

Is remote teaching not “teaching”?

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ABSTRACT

The disputes over the meaning of teaching in a pandemic scenario that made it impossible to carry out school activities in person mobilized the writing of this text which aims to provoke reflections on what is being understood by “teaching” when “remote teaching” is meant as something “inferior” than the face-to-face one. Post-structural contributions support the argument that such disputes articulate realistic conceptions of knowledge and project a generic and idealized idea of totality, of equality, in addition to favoring the production of normative schemes that organize the ways of thinking about schooling. Attempts to control what can be taught/learned, creating constraints for teachers and students to perceive themselves as otherness, themselves as presence. With no intention of offering definitive solutions, the reflections presented are the result from interpretations of teaching and learning processes that stem from post-structural contributions.

KEYWORDS

curriculum; post-structuralism; normative void; teaching.

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ENSINO REMOTO NÃO É “ENSINO”?

RESUMO

As disputas pela significação de ensino em um cenário de pandemia que inviabilizou a realização presencial das atividades escolares mobilizaram a escrita deste texto que tem como objetivo provocar reflexões sobre o que está sendo entendido por “ensino” quando o “ensino remoto” é significado como algo “menor” do que o presencial. Aportes pós-estruturais sustentam o argumento de que essas disputas articulam concepções realistas de conhecimento e projetam uma ideia genérica e idealizada de totalidade e de igualdade, além de favorecerem a produção de esquemas normativos que organizam as formas de pensar a escolarização. Tentativas de controle sobre aquilo que pode ser ensinado/aprendido, gerando constrangimentos para que docentes e estudantes se percebam como alteridade e se realizem como presença. Sem a pretensão de oferecer soluções definitivas, são apresentadas reflexões que decorrem de interpretações sobre os processos de ensinar e aprender suscitadas pelos aportes pós-estruturais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

currículo; pós-estruturalismo; vazio normativo; ensino.

¿LA ENSEÑANZA REMOTA NO ES “ENSEÑANZA”?

RESUMEN

Disputas por el sentido de enseñanza, en un escenario de pandemia que imposibilitó la realización presencial de las actividades escolares, movilizó la redacción de este texto que pretende provocar reflexiones sobre lo que se entiende por “enseñanza” cuando la “enseñanza remota” es entendida como algo “menor” que la enseñanza presencial. Aportes posestructurales sostienen el argumento de que estas disputas articulan concepciones realistas del saber y proyectan una idea genérica e idealizada de totalidad, de igualdad, además de favorecer la producción de esquemas normativos que organicen los modos de pensar la escolarización. Intentos de controlar lo que se puede enseñar/aprender, creando restricciones para que profesores y alumnos se perciban a sí mismos como alteridad, como presencia. Sin pretender ofrecer soluciones definitivas, se presentan reflexiones que resultan de interpretaciones de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje planteadas por aportes postestructurales.

PALABRAS CLAVE

currículo; posestructuralismo; vacío normativo; enseñanza.

INTRODUCTION

Reasoning about the education field, mainly about discipline matrix, is becoming more intense. Such reflections are based on the discursive perspective from which the appropriation of theoretical inputs from other knowledge fields have been favoring enquires about “truths” on how to think and exercise education. This process contributes to reverse the sedimentation of meanings that legitimize, and guide decisions made during schooling processes.

Some of these enquires have been facing resistance, since they have influenced meanings that are the very basis of the contemporary educational thinking. Equity, universality, emancipation, and awareness are some of the meanings that have been drafted based on post-structural and post-foundational readings. It is possible interpreting these meanings as “empty” (Lopes, 2017), if one appropriates the Discourse Theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2010). These meanings get empty due to outcomes from the saturation of meanings aimed at fulfilling their meanings, such as dispute processes whose outcomes cannot be foreseeing at first, and that make it impossible achieving the ultimate establishment of any meaning. The sense of “emptiness” is not related to absence, but to the exhaustion of meanings as attempts to fill and establish a given meaning.

Lopes (2013), in compliance with Mouffe (1998), advocates that “emptiness” favors the over-politicization of the social sphere, since the proliferation of meanings — and of disputes and negotiations about them — reinforces the idea of an agonistic democracy contingently taken as becoming. This is a dispute process that struggles for meanings in the discursive field, according to which democracy is built without the illusion that it is possible using any rational or logic basis capable of ultimately anchoring our certainties and/or beliefs, without guarantees about the final resolution of any human phenomenon.

These reflections lead to other interpretations about disputes and polarizations about the meanings of education, school, and teaching at pandemic times. These disputes concern attempts to establish some sense to these meanings. Disputes and decisions linked to “certainties” fed on the idea of what education and teaching are, or should be, about. They regard polarizations associated with what we are used to think/naturalize as schooling functioning standards.

By taking the mentioned contributions as theoretical reference, this article was encouraged by the intense debate set among different positions and certainties about teaching that have emerged after the activities in school environment were canceled in schooling *space/times*,¹ at all levels, worldwide, due to the covid-19 pandemic since 2020. The interruption of school activities in education facilities and the organization of remote schooling activities, be them synchronized or not, involved several interests, viewpoints and arguments that were pro and against

1 The spelling is appropriate based on the proposition by Elizabeth Macedo about thinking the discipline matrix production process and *space/time* for cultural negotiation.

remote teaching and/or distance learning — oftentimes, this process run without the proper differentiation between these teaching/learning modes.

The current article was motivated by the will to better understand that reports on and claims for the right to school must not authorize us to wonder about face-to-face teaching. Actually, they should help us going deeper in reflections about exclusions set in and by the school in times of “normality”. It does not mean disregarding legitimate concerns, such as risk of precarious conditions for the teaching function, the impact of economic and social inequalities that alienate a significant part of the population — be it because it does not have access to the internet or because it does not have the proper infrastructure to dedicate to teaching (in the case of teachers) and to learning (in the case of students). However, the herein proposed reflection aims at triggering enquires and reasoning about what has been understood as “teaching” when “remote teaching” is signified as “less important”, as less qualified than the face-to-face teaching. This discussion has mobilized educators, managers, responsible agents, and the general society since the first months of social distancing.

The content in the current article was substantiated by the theoretical-methodological reference known as Discursive Theory, which was developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1987; 2010), and by theoretical operators created by Jacques Derrida (1997; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2006; 2008; 2012). The theoretical discussion based on these authors’ appropriation of reflections was motivated by Derrida’s deconstructionist perspective, which aims at drafting the meanings of teaching that organize and legitimate schools’ functioning processes.

After all that said, it must be clear that the herein adopted theoretical reference does not allow propositions on a “new” school organization model, on a “new” Pedagogy. It also does not regard denying set or unset standards accountable for organizing each teaching level, in each institution. It actually concerns shining light on the contingent dimension, on the provisional profile of these standards, although they may seem stable and immutable, since they are set on solid and definitive fundamentals. It also does not regard denying the existence of fundamentals, but to take them as contingents.

The present text was organized based on the understanding that it is necessary deconstructing this thinking from the Derridean perspective. It means reversing knowledge, education, and teaching sedimentation by stating the contingency of these discourses to reactivate other meanings, other ways of thinking (Lopes, 2015).

This theoretical investment is justified by the fact that erasing the contingent dimension of fundamentals that organize the production of meaning given to education, knowledge, and teaching favors the control of differences, based on producing normative schemes that, in their turn, start making decision, *a priori*, about what to, how and who teaches, as well as that set who “students” must become. Therefore, this process opens room for embarrassment faced by those who can embrace the function of agents that understand and assume who they are and who they want to be. This embarrassment can stop others from feeling themselves as presence, as plurality and difference (Biesta, 2006).

The first section of this article introduces and addresses discourses that favor the production of realistic meanings to knowledge that support the production of certainties on education and teaching. Realistic concepts are discursive constructions that operate from the belief in the possibility of fully accessing the intelligibility of “reality”, of the “real being” of all things, as long as they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to do so. They help understanding knowledge as something that can be adapted to political and/or instrumental goals, as something that must be appropriated by subjects in order to be put at service of previously defined things (Pereira, 2017). This is how education has been signified, as emancipatory promise (Pereira, 2012). An emancipation that presupposes the appropriation of certain contents that would enable them to join a given rational community (Biesta, 2006).

The next section addresses the impact of these discursive constructions on the ways to signify and organize teaching functioning, education and teaching meanings that boost the sense of controlling differences, by compromising teachers and students’ self-perception as alterity to the detriment of a generic and idealized sense of wholeness (Macedo, 2017).

Finally, the article presents reflections resulting from interpretations of teaching and learning processes substantiated by the appropriation of post-structural inputs that can help reversing the sedimentation of truth.

PROCESSES TO BUILD “CERTAINTIES” ABOUT EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING

Sacristán (1999, p. 150, our translation) states that the modern education was known as

[...] the means for individuals and society’s progress as a whole. Progress is possible, as well as universal schooling. Based on its logic and contents, it is the essential means to encourage and fill [progress] with content: education is its lever, and what [education] provides means, in itself, advancement for subjects and society. Without this power, we would be inert.

The sense of progress associated with the knowledge-development process and, consequently, with improved human moral and material condition, favored the production/circulation of meaning, and it has made it possible consolidating the modern educational project. School played fundamental role in this process when it became the social institution accountable for the formation of new generations by qualifying them to act based on a new rationality. The modern subject is that of reason; over these new generations, one finds the emancipatory possibilities (Lyotard, 1984).

School is seen as the institution in charge of socializing qualified and selected knowledge, which is taken as the most adequate to be taught. This knowledge was signified as universal; its appropriation would mainly open the opportunity to correct the world, rather than just to better understand how it works (Pereira, 2012).

It regards a realistic understanding of world functioning and phenomena that can be summarized by the idea that it is possible assertively accessing and describing the existence of a world external to thinking. Laclau and Mouffe (1987) disagree with the realistic concepts; as they clarify: it does not imply denying the materiality of the world — the existence of things —, but understanding that such an existence can only be understood within a whole set of relationships, as part of a chain of articulations that form a significant wholeness. This wholeness is defined by these authors as discourse; it is a significant wholeness wherein differential elements integrating the same field of meaning are articulated. The mentioned authors have concluded that, in order for this articulation to be possible, the being, the object and the phenomenon must be named. In other words, it is not the name that defines the being, the object, and the phenomenon. The name is just an attempt to represent them. We can say an attempt because, based on Bingham (2008), by giving sense for a meaning, the name allows the differentiation of this meaning. The social sphere becomes textuality within the process to fight for establishing meanings. Laclau and Mouffe (2010) also warn about the impossibility of fully closing the signification process by arguing that the representation of the object by the meaning will never be total, it will always be distorted (Laclau, 2006).

Signification processes are also dispute processes wherein produced meanings about the world and world phenomena are contingent, arbitrary, and provisional interpretations that enable making the world intelligible. They do not fully represent what the world and its phenomena actually are.

The mentioned understanding allows drafting the epistemological privilege attributed to a given knowledge type, based on the assumption that its appropriation would make it possible for human beings to appropriate it and to make “[...] conscious [intervention] in the world in order to build a fairer and more democratic society.” (Pereira, 2017, p. 602, our translation). This privilege derives from disputes for certain meanings of both the world and human beings; they are discourses that can have effect on and form us as we are. Similarly, schooling — set for a kind of knowledge signified as universal — is also part of a process of disputes that help establishing epistemological privilege. This is a language game that leads to symbiosis between knowledge and teaching content, in which “[...] schooling [plays] on the appropriation terrain of a knowledge-thing.” (Macedo, 2017, p. 549, our translation).

The Theory of Discourse by Laclau and Mouffe (2010) helps thinking about the epistemological privilege attributed to a knowledge type which is the very outcome of hegemony processes. This process is featured by the production of and dispute for meanings that are carried out amidst tensions resulting in the hierarchy and exclusion of knowledge contingently taken as less legitimate.

The appropriation of a knowledge type legitimated as more appropriate, due to its signification as “[...] asset of knowledge and competence, of institutions, of values and symbols, set over generations and characteristic of a particular human community, and defined based on a more or less broad way, on a more or less exclusive way [...]” (Forquin, 1993, p. 12, our translation), implies the possibility of forging a given identity, which is previously idealized and defined, and that, consequently, enables blocking the emergence of other likely identities.

Regardless of the political-ideological matrix, homogenizing cultural projects and discursive construction contribute to establish an assumed metalinguistic neutrality that has been supporting an idealized identity, whose content is fully defined. Accordingly, this process ends up organizing itself to silence differences or, at least, to acknowledge them, as long as they remain subjected to a particularity defined as ideal.

However, despite the apparent stability in the hegemony of the herein addressed logic, school, as social institution, is often faced by differences and by excluded particularities, as an attempt to filter/select knowledge.

These exclusions are not always explicit, or even perceived, as mentioned. After all, the school is signified as institution aimed at equally attending *all*, as long as *all* fit what was pre-set, the way of thinking school and education, in order to think of a school that has been ineffective and poorly productive. It is so, because this school sets barriers for the schooling process to remain an ethical and egalitarian acknowledgment space, to welcome alterity (Bhabha, 2013). Control attempts do not guarantee total control over the other as alterity, since they actually boost exclusion production.

Thus, advocating for school education as right of *all* means defending the assumption that, as human beings, we share something that has to be necessarily common and universal, as well as signified as condition to ensure the establishment of a more democratic society. Macedo (2015, p. 869, our translation) states that it regards a discursive construction wherein “[...] equality is supported by an abstract similarity capable of guaranteeing it.” Choices related to schooling processes — what to teach, how to teach, how to evaluate — are arbitrary decisions made on behalf of such an abstract resemblance, no matter if it is projected from a more progressive or conservative political position.

Discourses articulate meanings full of this logic, of this way of thinking about the world where an abstract equality is praised. It is on behalf of such equality that a universal common, yet to be offered to an abstract *all*, feeds fetish on school functioning and on teaching. This fetish proliferates within a context of disputes for education and teaching signification, within a scenario where the discourse pro and against opening schools, and/or pro or against remote teaching, emerges as antagonistic by articulating meanings for school and teaching as attempts to draw differences between “us” and “them”. Based on theoretical references, it is possible to understand the references to face-to-face teaching, which is signified as the one ensuring the future of new generations, as one of these examples, according to which the contingencies of fundamentals this statement lays over are approached, as well as the contingencies of the antagonism that seem to differentiate them.

Accordingly, it is not a matter of “being right”, about what we signify as school or teaching, but of how we understand the contingent dimension and the limits imposed by these meanings. This contingent tends to be approached and to hide countless possibilities to interpret and signify pre-conditions that have allowed any signification or decision to be made.

Identifying contingents allow a given hegemony of meanings attributed to schooling processes, and it means the deconstruction advocated by Derrida (1997;

2008). It is a theoretical investment essential to understand what has, contingently, allowed some meanings to block some many other possibilities to think and interpret what seems to be set and established.

This perspective highlights the fact that polarization does not help the discussion about what must be done during times of sanitary crisis. However, it helps wearing the democratic space (Mouffe, 2001); unfortunately, such a reality has worsened in the pandemic scene. Polarization leads to hierarchy, and it tends to stop the signification process and to threaten politics, which is herein understood as contingent action marked by conflict, disputes and negotiations that form the very basis of the social sphere (Laclau, 1996). Polarization limits the field for disputes and negotiations, acts to erase differences between what is identified as “us” and “them”; moreover, what we have established as “us” can have in common with what we define as “them”. However, neither “us” nor “them” can exist as “identity” in itself.

BUT WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH TEACHING?

The herein advocated argument lies on the fact the discipline matrix and evaluation policies that are still in course worldwide have been favoring the naturalization of normative schemes and homogenization processes applied to such matrix (Ortigão and Pereira, 2016), since these processes feed expectations for controlling differences and policies that have been introduced as the most appropriate solutions for educational issues (Pereira, 2019).

However, despite all the criticism towards this homogenization and to the control of differences (Lopes, 2015; 2017; Macedo, 2012; 2015; 2017), there is a certain degree of consensus on the will to develop a desirable learning pattern, although a conflicting one (Mouffe, 2001). What is actually developed as desirable learning pattern also faces different positions that are pro or against remote teaching; pro or against the return to face-to-face school activities, even after having covid-19 under control. According to this debate, there is a desired pattern developed without the need of having enquires about how students and teachers experience and feel the anguish and doubts about this particular moment.

Reports on the infeasibility of providing students in the public network with the same opportunities available for students in private schools were frequent in meetings and chats with teachers working in the basic education public network throughout 2021.² Actions taken by private schools — such as the elaboration and distribution of exhausting lists of memorization activities (just as it happens in the classroom) — concerned with the “contents” expected for students to “learn” during the social distancing period and with evaluation practices, among others (such as the attempt to reproduce face-to-face teaching practices in remote teaching during the social distancing time), were the main comparison parameters. Despite reports

2 Activities organized by a group of teachers from a Pedagogy course of a public university in order to fulfil the demand of a school from Rio de Janeiro’s municipal network, located in a peripheral community.

by teachers and child guardians, there were countless images on the internet showing such frustrated attempts to carry out these extrapolations — images such as teachers writing observations on the white board right in front of their computers.

These are legitimate matters that account for teachers, students, and child guardians’ anguish. They shall not be minimized, since they truly caused much loss. However, it is worth arguing: what were, or should be, the essential contents at that moment? Even when it comes to middle class students that were assisted by their schools, would the fact of “not losing contents” be the most important issue? How much can such an understanding tell about the emptying of schools as exchange and welcoming *space/time*, given the privileges attributed to teaching contents that are selected in a fully contingent and arbitrary way? Regardless of the pandemic, the justification for any attachment to any mechanical face-to-face teaching model do not find support in certainties on fundamentals that can ultimately prove what knowledge and teaching actually are, that can explain how knowledge teaching must be carried out and, consequently, what and how students must learn. How such an attachment deals with expectations about controlling how teaching and learning must take place, and about who students must become?

As previously discussed, discourses capable of articulating the meanings of epistemological realism help and legitimate the understanding of knowledge as something that can be appropriate, accumulated and put at the service of certain ends (Lemos, 2018), of a logic to think knowledge in a way to favor the activation of standardization and control mechanisms applied to learning at and through school. These control expectations do not consider the “[...] complexity of the schooling function, which is not limited to the mere transmission of socially relevant knowledge to new generations.” (Esteban, 2010, p. 65, our translation).

Embodying an attitude to break up with the linguistic universalism, by stating that the relationships between language and objects we name become intelligible within negotiation and translation processes (Derrida, 2008), is a practice that has been mobilizing reasoning about the need of theoretically investing in the process to deconstruct realistic traces articulated by the educational thinking. According to Derrida (1997), these traces form tradition, not as its permanence, but as permanently negotiated, translated and immutable meanings; they are the very result from erasing the contingents of negotiation/translation processes.

According to the mentioned author, translation is the place of *différance* — “[...] movement (active and passive) that consists in differentiating, by delay, delegation, postponement, resend, deviation, extension, reserve.” (Derrida, 2001, p. 14, our translation); is the process through which significations do not stop proliferating within a differential, different and differed network. Translation makes it possible to fully bring something that was said to present times (Derrida, 2006; 2008).

Based on Derrida (2001), it is impossible for language to tell anything about an essence; moreover, the several uses of language are a failed attempt to explain named things. The production of differences, signification conditions and of structure as a whole, is the movement of *différance*. It is not observed through the origin of an undivided unit of a present possibility. “What differs the present

is [...] that from which the presence is — in its representative, in its sign, in its trace — announced or desired.” (Derrida, 2001, p. 15, our translation).

Derrida (2001, p. 11, our translation) gives the possibility of reflecting about how the centrality of reason operates by promoting fundamentals and by reestablishing a place of truth and essential identities, by criticizing the constant search for the origin/wholeness of things and the statement that the presence “[...] of the object, the presence of meaning to awareness, the presence in itself in the so-called ‘living word’, and in consciousness itself [...]”. These are attempts to stop the difference provided by language, because the educational thinking is, simultaneously, composed by and encompassed in this stopping process; these attempts explain and justify control expectations linked to teaching concepts and organization.

However, particular demands and struggles for differences have become stronger. Different forms of being in the world have been fighting for the *space/time* of statements by claiming for legitimacy. The development of information and communication technologies has been intensifying global cultural exchange and flows that lead to fast and intense changes that help perceiving a world in chaos. This is the fertile land for the proliferation of the fear, uncertainty and insecurity that make us long for the “lost stability”. This is a nostalgic attitude through which we attach to the sense of missing an imagined past. Such an attachment makes us think that we had more control over our own lives in the past; consequently, over what must be taught and learnt, and over how a given content must be taught and learnt. Uncertainties caused by the pandemic seem to have activated memories from an imagined past when control over things was possible and did not leave any room for uncertainties. But it was never true. Problems got worse during the pandemic, but they will remain in place, just waiting for us to go back to “normal”.

We are still experiencing the uncertainties described by Esteve (1991, p. 97, our translation) in the excerpt where he compares teachers to

[...] a group of actors dressed in garments from a determined time, but all of a sudden the scenario is changed, in just half of the stage, and a new background is unrolled, in the past scenario. A new post-modern, colorful, and shiny play hides the previous scenario, a classical and dour one. The actors’ first reaction would be surprised. Later, distress and discomfort, and a strong sense of aggressiveness, the will to stop the work and seek the accountable ones, in order to, at least, find an explanation. What can be done? Keep on telling the verses, dragging large garments on half of the post-modern scenario, full of unstoppable lights? Stop the play and quit the stage? Ask the public to stop laughing, so they can hear the verses? The problem lies on the fact that, regardless of who has made the change, the actors are the ones who show their faces. Therefore, they are the ones who will have to find a good way out, although they do not hold accountable for the change. Reactions to this situation would be quite different from each other; but, in any case, the word “embarrassment” could summarize the feelings of this group of actors in face of a series of unforeseen circumstances that force them to play a ridiculous part.

Green and Bigum, in their article “Aliens in the classroom”, published in 1993, advocate that these feelings of unsafety deriving from the intensification of a media culture and of the assumed decline in contemporary life (Green and Bigum, 2011, p. 207, our translation) open room for “[...] a new generation, which has a totally different constitution [...]”. These authors are provocative and suggest that the association between teachers and students must be thought as the encounter of subjects who share a feeling of mutual estrangement.

These two texts lead to enquires about conflicts and tensions deriving from the hard time welcoming differences that stand in front of us, on a daily basis, in every classroom. If, in face-to-face classes, we can nurture the will to find them, when we work remotely, we are forced to acknowledge their infeasibility. But is it desirable? From this perspective, the question “but how am I going to give a test remotely?” reveals how we mobilize ourselves to control what we think the other must learn and what are the post-structural inputs helping us to understand how embarrassment of differences are attempts to avoid what the other can state as the particular presence of a world that is pure plurality (Biesta, 2006).

The school, just as we know it, is driven by fundamentals that are solid and naturalized. These fundamentals have implications in several issues that we can identify in this institution. These problems tend to be presented as pedagogical mistakes, formation deviations and lack of proper methodology; they open space for the proliferation of salvationist solutions that deepen the reasoning on the network of certainties gathered over the centuries, solutions that have made it possible for schools to consolidate themselves as social institutions that also ended up leading us to dilemma and paradoxes we have a hard time understanding.

Keep on thinking knowledge and, consequently, teaching and learning, based on fundamentals seen as solid and immutable implies insisting in the failure of a model that cannot support itself. Based on Esteves (1991), it is in this model that we act in the same play by experiencing the illusion that we are guided by the same standards and that, somehow, they are immutable. Oftentimes, the attachment to the face-to-face teaching expresses this illusion about an idealized past when all predicted contents were taught and learned by *all*. It is as if, in the past, we were capable of ensuring 100% audience and acceptance for the play we were acting in. What is even worse: we assume that the right to education must be reduced to the duty of *all* to learn predefined contents, competences, and skills. The idea of *all* always brings along a generic subject taken as ideal identity. This process favors the exclusion of real subjects who hardly encompass this wholeness.

Although we do not intend to provide salvationist solutions, but, in order to be faithful to the theoretical input organizing this reflection, we aimed at inviting readers to reason on the need of controlling the imponderable. These features mark the human existence; however, the intense changes we have been experiencing in the contemporary world make it clearer that we are “language, split and precarious beings” (Lopes, 2013, p. 8, our translation) who live in a world that is pure chaos (Derrida, 2005). It is so, because we have everything that is chaos, so, we long for stability.

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS ARE POSSIBLE...

The appropriation of post-structural inputs has been productive for the process to deconstruct and stop the sedimentation of meanings given to education and teaching. Neither teaching, nor education can ensure anyone's salvation. On the other hand, understanding education as the process to produce the other and of taken teachers as technicians — such as a midwife in charge of releasing the rational potential of the other — is what allows us to think the other as someone to be saved (Biesta, 2006). From a salvationist perspective, teachers' task lies on producing the other in order for it to be inserted in a preexisting order, in a preexisting rational community, in an essentialist logic to think human beings and their formation as common identities. However, Biesta (2006) warns that we live in a world of plurality and differences; therefore, the challenge of education is, or should be, to make it possible for each human being, who is unique and singular, to become present in a world that is pure difference.

Accordingly, the problem does not lie on where teaching takes place, but on how it takes place, on how universalist and essentialist meta-narratives contribute to stop differences and subjectivities by setting barriers for individuals to do not acknowledge themselves as alterity and difference, besides creating embarrassments for teachers to experience their function in other ways. Based on Derrida (2002), teaching works as the practice through which teachers produce the other by erasing themselves within this process to become “instruments” used by knowledge to speak by itself. It is essential highlighting that, based on the aforementioned author, this erasing process is never complete, the differentiation process never stops. Thus, thinking teachers, and teaching position, like this, is a kind of dispute for teaching meanings and for teachers' place in this process.

The philosopher's reasoning on the erasing of teachers, when they become instruments at the service of something, helps us thinking about the process to erase the students: teachers objectified as “transmission channel” and students objectified as “receptacles” of knowledge, based on the assumption that this is the condition for subjects to recognize themselves within a given pre-existing culture, to the detriment of their own existence (Biesta, 2006).

Thinking about teaching as the transmission of something to somebody, and that it must be learnt as it was pre-established, is a practice that follows a realistic logic that has been favoring the submission of education to teaching (Macedo, 2012). This author is provocative in another text; she states that the function of school does not lie on teaching — or, at least, it should not do so. “It has to educate, and this is not teaching.” (Macedo, 2017, p. 541, our translation).

Reasoning about the provocation by Macedo (2017) can be a fruitful exercise to deconstruct our “certainties” on education, school, and teaching, in order to mainly deconstruct the sense that education is reduced to teaching. This exercise could avoid a polarized and non-fruitful discussion to seek setting sides opposite to those that one advocates for and to those who are against remote teaching, since this polarization drains the power that could be driven to ensuring the material conditions for providing school for *all*. However, it

should be done based on the understanding that opening room for the material conditions means guaranteeing a right, as well as becoming a presence without the duty to submit to what was established as common and adequate for *all*. It is so, because what is established results from contingent decisions that favor the process to “[...] erase the difference which it is impossible to conceive the subject-other, or even culture itself, without.” (Macedo, 2017, p. 550, our translation). This author, based on Bhabha (2013), assumes a translating perspective of culture. Culture is seen as cultural enunciation practice and, as emancipation, it is “[...] always open to alterity, and it forces the constant negotiation with this alterity [...]” (Macedo, 2017, p. 551).

Covid-19 led to intense changes in all dimensions of our lives. We were affected in different ways, we all behaved differently, we signified these changes in different ways; these significations were cultural enunciations. We are engaged in language games, in discursive construction that operate in the standardization logic, in the logic of regulation and control, based on the illusion that it is possible controlling chaos, that there is a salvation solution capable of taking us out of this place; feelings that tend to get more intense due to the rooting of uncertainties.

However, be it to advocate for remote teaching, or to build arguments to support the infeasibility of it, it seems to be more productive to problematize the reasons why such differences affect us and make us naturalize the effects of a standard that assaults us as teachers and students. Appealing to the “normality of the past” is an illusion. Thus, why not trying to look at the situation in a different way, by perceiving the gaps that open up when relationships need to be thought in other virtual *space/times*, by reflecting about other possibilities to think about education, teaching and learning, by breaking up with the linear perspective of the teaching-learning idea in order to think this relationship as enunciation *space/time*, by disrupting the realistic concepts substantiating the transmission logic found in the idea of having one person to teach and another one to learn?

Once more, Derrida (2012) gives arguments to think the act of learning as an event, as the thing that escapes the attempts to calculate and preserve the relationships marking the alterities and that, simultaneously, displace them. This event is something “exceptional, without rules”, event as something that “[...] must be exceptional, and such a singularity of the exception without rule cannot open room for anything, except for symptoms.” (Derrida, 2012, p. 247, our translation). Thinking about teaching as an event implies placing drafting uncertainties about education, knowledge, school, and teaching, which are full of objectified meanings of culture; it also implies operating in the deconstruction logic that seems to be introduced and established as part of a school tradition expressed by a normative discourse, according to which, education is reduced to a project aimed at conforming subjectivity, a project of acknowledgement that takes into account subjectivities and triggers perverse effects on differences.

It concerns enquiring and acting to provide possibilities so that other meanings, other forms of doing, can emerge. However, it also aims at allowing the understanding about difficulties set in order to stop other practices to rise. It regards deconstructing the rationality capacity, as it is able to ensure objectivity to

teaching and learning by accepting the arbitrary profile found in decision about what to teach by quitting the intention to control what must be learnt and taught. It is important thinking, like Macedo (2017, p. 549, our translation), “[...] the school as place for inter-relations, where the subject who was not invented [...] can be acknowledged [...]”. Planning, setting goals for the development of a new that still does not exist and/or that we do not know what it is, demands each teacher to adopt an ethical accountability attitude (Derrida, 2004). It is from such a perspective that a non-representational epistemology can be produced.

Thus, school’s leading role stops being thought as teachers’ privilege, and it implies thinking it as students’ privilege. It concerns thinking a dialogical and intersubjective relationship between teachers and students; processes in which ethical democratic practices of ethical and collective accountability are articulated (Derrida, 2004). It means thinking a sort of responsibility linked to the response to a call (Derrida, 2004), of an ethics of alterity that encourages us to comply and to think about the rules to respond to the call of the Other summoning us. This is a kind of ethics and responsibility that cannot be objectified, since they make us “[...] responsible for life, for beings, things, for the world and nature.” (Farias, 2012, p. 188, our translation). Teachers and students are responsible for what was *learnt* as knowledge. In this case, hearing and mediation are essential for the classroom, no matter if it is physical or virtual, to emerge as vigorous *space/time* capable of potentiating the enunciation and negotiation of meanings.

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