

A reflection on higher education in health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: traditional education still perpetuates

Uma reflexão sobre a educação superior em saúde no contexto da pandemia de COVID-19: a educação tradicional ainda perpetua

Una reflexión sobre la educación superior en salud en el contexto de la pandemia del COVID-19: la educación tradicional aún perpetúa

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Abstract

Pandemics that occurred in the past strongly marked all areas and spheres that makeup society. This gave rise to important and revolutionary events with repercussions that continue to this day. The COVID-19 pandemic was no different in this regard, especially as it emerged in an extremely globalized age. Therefore, the objective of this critical review was to reflect on higher health education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on traditional education that is perpetuated through the new context. There were many challenges faced by this new reality, especially regarding the use of technology to provide quality education. However, we believe that one of the greatest challenges of education in this context continues to be overcoming traditional teaching, which has been subtly perpetuated in many institutions of higher education in health. We should discuss and reflect more on the camouflage

of current teaching: the intentional camouflage driven by political and doctrinal interests; and the involuntary that drags from generation to generation.

Keywords: Teaching; Education; Education, higher; Health postgraduate programs; COVID-19.

Resumo

As pandemias que ocorreram no passado marcaram fortemente todos os âmbitos e esferas que constituem a sociedade, levando a acontecimentos importantes e revolucionários com repercussões que se projetam até a atualidade. A pandemia por COVID-19 não foi diferente nesse sentido, ainda mais por ter surgido em uma era extremamente globalizada. Diante disso, o objetivo desta resenha crítica foi refletir sobre a educação superior em saúde no contexto da pandemia de COVID-19, com enfoque para a educação tradicional que perpetua mediante o novo contexto. Muitos foram os desafios apresentados diante dessa nova realidade, especialmente no que se refere ao uso da tecnologia para proporcionar um ensino de qualidade. Contudo, acreditamos que um dos maiores desafios da educação nesse contexto ainda é a superação do ensino tradicional, o qual sutilmente tem perpetuado em muitas instituições de ensino superior em saúde. Devemos discutir e refletir mais sobre a camuflagem do ensino atual: a camuflagem intencional movida por interesses políticos e doutrinários; e a não intencional que se arrasta ao longo das gerações.

Palavras-chave: Ensino; Educação; Educação superior; Programas de pós-graduação em saúde; COVID-19.

Resumen

Las pandemias ocurridas en el pasado marcaron con fuerza todos los ámbitos y esferas que conforman la sociedad, dando lugar a importantes y revolucionarios hechos con repercusiones que continúan hasta nuestros días. La pandemia de COVID-19 no fue diferente en este sentido, especialmente porque surgió en una era extremadamente globalizada. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de esta revisión crítica fue reflexionar sobre la educación superior en salud en el contexto de la pandemia de COVID-19, con un enfoque en la educación tradicional que se perpetúa a través del nuevo contexto. Fueron muchos los desafíos que enfrentó esta nueva realidad, especialmente en lo que respecta al uso de la tecnología para brindar una educación de calidad. Sin embargo, creemos que uno de los mayores desafíos de la educación en este contexto sigue siendo la superación de la enseñanza tradicional, sutilmente perpetuada en muchas instituciones de educación superior en salud. Deberíamos discutir y reflexionar más sobre el camuflaje de la enseñanza actual: el camuflaje intencional impulsado por intereses políticos y doctrinarios; y el involuntario que arrastra de generación en generación.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza; Educación; Educación superior; Programas de posgrado en salud; COVID-19.

1. Introduction

Pandemics that occurred in the past strongly marked all spheres and spheres that constitute society, leading to important and revolutionary events with repercussions that are projected to the present day (Saldiva, 2021; Nascimento, 2020; Antikeira & Sekine, 2020). This is because epidemics and pandemics are situations that require the most diverse governmental and non-governmental sectors to immediately adapt to social and economic contexts for the preservation of life (Tonial, 2020). The impacts of these measures can be lasting (Tonial, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic was no different in this regard, especially as it emerged in an extremely globalized era. It has modified and continues to interfere not only in human relationships but also in global social, economic, environmental, and educational conjunctures, as well as in their interfaces (Dorion, 2021; Nicola, et al., 2020; Macedo & Macedo, 2020; Souza 2020;). Teaching in the various undergraduate and graduate courses in the health area has also been strongly modified (Costa, 2020; Ferreira et al., 2020).

Therefore, the objective of this critical review was to reflect on higher education in health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on traditional education that perpetuates through the new context.

2. Reflection and Criticism

Is it possible to say that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a health education project that would come into being within a few decades? On the other hand, did much of what was changed in this sphere, because of this global event, require completely new and different measures from what had already been projected and designed for the future?

Depending on the perspective, these questions can bring up different reflections. From the Freirean perspective, which

values education as a practice of freedom, one can consider a “yes” answer to both questions. This is because the consciousness of educators in the current (post-modern) historical period is critical, transformative, and differential. Through this awareness, it is possible to achieve a freedom that Freire defends in his writings: to defend his ideas and points of view regarding liberating and problematizing teaching (Freire, 2021; Freire, 2018; Freire, 2014).

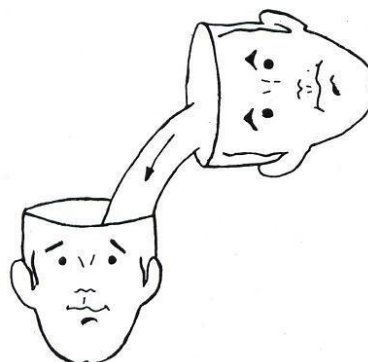
From the point of view of traditional education, the future (considering the non-existence of this pandemic period) would continue to use education based on knowledge retention only. In addition, from the point of view of those who were strongly influenced by Freire's perspectives, eventually teaching and teaching in the area of health, within this context, would achieve everything that has been achieved with the advent of the pandemic.

There were many challenges faced by this new reality, especially regarding the use of technology to provide quality education (Sögüt et al., 2022; Carneiro et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2020). However, we believe that one of the biggest challenges of education in this context is still overcoming traditional teaching, which has subtly perpetuated in many higher education institutions in health. This is worrying because this type of teaching is not aligned with the current needs of students and the community, not providing the development of critical awareness of these agents and improvements for society.

When one thinks of traditional education, one also thinks of banking education, a conception that denies dialogue and freedom (Lins, 2011; Freire, 1997). With banking education, a term conceptualized by Freire, the teacher “puts the contents into the heads of students” oppressively and authoritatively, without awareness or dialogue (Freire, 1997). Even before the pandemic, this education model was already growing, along with the expansion and commodification of Brazilian higher education (Almeida et al., 2012), omitting important content for the training process of students (Oliveira, 2021).

Subtly, this approach still perpetuates and we fear that it will extend or gain more strength in this pandemic scenario at the expense of remote teaching, especially in higher education courses in health, although the students enrolled in them are adults and rationally more experienced and participatory. Thus, denouncing this model of education in search of a liberating pedagogy is a common responsibility of all entities and society (Brighente & Mesquita, 2016). These complaints, thanks to social media, have gained emphasis, which has contributed to the expansion of liberating education and the population's awareness of its effects in the short, medium, and long term. The following cartoon denounces this model of banking education (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Banking Education.



Source: Bordenave e Pereira (1991, p. 10).

Weaving dialogues about this camouflage is extremely urgent, even more so when it comes to the health area, made up of professions that deal with lives at all times. It is observed that: many professors use technology for teaching, but do not make the student the protagonist of its use and its applicability to seek knowledge; the technology used makes the classes flow easily and makes them more expository and dialoguing, but they are not enough to incite reflections for the maturation of a

critical conscience; political bodies, driven by doctrinal principles, strongly interfere in the content that teachers can teach in the classroom, whether remote or virtual.

Higher education in health, considering the current pandemic context, will consolidate and reinvent itself effectively when its agents understand the importance of the mutual journey of governmental and non-governmental sectors of education, connected by the same purpose. This purpose should be to transform and/or improve the current realities that permeate higher education and reach the other dimensions that interface with teaching: health, environment, and society.

3. Final Considerations

Given the exposed theme and reflections carried out, we must discuss and reflect more on the camouflage of current teaching: the intentional camouflage driven by political and doctrinal interests; and the unintentional that drags along the generations. Despite the pandemic context, teaching in health courses still has traditionalist marks to the detriment of constructivist approaches.

Therefore, as facilitators and agents of teaching, teachers must seek daily these traditional teaching practices that surreptitiously re-enter classrooms and practical teaching fields in higher education institutions in health. Undergraduates and postgraduates, in turn, the main agents of this teaching-learning process, must seek to know the new education models and appropriate them so that they can demand and claim the best teaching strategies.

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