

THE VALUE OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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On March 24 of this year 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the United States had the potential to become the new epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, due to the data presented that infected more than 42,000 people in the United States at that time. President Donald Trump dismissed the seriousness of the growing threat of the virus. He trivialized the emergency by saying it was a "farce" from his political rivals.

Today, May 23, according to the data from the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University, there are more than 5 million confirmed victims in the world and of these more than 1,6 million in the United States alone, with more than 98 thousand deaths.

Director Michael Ryan of the World Health Organization (WHO) emergency program announced on May 22 that South America has become the new epicenter of covid-19 in the world, considering data from Brazil. He said, "*We have seen many South American countries with an increase in the number of cases and, clearly, there is concern in many of these countries, but certainly the most affected is Brazil at the moment*".

In the international ranking, Brazil is the sixth country in number of deaths. According to data from Johns Hopkins University, the countries are the USA, United Kingdom, Italy, France and Spain, respectively. But, if taking into account the numbers of confirmed victims, the order is the USA, Brazil, Russia and United Kingdom according to the confirmed data.

However, Brazilian underreporting is high, so that the actual numbers of infected people in the country may be higher than those in the USA. The Brazilian Ministry of Health admits that there is a lag in testing, especially in the poorest regions of the country with continental territory.

The confirmed data register more than 330 thousand cases of the disease, but researchers from the *Covid-19 Brasil Portal*, an initiative of the University of São Paulo (USP) and the University of Brasília (UnB), estimate that the number varies between 3,1 and 4,3 million, due to underreporting.

In the case of Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro also neglected the problem, as did President Donald Trump, his Brazilian counterpart said that the disease was a "fantasy" and a "small flu", invented by the media and his political rivals. He is determined to make this pandemic political, in opposite of health issue, blaming his adversaries for trying to destroy the country.

Like his American counterpart, the Brazilian president defied the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization and went out into the streets of the country's capital, Brasília, encouraging the population to go out into the streets and not practice social isolation. He shook hands with supporters in Brasilia, did not wear a protective mask, took a picture of the hugging people and told people not to worry about it.

He said on his social media: "*It's just a little bit of the flu or cold*", blaming the media once again for the hysteria and panic over Covid-19. Even Facebook is removing fake news posts about Covid-19. Among the posts removed by the social network is that of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who claimed that scientists "showed" that there was a cure for the new coronavirus.

It seems unbelievable that public people, such as president of the republic, promote fake news and intolerance (Arroio, 2019). Instead to promote health and protection to vulnerable people, in special those over than 13 million of Brazilians that live in informal settlement named *Favelas*.

The Russian president and the British prime minister also initially denied the seriousness of the problem; the results of these denials are reflected in the numbers of confirmed victims and deaths in both countries that together with Brazil and USA lead the international ranking of victims of COVID-19.

The British scientific journal *The Lancet* of the month of May in its editorial entitled ***Covid-19 in Brazil: "So what?"***, presented a very strong criticism to the management of the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic in Brazil and went on to state that "*perhaps the greatest threat to the country's response to covid-19 is its president, Jair Bolsonaro*".

Even though scientific research, the most recent article published this week reported the largest research to date on chloroquine has concluded that it is not possible to confirm the drug's effectiveness in treating people with Covid-19. The study was performed by Mandeep R. Mehra (Brigham and Women's Hospital), Sapan S. Desai (Surgisphere Corporation), Frank Ruschitzka (University Hospital Zurich) and Amit N. Patel (University of Utah and HCA), (Mehra et al. 2020), shows that the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine is not efficient in the treatment of COVID-19.

The researchers evaluated the effects of using the substance on 96,032 patients infected with the new coronavirus. This study considered patients admitted to 671 hospitals on six continents who tested positive for the virus between December 20, 2019 and April 14 this year.

Both American and Brazilian presidents encourage the use of the drug. Even though the scientific research results show that the use of the drug increases the problem of cardiac arrhythmia, increasing the risk of death by 30%. Also, one of the side effects of hydroxychloroquine is the change in the retina, which can lead to partial or total loss of vision. Even there is evidence based on scientific research, both presidents continue to deny Science and neglect the seriousness of the real problem.

In the Brazilian case, the president dismissed two ministers of health, as they followed the scientific guidelines of the World Health Organization and recommended social isolation as the best strength to prevent the spread of contamination by the virus.

The president decided, contrary to scientific guidelines and studies, to update the ministry's health protocol and recommend the use of the drug chloroquine. The health minister is not a doctor, now he is a military man who does the president's orders, denying scientific studies. Bolsonaro's endorsement has prompted many people to take the drugs without scientific proof of their benefit.

Bolsonarist supporters have used the hashtag #cloroquinasalvavidas (#chloroquine saves lives) on social media to defend the use of the drug, even though there is no scientific research or scientific evidence. Researchers from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, authors of an article critical to the use of the drug, were the target of virtual attacks showing the intolerance of this group of president's supporters who deny Science. This reveals a very low level of scientific literacy among the president's supporters, who are based on a simple personal opinion with no basis and which denies the value of Education, Health and Science.

The unfortunate scenario shows the urgent need for discussion on the role of media literacy for all (Arroio, 2017), as it is evident that a part of the population with a low level of education, low capacity for critical thinking is easily manipulated by fake news that stimulates intolerance and hate Speech (Arroio, 2019).

In view of the *sui generis* situation, the relevance of the role of Education in the world in the context of the pandemic is evident and especially for countries in which their leaders deny Science and reality, and manipulate the data with fake news practicing the worst populism with their supporters and putting human life at risk.

When thinking about the importance of Education, and especially of scientific literacy, a utopian future would be one in which all people would be able to learn at their own pace. Also recognizing early on the value of scientific knowledge so that they could make their decisions based on this knowledge, with the opportunity to experience various fields of knowledge and develop empathy with other human beings.

According to Baptista from University of Lisbon, Portugal (2017, p. 212), “*it is essential that students develop their critical thinking and creativity as well as problem solving, communication, digital, social, intercultural and linguistic skills*”, Science Education has an important contribution to promote the public understanding of Science, critical thinking is necessary to make decisions based on scientific knowledge.

The pandemic's unprecedented experience also makes it possible to think and act to understand and promote actions on the meaning of living globally interconnected. Covid-19 unveils and shows that there are no isolated issues and actions. According to Usak et al. (2020, p. 180), “*The most important subject to teach our youth is that this world does not just belong to us alone*”, this awareness about community, collective, society is urgent.

The virus is unaware of the boundaries, we see on maps. Humanity needs to be able to understand this interrelation and think in a systemic way, seeking to anticipate the impact of its actions on multiple levels and contexts.

It has already neglected climate change, today causing catastrophes that affect mainly the most economically vulnerable populations. And with many efforts, we try to convince authorities that deny Science that time is passing too fast. Actions to mitigate the effects caused by human action on the degradation of the environment are urgent. It is time for climate change education that is likely to affect its prospects, at this moment and into the immediate future (Reid, 2019).

Since World War II, there has been no common event capable of forcing countries around the planet to close schools and universities at the same time. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, the situation is experienced by 826 million students currently paralyzed outside classrooms due to the covid-19 pandemic do not have access to a computer at home. The number corresponds to half of the total number of students in this situation, more than 1.5 billion students and 63 million primary and secondary teachers (UN, 2020).

The covid-19 pandemic has pushed educational institutions around the world to suddenly use long-standing technological tools to create content and remote learning experiences for students. There are different ways to stimulate learning remotely and, if well structured, educational activities can fulfill more than a purely academic function. The diversity of supports and methods in remote education can support the creation of a positive routine for children and young people, guaranteeing some stability in the face of so many changes.

Educators from all areas of knowledge are experiencing, under current circumstances, new possibilities for teaching - and this can be an opportunity for significant change if we rescue the value of Education. An Education that takes care of the most fragile and vulnerable people, that makes sustainability possible the planet to survive and overcome the folly of the dizzying exploitation of human and natural resources.

An Education, based on knowledge, that allows experiences, even in this moment of physical isolation, but not of social isolation, that can update personal relationships, reconnect humanity through the mediation of technology about solidarity, empathy, and respect each other, for the understanding that their individual choices impact the collective.

The context of the pandemic highlights the recognition that Education only makes sense if it is anchored in universal values such as human rights, empathy, solidarity, and that it combats scientific denials’, social reductionism, necropolitics and populism.

The humanized dialogue is intrinsically pedagogical, as knowledge is only built when it happens from experiences; it will not be through the sending of large amounts of content and worksheets to perform at home through technological resources. The use of such resources needs to promote experiences connected to the real needs of people and their contexts, but with the use of technologies without excluding.

Education in the context of covid-19 takes place remotely, needs to enable knowledge of the reality and the feeling of those around us, so that we may be better able to help them. It seems that without mutual help, it does not seem possible to deal with uncertain times. Respect the feeling of the other, enabling the feeling that we are getting more mature from this situation. Promoting listening is necessary, after all about what will be done with thousands of children and young people by the end of physical isolation, when possible, imposed by the risk of contagion.

For sure, we will no longer look at ways of studying and working in the same perspective. We are here, you are not alone, let's go through this together.

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