Problematizations about distance education in contemporaneity from the Heideggerian perspective: Beyond the debate on distances and proximity

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to analyze the issue of Distance Learning (EaD), through the perspective of two categories: distance and proximity. From such reflections, we intend to raise notes that make it possible to understand how the confrontation between face-to-face and non-face-to-face teaching (EaD) occurs, discussing to what extent this issue is an analytical contradiction. To this end, a literature review was carried out, dialoguing with the conception of the philosopher Martin Heidegger about proximity and distance, in order to problematize the debate beyond the question about metrage. About the distance education education, we highlight the contributions brought by Amaral Filho; in addition to dialoguing with authors such as Paulo Freire, based on the concepts of liberating education and pedagogy of autonomy; and the philosopher and sociologist Pierre Levy, through his important contributions to thinking about the science of information and communication in contemporary times. The initial reflections, brought in the present work, seek to contribute to broaden the discussions about face-to-face and distance learning in the contemporary context where education needs to (re)invent itself in a pandemic context.

Keywords: Distance, Proximity, Distance Learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times there has been a growing debate around technological advances and the new social dynamics brought with them, just think of the social relations and cultural practices that arise from social networks, online games, distance learning, among others. Therefore, the demands arising from these technologies and their insertion in the most varied daily spaces are significant.

The expansion of distance education in Brazil has its highest occurrence from the year of

2007, when the Ministry of Education began a process of facilitating the legal regulations responsible for the opening of new distance education centers, measures that were received with great enthusiasm by groups of great prominence in this market. Along with these changes, there are many questions, insecurities, responsibilities and the need to master the technological apparatuses, to master the social and cultural dynamics that are formed in the spaces of online coexistence to be included.

Thus, we highlight that the scope of this research is centered on the problematization of the debate around the opposition between distance and *presence*, considered as defining aspects to measure

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the quality of one to the detriment of the other, so we will dialogue with Heidegger's philosophical debate on *distance and proximity* present in the work "Being and Time".

The research conducted by Rhoberta Santana de Araújo and Edineide Jezine brings important problematizations about the expansion of distance learning in Brazil through data provided by INEP (Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research). In addition to the authors already mentioned, we will be dialoguing with the contributions of Pierre Levy and the Brazilian philosopher and educator, Paulo Freire.

We consider that the dialogue between the reflections of these authors makes it possible to understand the importance of sociocultural issues for the development and analysis of the problematizations raised here, considering that from them we identify important issues surrounding the growing search for the modality of distance learning in today's society, which is often chosen mostly by popular segments.

Thus, we seek to understand the following questions: Which model of education can be classified as good?; Faced with a scenario of intense technological advances, how can education structure its practices and methodologies to adapt to new contemporary demands, be they political, economic or social?

Therefore, debating distance education in contemporary society, raising the questions present here and the others that arise later, enables the public interested in the theme, to expand its argumentative repertoire; At the same time, it launches other perspectives that will enrich research in the area of education, something fundamental in a historical moment where the pandemic that began in 2019, caused as a result of Covid-19, demanded and is demanding a strong mobilization of the educational sector, either to meet the demand of the student or to offer intellectual subsidies to those who needed to fit the demands of the labor market.

2 METHODOLOGY

From the point of view of the objectives, the research is classified as exploratory, because, "these researches aim to provide greater familiarity with the problem, with a view to making it more explicit or to constitute hypotheses." (GIL, 1999, p. 41).

As for the technical procedures, from the bibliographic research we performed the data collection from the selection of bibliographies that dialogued with the objectives proposed in our research, that is, distance learning in contemporary times from the categories distance and proximity; the material from the bibliographic survey was also mapped in the databases of Google Scholar, Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, Bank of Theses and Dissertations of CAPES.

In this sense, bibliographic research helps to expand knowledge about a particular research object, to have a greater domain and knowledge about the subject. Thus, it was possible to synthesize

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the bibliography from the theoretical aspects that could dialogue with the needs arising from the theme, the objectives, the problematics, methodologies, the conclusive hypotheses, in addition to making it possible to relate the institutional place occupied by the writer and the field of research.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initially, we highlight an important reflection on what Pierre Levy calls *cyberspace* so that later we can enter the debate on distances and proximity aligned with the debate of distance learning. According to Levy (1999, p.

15), "The term [cyberspace] specifies not only the material infrastructure of digital communication, but also the oceanic universe of information that it houses, as well as the human beings who navigate and feed this universe", thus, it can be perceived that it is necessary to understand the complex network that permeates the field of distance education, because in addition to needing to consider access to material infrastructure, the development of the skills to handle them.

Also, it is important to understand the plots that permeate the dynamics between access to information available in cyberspace and the practices that involve the uses of this information and the relationships that involve the diversity of individuals who are in it, it is from these reflections that we begin the following problematizations.

3.1 ATTENDANCE AND DISTANCES IN THE CONTEXT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

We tend to analyze distance learning through statements that highlight positive or negative aspects, disregarding the complexity of economic, cultural and social factors that permeate the debate, reducing the issue to arguments based on claims that point to the inferiority of this teaching modality due to the lack of direct contact between teachers and students; On the other hand, the advantages of this are highlighted due to the practicality of performing the activities synchronously and asynchronously at any time and place that has availability.

This is where distance education becomes popular and gaining increasing spaces and, with this growth, questions also appear about the quality of distance learning, given the absence of personal interaction in the classroom between students and teachers.

According to data brought by Rhoberta Santana de Araújo and Edineide Jezine, we highlight that,

> The most recent data from the Higher Education Census indicate the scenario of frank expansion of the modality in Brazil. The number of entrants to undergraduate courses in the distance format corresponded to 40% of the total number of tickets in 2018. This percentage was 19.8% in 2008. In the period between 2008 and 2018, enrollment in undergraduate distance learning courses showed a percentage increase of 182.5% (INEP, 2019). On the other hand, in face-to-face courses, the growth, in the same time frame, was only 25.9%. In relation to vacancies offered, for the first time in history, EaD surpassed the face-to-face modality.

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There were 7.1 million places assigned to distance learning courses against 6.4 million in face-to-face courses. (ARAÚJO; MESQUITA ARAÚJO, p. 06, 2021).

The data provided by INEP (Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research) indicate that the number of undergraduate students opting for distance education has been markedly higher than the number of those interested in face-to-face teaching; The survey also highlights that since 2018 the number of vacancies offered by higher education institutions in the distance modality, in relation to the number of vacancies made available by face-to-face courses, has been higher than the latter.

It is in this context that the author Fausto dos Santos Amaral Filho develops in his article entitled "Distant presence, present distance: A reflection on distance learning" an important debate on the presence of distance education in current society and the criticisms surrounding it. Among the important issues, the author seeks to delineate how society, and even more specifically the scope of education, has dealt with the issue of *proximity in* distance brought by EaD, considering that technology to the extent that it came to bring practicality to perform everyday tasks, also generated the need to perform tasks at a greater speed and quantity, evidences an ever-increasing demand from the labor market to find individuals increasingly available to perform their functions.

It is important to highlight that these functions are no longer as delimited and centralized as before, in addition, the need to be increasingly qualified to meet the demands of the market is an issue that has become important for those who wish to enter or remain in the educational sector, in addition to playing a fundamental role in the professional life of those who yearn to progress in this increasingly competitive and demanding market.

In view of the above, Amaral Filho carries out a philosophical reflection on the categories *distance and proximity from the perspective of the* Hyedeggerian anthology, which brought important contributions to the debate, as it allowed to distance the analyses from the superficial discourses and take it to a level of discussion that would allow unveiling the complexity present in the theme. According to him, "In the proper way of making oneself human, there is no presence that does not behave distance, there is no distance that does not behave presence." (AMARAL FILHO, 2017, p.13), because as the author already highlights, in the social dynamics the human being shares situations where he needs to deal with the presence of both, considering that being physically present does not imply a real presence.

According to Martin Heidegger, "being-together" does not imply a spatial proximity, in fact, "being-together" to the world is related to the dynamics that we exert in the world by relating to it and, consequently, transforming it and even unveiling its nuances.

[...] Sometimes, no doubt, we usually express with the resources of the language the set of two entities simply given by saying: 'the table is by the door', 'the chair' 'touches' 'the wall'. Strictly

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speaking, one can never speak here of a 'touching', not because one can always find, on a precise examination, a space between the chair and the wall, but because, in principle, the chair cannot touch the wall, even if the space between them were equal to zero. To do so, it would be necessary to assume that the wall came to meet 'the chair'. An entity can only touch another being simply given within the world if, by nature, it has the mode of being, if, with its presence, a world has already been discovered to it. For from the world the being can then reveal itself in touch and thus become accessible in its simply given being. Two beings that take place simply within the world and that, moreover, are in themselves devoid of the world, can never 'touch', never one of them can 'be and be next to the 'other'. (HEIDEGGER, 1997, § 12, p.93).

First, we need to clarify that presence is not used here as a spatial situation, but as a way of being *human* or way of being of man; this is because many translations of the work "Being and Time" translate *the concept of Dasein as presence, causing misunderstandings about the concept, in view of the lack of a word that can encompass all the conceptual complexity of the German word* Dasein. Having understood this first point, we must understand that "being is, therefore, the formal and existential expression of the being of the Dasein that possesses the ontological constitution of being-in-the-world" (HEIDEGGER, 1997, § 12, p. 92).

Such considerations lead us to the following conclusions: man as Dasein is/inhabits the world and it will be from him that in this dynamic of being together that he will maintain relations and will transform it, resulting in his "revealing himself", therefore, only Dasein can "be-together" to the world.

From the above, it is clear that the "being-together" does not mean is "next *to" or "*glued *to",* *implying a spatial relation that means a "here and now" that reduces the Dasein to a material-present* *structure, because it inhabits the power-being,* of the yet-not; therefore, man is also what may become, in other words, his possibilities; "Understanding is a way of being of presence in which presence is its possibilities as possibilities." (HEIDEGGER, 1927/2006, p. 206), thus, man as an existentially anthological being is from the interaction with other men, it is in this shared world that we have the being-with, and this goes beyond its materiality.

Thus, applying the thought of the philosopher Martin Heidegger to the present debate, we understand that language in its multiple forms is an important tool, because through the action of man it is possible to be spatially distant, but close by *Being-together*. On the issue, Amaral Filho states:

> if the old Greek formula that defines the human who dwells in us – Anthropos kai zoon logon – still applies, man is the being of language (lógos), and this, in turn, is the open that is established in the interchangeable game between the present and the distant, constituting us as such. (AMARAL FILHO, 2017, p.14)

With this, the *being-in* of Dasein, with communication and active listening, the human being can be a transforming agent. We understand that this effort detached by Amaral Filho (2011) was fundamental to launch new perspectives in the face of the debate and advance in these discussions, because as the author highlights, the heated debates imbued with the desire to defend their personal arguments, is closer to the posture of rival fans in a football stadium where each group tries to convince

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that their team is better than the other, making us believe that we are facing an *analytical contradiction*, because the question is presented to us in such a way that it opposes *face-to-face education versus* non-face-to-face education.

3.2 IS THIS AN "ANALYTIC CONTRADICTION?

About the above so far, the following question remains: if the debate on the quality of the two modalities of teaching treated here should not be summarized to the debate on *distance and presence*, because these two concepts are not presented in such a limiting and centralized way; then, what aspects should be raised in a way that can bring contributions to think about improvements for Brazilian education in the contemporary scenario?

A priori we must make some considerations about education, understanding that the search for a formation of the individual, in addition to the mastery of technical tools that allows him to be inserted in the labor market, is not an exclusive problem of our society, in other periods of the history of Western civilization other societies have already denoted concern in the face of the educational perspective centered on the formation of the human being to exercise a function, Therefore, they sought to achieve an educational model that forms man integrally, so that the citizen could act as a transforming agent in his social environment, is the case of the Greek civilization.

The Greek Paideia, that is, the integral formation of the Greek man, is the example that we will highlight here, from it the Greeks expressed the desire to form individuals not only capable of mastering contents, but also citizens who participated in public life, who were able to make decisions based on an ethical and moral conduct.

It is worth mentioning that this conception only takes the integral dimension of education from the fifth century BC, because it is in this period that education ceases to form the Greek man and begins to form the *Greek citizen*, although this model continues to serve the interests of male, free and economically advantaged individuals. As Werner Jaeger, a great scholar of Greek culture, states,

> [...] the concept, which originally designated only the process of education as such, extended to the objective and content aspect the sphere of its meaning, just as the German word Bildung (formation) or the equivalent of Latin culture, of the process of formation came to designate the being formed and the very content of culture, and finally embraced, in totality, the world of spiritual culture: the world in which individual man is born, by the simple fact of belonging to his people or to a specific social circle. (JAEGER, 1986, p.245).

Already making the necessary reservations about the historical anachronisms, I point out that the most important for the present research is to consider that the author seeks to highlight, from a historical fact belonging to a civilization with such importance for the formation of Western culture, as is the case of the Greek civilization, as already in this period there was a concern to develop a complete formation of the individual in an integral way, This is because it goes beyond the

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instrumentalization or preparation of the individual to develop a given function or activity, this training aims at the physiological and historical-cultural development, and according to the choices of the individual.

But, this is still not quite what happens in our society, because the economic, political and social discrepancies do not allow everyone to have the same opportunities, in fact, even today many young people need to enter the labor market earlier and earlier, which ends up resulting in various social and economic problems, such as the lack of skilled labor, low wages and the interruption of the educational formation of many Brazilians, that is, the problem of school dropout has become a worrying reality that highlights the economic and social discrepancies, since the most harmed are the young people of the popular classes.

It is in this context where online distance education has been gaining ground, by enabling greater dynamism to access the study environment and flexibilization of schedules; enabling that even at a distance the individual can continue their training through undergraduate courses, post-graduations, training courses, languages, among others.

However, there are several criticisms that question the quality of this teaching model under the argument that the absence of direct contact between teacher and student in the classroom does not offer a good quality to this training, however, as the author Amaral Filho points out, treat a universal preposition as an incontestable truth, Whether from an affirmative or negative perspective, it is already a major obstacle to moving forward in the discussion.

The Brazilian philosopher Viviane Mosé presents an important discussion about the place of the school in an educational context as uncertain as the scenario presented in contemporary times. On the issue of education in a context of technological advancement, it considers that,

> There was predictability when what was offered in vocational training was appropriate to the labor market. This stability, which absolutely never existed, gave way to a relationship of uncertainties. Today technological changes introduce innovations that always require new knowledge, new skills. This means that during life it is necessary to change qualifications a few times and build new skills. In addition to the immense volume of content and knowledge available cause the rapid and inevitable devaluation of the old acquired content and quickly make obsolete a university education, for example. (MOSÉ, 2013, p.54).

With this, it is necessary to consider that the contemporary educational panorama presents intense modifications resulting from the economic, social and cultural perspectives generated by globalization, today we live the digital age marked by the instantaneous speed of the transmission of information, enabling direct communication between people, overcoming language barriers, without limit of time and space. We do not know how far technological advances will take us, but it is a fact that we live the fourth industrial revolution, and it is up to professionals to seek to enter a fierce market that still requires a significant investment to be able to enjoy it, and not everyone who can make this investment in their training will have a place in this very competitive market.

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The professional who stands out has the differential of creating efficient means of generating and sharing information, knowing how to offer solutions to the most diverse issues, considering that here the professional who works in a single function no longer fits. These demands point to another problem for Brazilian education, the lack of resources and other policies to encourage research and science, and in this sense, we have already faced a major barrier that Brazil needs to deal with as a matter of urgency: the scrapping of education that was already a problem debated among social scientists, educators and other social sectors, but that has become alarming in recent years.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand that the debate *Distance Education versus face-to-face is not an analytical contradiction, because if it were, it would be possible to affirm that all face-to-face teaching is better than distance education, however, is it possible to say with absolute certainty that all face-to-face* education is good? If for a long period we believed that only the teacher and the textbook were necessary to obtain and develop knowledge, the internet and technological devices allow access to information on the most varied subjects, because with the availability of a diversity of documents the most varied positions arise, this panorama provides the formation of what Pierre Levy calls *cyberculture*:

> [...] 'cyberculture', specifies here the set of techniques (material and intellectual), practices, attitudes, modes of thought and values that develop along with the growth of cyberspace (LEVY, 1999, p. 15).

Since verbalization is such an important characteristic for the development of the human being, this being an act of self-revelation allowing us to communicate by exchanging ideas, feelings in society, fighting against the elitist silencing that is still so prevalent in the educational system of Brazil, demanding public policies that act effectively in the face of economic, racial, ethnic, gender differences and that respect neurodiversity.

Marcelo Fabri, based on Heidegger's philosophy, states that "verbal resonance eliminates distance and brings proximity" (n.d., pg. 56), so it is an important structure to make possible the proximity between individuals, or is this dynamic only possible if physical matter is close?

If the answer to the previous question is positive, how to explain the need to advance in the struggle for equity in the scope of public education policies? Therefore, it is important to understand that here there are no generalizations or superficial discourses, so we do not fall into the error of affirming, also, that all distance education is good, the most constructive to enrich the debate, as Amaral Filho already points out: "but which face-to-face education is good?, as much as, but which distance education is good?" (2017, pg. 42), we understand here that the fundamental thing is to think of an educational model that intends to be liberating and stimulates the autonomy of the individual.

According to Paulo Freire (1996, p.59), "respect for the autonomy and dignity of each one is an ethical imperative and not a factor that we may or may not grant to each other", because an education

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that does not take into account the specificities present in the social, economic, cultural and gender diversities, can offer a spatio-temporal proximity, but will not reach the didactic-pedagogical proximity necessary to overcome models that met the interests of the dominant classes, As it was, the scholasticism and the technicist, which aimed to instruct the masses to exercise only their tasks in the labor market.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Being close physically is not necessarily a guarantee of development and learning, as well as the proximity provided by social networks and their technological structures are also not synonymous with approximation, because only technological innovation does not improve the quality of teaching, nor does it bring us closer, the studies of behavioral psychology already evidence this.

But, in the two cases where we deal with education, distance and face-to-face, the most important thing is to deal with the need to stimulate students to develop their autonomy and enable an integral formation that respects the students' histories, maintain an educational system that privileges the history and culture of the dominant classes, reserving the masses an education that mischaracterizes them as individuals of potentialities in order to offer them an instructional "formation" aimed at availability of labor for the labor market will not solve the educational reality of the country.

In this sense, distance education can bring great contributions by enabling the continuous training of many individuals who need to enter or remain in the labor market, in addition, bring real chances of these reach better professional positions in their areas of expertise. For this to occur, training and instruction are important for teachers and students, both can enable autonomy and openness so that diversities can build and insert their cultures and socio-educational demands, dialoguing with the historical, social and cultural reality that we live in contemporaneity, because more than equality, it is necessary to talk about equity of rights.

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