focused teaching strategy, promoting autonomy and proactivity.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Leal<sup>1</sup> carried out a study that aimed to analyze the use of active teaching-learning methodologies in emergency remote teaching. As a result, the study revealed that 75% of the analyzed sample does believe that the adoption of active methodologies favors the learning process in emergency remote education.

Researchers<sup>13</sup> concluded that, given the changes brought about by the new social behavior, public policies are beginning to think about the need for equity regarding the distribution of teaching technologies, with which higher education institutions are reinventing themselves. In other words, when looking at teaching in the face of technologies, there is the feeling that these provide teachers with different reconfigurations of themselves or even a transforming experience of themselves, as they cause creation, reinvention, dislocation, and innovation, including in face-to-face teaching. This reconfiguration may be related to the more frequent use of active methodologies, where the teacher becomes a mediator, creating possibilities for the construction of knowledge, not being the only holder of knowledge in the learning processes, whether individual or collective.

The deconstruction that remote teaching caused in teachers also reinvented human relationships, between teaching and teaching. Even returning to face-to-face modes of teaching, the effort made during remote teaching brought about new possibilities of understanding, generating learning quickly and sharpening the creativity of the teacher. In this way, remote teaching enabled the invention of teaching strategies that were never used before for this purpose. In this sense, the need to reflect on the reconfigurations in teaching actions is elucidated, generating scientific content and academic debates.<sup>5,13</sup>

### Final Considerations

The pandemic affects both teachers and students, so that everyone is undergoing changes in their lives and having to adapt in an emergency. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that there must be understanding on both sides. Remote teaching does not replace the face-to-face method; however, it is the only alternative for those who have access conditions to maintain their activities, both in terms of qualification (students) and work (teachers).

In the context of remote education, it is up to everyone involved in the educational process to join forces to reflect on the pedagogical strategies that are most appropriate to the different realities, so that the impacts and consequences of the pandemic are at least mitigated.

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