



Dropout in the context of distance education: a review of “pre” and “post” pandemic at all educational levels

Avoidance in the context of distance education: a review of the “pre” and “post” pandemic at all educational levels

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Summary

Distance Education (EAD) has become popular over the last few decades in the context of Higher Education, but new dilemmas have been brought to non-face-to-face teaching due to its “emergency” adoption in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing problems that they extend to all levels of education, such as educational dropout, a phenomenon in which students abandon the educational process. This scientific article seeks to analyze the phenomenon of educational dropout from “pre” and “post” pandemic perspectives, emphasizing the factors that generate this phenomenon at all levels of education, as well as presenting possible solutions to the problem. The results revealed a series of factors that lead to evasion within the scope of EAD, such as lack of time, need to enter the job market, difficulties in interacting with tutors, colleagues and the institutions themselves, difficulties in dealing with technologies, among countless others.

Key words: Educational Evasion; Distance Education; Factors and Solutions.

Abstract

Distance Education (Distance Education) has become popular over the last decades in the context of Higher Education, but new dilemmas have been brought to non-face-to-face teaching from its “emergency” adoption in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing problems that extend to all levels of education, such as educational evasion, a phenomenon in which students abandon the educational process. This scientific article seeks to analyze the phenomenon of educational evasion in the perspectives “pre” and “post” pandemic, highlighting the factors that generate this phenomenon at all levels of education, as well as on the presentation of possible solutions to the issue. The results revealed a series of factors that provide evasion within the SCOPE of THE, such as scarcity of time, need to enter the labor market, difficulties in interacting with tutors, colleagues and with the institutions themselves, difficulties in dealing with technologies, among many others.

Keywords: Educational Evasion; Distance Education; Factors and Solutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Distance Education (EAD) became quite popular with the advent and popularization of new technologies, such as devices connected to the internet, especially in Higher Education, meaning that people could attend their courses and subjects anywhere, without the link between the classroom space and the teacher. However, with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, a paradoxical situation was created: not only did Higher Education courses need to adopt an “emergency” distance learning model due to the need for social isolation, but other educational levels also need to be restricted to remote education, such as Elementary School and

High school.

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Precisely because it was an adoption at a critical moment of distance learning, most institutions and teachers at all levels were not fully prepared to deal with the challenges of non-face-to-face teaching, generating a series of obstacles to the consolidation of a model of quality teaching mediated by Technologies

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Information and Communication (ICTs). This reality also brought a challenge to students, both in the context of Higher Education and at other levels.

A problem widely observable throughout the history of Brazilian education has thus worsened: educational evasion, which can be summarized as the “abandonment” of the institution by the student. Dropout was already present both in the context of Basic Education and in the context of Higher Education (whether in the EAD modality or not), but this new remote teaching configuration brought new challenges to ensuring the presence and retention of students at all levels. education.

That said, the general objective of the present study consists of an approach to educational evasion within the scope of EAD, considering both the “pre” pandemic moment and the “post” pandemic moment where its adoption became indispensable. To achieve the aforementioned objective, the specific objectives were dismissed in the following provision:

- Carry out a conceptual approach involving Distance Education (EAD) and evasion, also impacting about the moment of mandatory adoption of non-face-to-face teaching following the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil;
- Analyze the factors that generate evasion in the context of distance learning, placing emphasis on higher education in the “pre” pandemic and for all levels of education during “post” pandemic;
- Point out possible solutions in an attempt to solve the problem of evasion within the scope of EAD.

The research problem, that is, the question that aims to answer with the preparation of the scientific article, starts from the following question: what are the factors that generate evasion within the scope of EAD and what are the possibilities of reducing evasion rates in the non-face-to-face teaching? It should be noted that, for the purposes intended by this study, the term “post pandemic” does not refer to the end of the pandemic at a future time, but rather to the moment in which the pandemic context was in force where the adoption of remote teaching became mandatory. .

The justification involves two basic meanings: 1) the first concerns the popularization of distance learning over the last few years in Higher Education, analyzing factors that motivate evasion in this modality and possible solutions; 2) the second concerns the need to critically reflect on the obligation of distance learning in the pandemic context, seeking to list aspects that can contribute to access and retention in distance education at all levels.

2 METHODOLOGY

Distance Education (EAD) has been a relevant object of study in the contemporary educational context, so that different researchers have already analyzed the phenomena related to non-face-to-face teaching. For the preparation of the present study, which addresses evasion in the context of EAD in the “pre” and “post” scenario, a bibliographical research was carried out, which starts from the collection of data and information from the contributions of other authors on the theme. Oliveira (2010) highlights that bibliographical research is one in which the results can be qualified based on the objectivity of findings and a real diagnosis of the research topic, being a type of subjective research that involves the study of human experience.

Regarding the time frame of the materials selected for the preparation of this study, research sources published exclusively between the years 2017 and 2021 were selected, allowing an exploration involving only recent aspects of evasion within the scope of EAD. In total, 22 study materials were collected, of which 6 were discarded because they did not fit the research objectives, thus totaling 16 sources consulted, presented and referenced throughout the presentation and analysis of the results obtained.

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3 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

3.1 Distance Education: Concepts and conceptions and the “emergency” adoption of distance learning in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic

According to Silva and Pavão (2019), educational processes can be classified based on the variables time and space, and in face-to-face education processes, teacher and student meet in time and space in the classroom.

class, while in distance learning there is the non-face-to-face modality of education, where teacher and student are separated in space and/or time. According to Law No. 9,934/96 (Law of Guidelines and Bases Established for National Education) in its article 1, distance education can be defined as

(...) the educational modality where didactic-pedagogical mediation in the teaching and learning processes occurs with the use of information and communication means and technologies, with students and teachers developing educational activities in different places or times (BRASIL, 1996).

When we talk about EAD, in this sense, we are talking about an educational modality that occurs with the separation of time and/or space through the intermediary of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), almost always involving a computer with internet access, allowing communication and exchange of information between the teacher and their students via digital platforms.

According to Bueno de Camargo (2021) EAD gave a new meaning to educational processes in their entirety following the Covid-19 pandemic, which broke out in 2020, making non-face-to-face teaching mandatory given the need for isolation and social distancing, considering that even before this fact “the remote characteristic of user interactions requires institutions to develop innovative ways to monitor how students perform and how they react to certain situations to which they are exposed” (BUENO DE CAMARGO, p. 2021, p. 13).

The aforementioned author points out, however, that although EAD appears to be an innovation following the emergence and popularization of the internet and electronic devices, it followed a series of steps to reach this point: firstly, correspondence courses were offered, then radio and television courses (telecourses), moving in sequence to EAD at Open Universities and to teleconferences until the advent of *World Wide Web* and the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It should be noted that distance learning, although it became largely mandatory with the emergence of the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic, was already quite popular prior to this fact. Based on this clear and objective understanding of non-face-to-face education and its main concepts, the following chapter will address educational evasion in general, providing theoretical support to analyze the issue of evasion within the scope of distance learning.

3.2 Notes on Evasion in Education

Silva Filho and Lima Araújo (2017, p. 37) “evasion and school dropout are a major problem related to Brazilian education”, since the goals set out by the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988, which determine the universalization of elementary education and the “eradication” of illiteracy in the country have not yet materialized, even with education being a guaranteed right and determined in article 5, with housing, work, leisure, among others, constituting a social right that is difficult to achieve full at national level. For the author, evasion consists of the act of evading, running away, abandoning or giving up something, so that when we talk about school evasion or educational evasion we are talking about the act of running away or abandoning school due to the completion of another activity.

Evasion is

One of the weaknesses of the Brazilian educational system is an issue far from being resolved, as it affects different levels of education in public and private institutions. It has been the target of confusing educational policies that have not been sustained for long, and this is felt in the lack of identity in teaching, which needs to be discussed so that real means of coping can be sought. A change is necessary that is not a simple passive adaptation, but that seeks to find a proper place to build something new, allowing the expansion of human potential and the emancipation of the collective, looking in all directions and dimensions — historical, cognitive, social, affective and cultural. Social, cultural, political and economic factors, as well as school factors, in which educators collaborate every day to make the problem worse, through the use of an outdated teaching method or a practice crystallized as a result of inexperience, end up developing the content out of context and meaningless for the student (SILVA FILHO; LIMA DE ARAÚJO, p. 2017, p. 45).

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Although school dropout in the scope of basic education is the most critical factor in analyzing the issue, authors such as Figueiredo and Ribeiro Salles (2017) consider that this phenomenon can also be observed in the scope of Professional Education and even Higher Education. The authors highlight the existence of multiple factors that can generate evasion, which are presented below:

Individual factors: dropout rates are higher among students with little motivation for education or who carry out professional activities (for example, in the case of students who work from an early age to help obtain family income), in addition to other factors such as absenteeism, bad behavior, pregnancy, unsatisfactory school performance, among others. Other factors could be cited as individual, such as drug and alcohol addiction on the part of students, distancing them from educational processes in general;

Contextual factors: the family is the main contextual factor, involving the socioeconomic condition and family arrangement, not only due to the student's need to dedicate themselves to work, but also due to other elements, such as the lack of support from parents and guardians regarding education. The influence of groups of friends who have already abandoned school and education is another example of a contextual factor that increases dropout rates in the Brazilian case;

School factors: among the school factors, we can mention the role of the curriculum, the relationship between the student and the school/teachers and the teacher's own professional performance, which should motivate students in relation to the educational process, but often does not.

Based on these three groups of factors above, it is possible to understand that educational/school dropout is a complex factor, with a series of reasons that end up keeping the student away from the educational institution. But what about when we take this complex equation to the field of Distance Education? In theory, as it is a more flexible educational model, it should be more attractive to students as a whole, but, in practice, the dropout process is also seen as a challenge for the consolidation of non-face-to-face education in the country. In the following topic, issues involving school dropout specifically within the scope of distance learning will be addressed, considering both general factors and specific factors of the consolidation of non-face-to-face education in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3 Evasion in the Context of Distance Education in the “pre” and “post” moments Covid-19 Pandemic: Causes and Factors

As seen, a series of individual, contextual and school factors end up being responsible for generating the School dropout rates are still high in the country. From now on, such factors will be analyzed from the perspective of EAD. Aorivan Possa et al. (2020) sought to specifically analyze the evasion of young students (aged 15 to 29) in the current context of distance learning with in-person subjects structured in remote classes, verifying that non-in-person teaching is not capable of preventing the incidence of evasion, mainly due to the fact that such students also need to dedicate themselves to work in a socioeconomically unfavorable moment experienced by the country.

According to Souza, Pereira and Ranke (2020), the main causes that generated school dropouts during the Covid-19 pandemic consisted of family instability, the economic crisis and entry into the job market, with the lack of investment in public education and the lack of implementation of public educational policies that aggravate this phenomenon. The authors point out that even with students who needed to go to school in person to get a meal, highlighting the social and economic inequality in Brazil, dropout rates were already high, which is worsened in the pandemic context.

However, it is necessary to highlight that the increase in dropouts today did not only occur in basic education: Salvagni, Wojcichoski and Guerin (2020) considered the emergency EAD adopted in Higher Education, revealing that it was adopted without great and consistent planning, which also contributed to student dropout in different higher education courses.

I defend here a social factor as demotivating for students at all levels of education: both in basic education and in higher education, coexistence with other students can be an essential factor in staying with them, as they interact with people with similar interests. In the “emergency” remote teaching of the pandemic, this interaction no longer exists, being restricted only to the digital environment.

When it comes to basic education, it is important to highlight the difficult mission of analyzing dropouts in EAD “pre-Pandemic”, since the courses generally took place in person, including in the context of Youth and Adult Education (EJA). However, it is possible to analyze “Pre-Pandemic” evasion in the context of EAD higher education, drawing a parallel with other levels of education. Umekawa and Zerbini (2018) carried out a scaled study on the factors

related to evasion in distance learning, which considered aspects such as the tutor's online performance and course design, available time, family issues, lack of discipline, student's lack of interest, experiences and skills involving technologies, among others.

It can be seen, therefore, that the individual issue has a great influence on school dropout rates in the context of non-face-to-face teaching: if the student is unable to motivate himself, have discipline and organization with his studies and provide himself with autonomy and independence in terms of content, there is a greater chance of dropping out of school. In the same sense, the role played by the teacher can be seen as equally relevant: if the teacher is unable to create dynamic classes and motivate students, thus generating monotonous and uninteresting classes, he will not be able to captivate the students, thus contributing to a lower engagement and favoring evasion in EAD.

Time is another key factor in delving deeper into the phenomenon of dropout in non-face-to-face teaching: considering Since the “pre” pandemic, it is possible to say that students often looked to EAD for a way to reconcile the training process with carrying out work activities. However, if the professional works long hours, he or she may experience levels of fatigue and be more likely to drop out of the course. This perspective can even be applied to young people who take face-to-face courses in the distance learning modality today, since, as presented in the previous topic, it is not uncommon in a country with inequalities for such young people to end up entering the world of work early to generate more income for themselves and their families.

Thiago, Carvalho and Trigueiro (2020) carried out a study on the factors of Evasion in Distance Education in a Bachelor's Degree in Administration, in which the following were listed:

- Work-related issues are reaffirmed as one of the main causes of dropout in EAD;
- Interests in remote subjects and activities contribute to aggravating dropout rates;
- Scarce time to dedicate to course activities and subjects;
- The financial conditions for carrying out the course;
- Family issues that hinder the carrying out of activities related to the subjects and the course;
- Technological conditions prevent activities from being carried out;
- Difficulties in accessing and contacting distance tutors;
- Difficulties in access and contact with colleagues in non-face-to-face teaching;
- Difficulties in accessing and contacting the distance learning course coordination;
- Poor preparation or lack of preparation to carry out non-face-to-face activities;
- Low performance in the course due to lack of motivation to carry out activities.

Now, factors related to logistics, time, lack of communication, among countless other factors, can significantly contribute to the increase in evasion within the scope of EAD. Pedrosa and Nunes (2019, p. 4) highlight that EAD has more “competitive stimuli (children, wife, television and neighborhood noise, among others) and depends much more directly on some of the student's skills, such as the ability to organization and concentration for studies”. The factors for dropout in the modality are divided into internal factors, factors related to the course and tutors and the demographic factors of the students, in the following logical order:

Internal Factors: refer to the student's individual perceptions and their *locus* of control, including difficulties involving the content, lack of motivation, little persistence, among others;

Factors relating to the course and tutors: include aspects such as the workload and teaching material used in the course and the quality of interaction between the student and the EAD tutor;

Demographic Factors: address age, sex, marital status, number of children, type of work or profession and so on.

In their case study, the authors performed the following analysis:

Distance learning students face a complex, difficult and almost always lonely routine, when the classroom and the computer, or the technology used, become confused or merge with themselves. It is possible to affirm that the ways in which content is presented, reconciled with this isolation, as well as with the unexpected, but real complexity, are relevant to current dropout indicators. The student simply gives up, the big question is how do we delve deeper and understand the main reasons?

so that we can have institutional policies that not only monitor these indicators, but that establish actions that inhibit them. Everyone benefits from the reduction in dropout rates, the student, the institution and education as a whole. Reinventing models that focus predominantly on flexibility can disorient the student and this does not seem to be the most appropriate path. Processes are needed that enhance a closer relationship between students and institutions, where the need to interact experience to generate new knowledge is clear (PEDROSA; NUNES: 2019, p. 14–15).

Although EAD has evolved significantly with the popularization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), if we compare the current model with the model of correspondence courses or telecourses, there remain consistent questions about evasion in EAD, which were already the subject of analysis in the “pre” pandemic moment and intensified from the “post” pandemic moment.

A study carried out by Semesp (Professional Association of Entities Maintaining Higher Education Establishments in the State of São Paulo), with information published by the Electronic Portal Poder360, included a survey carried out with 53 Higher Education institutions in October 2020, which revealed that 608 thousand students withdrew or stopped enrolling during the first semester of that year, generating a dropout rate of 10.1%, a higher percentage than the same period in 2019, with a dropout rate of 8.8%, representing a 29.9% increase in dropout rates over a period of 1 year.

The research also revealed a higher rate for face-to-face courses, which had to rely on the adoption of mandatory distance learning from the moment of the pandemic: while at the beginning of the second half of 2020 the drop in admissions to distance learning courses was 13.2%, while the drop in in-person course admissions was 38.2%. Now, the emergency adoption of EAD in the context of the pandemic ended up generating an environment of uncertainty and inconstancy within the scope of Higher Education, in addition to an increase in dropouts. Due to the very reasons that generate evasion in the context of distance learning presented throughout this topic, it is possible to state that the indispensability of remote teaching generates a significantly smaller number of enrollees in higher education courses that previously took place in person.

The survey carried out by Agência Educa Mais Brasil and published in March 2021 included the increase in school dropouts in the context of secondary education, revealing that young people between 15 and 17 years old include 680,000 individuals out of school or who have not completed their studies (7, 1% of all subjects in this age group). Just as in the context of Higher Education, the emergency adoption of remote teaching at the time of the pandemic may also have led to an increase in dropouts at other levels of education. All this information is relevant to consider the possibilities of combating evasion within the scope of EAD, which will be presented in the following topic.

3.4 Tackling the problem of Evasion in the context of EAD: Possible Solutions

From the recognition of the causes and factors that provide the increase in Evasion in the educational modality of non-face-to-face teaching, it is possible to establish possibilities to alleviate the problem in question, always considering that, as also revealed in the research carried out by the author, evasion due to all levels of education has always been a serious problem to be faced in the historical context of Brazilian education. It should be noted that the majority of studies and publications collected for the preparation of this research place more emphasis on the problems and factors related to evasion in distance learning than on the elaboration of possible solutions for this phenomenon.

In his study, Piovesan Soares (2020) analyzed the issue of using artificial intelligence tools to extract databases, information and knowledge that can support the decision-making process of companies.

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educational institutions that suffer from the dropout problem. The author points out that, although institutions can contemplate general factors that generate an increase in evasion, the creation of a system that informs the percentage of evasion monitoring to coordinators, generating reports and information that can only be interpreted by other human beings.

Vieira da Rocha and Maciel da Silva (2020, p. 8) highlight that “the important thing is to find solutions that best work in a preventive manner, such as reinforcement classes throughout the period” as a possibility to be explored in distance learning. To this end, it is up to teachers to constantly monitor students, identifying learning needs and difficulties to envision possibilities for preventing distance learning.

Kowalski et al. (2020) point out that the causes and factors that generate evasion within the scope of EAD are the path in the search for solutions: if students find it difficult to access virtual platforms and learning environments, for example, increasing support from educational institutions would be a way to resolve the issue.

As seen in the previous topic, there are many causes that generate the phenomenon of evasion in distance learning at all levels, such as lack of time, excessive working hours, the need to enter the job market early, among countless others. These causes are more complex to resolve, as they involve the socioeconomic conditions of a Brazil that is constantly in crisis and involve an effort not only by the educational sector to provide a “key change” on these factors, but also the development of policies public institutions that allow people, regardless of their age group or level of education, to have not only access to education, but also the permanence necessary to graduate. Issues involving the consumption of drugs and alcohol as factors in school dropout in distance learning can also only become resolved with the intensification of public policies, so that greater emphasis was given in the present study to the aspects that can be resolved through integration between teachers, institutions and students.

To address the problem of dropout rates in distance learning in elementary and high school, for example, contact with the family to provide encouragement to stay in classes can be a solution. In the context of Higher Education, the aspects are more of an individual nature, as the student is responsible for themselves, having greater “freedom” to abandon their course.

In this way, critically reflecting on the problem of school dropout and finding solutions to the problem implies an effort, especially by the educational institution and teachers, on the factors that generate the increase in the phenomenon in non-face-to-face teaching. Based on this diagnosis, it is possible to draw up an action plan that includes possible solutions to the problem, always considering the profile of the students and their demographic factors.

The student is equally responsible for combating school dropout, seeking more autonomous and independent in the context of EAD. If a large part of dropouts, especially in Higher Education, result from students' lack of motivation and organization, as well as lack of attention to content, they are responsible for changing this situation. Teachers and institutions must contribute significantly to this end, creating parameters for participation in distance classes and constantly monitoring students.

From the review carried out, I identified other factors that were no longer mentioned by the selected authors, such as the issue of students' lack of attention in distance learning. It is necessary to highlight that, in non-face-to-face teaching, the student is most of the time at home, relying on the distractions of the internet. Without adequate stimuli, it is natural that students end up straying from the content, which will cause them to become “lost”, thus contributing to increasing the possibility of dropout rates.

In short, there are numerous factors that contribute together to the occurrence of evasion in the context of EAD, so that the search for solutions implies an individualized analysis of cases, since the solution to the evasion problem can only be carried out with adequate perception. of the causes and reasons related to the phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

The present study consisted of a thorough investigation of evasion within the scope of Distance Education (EAD), emphasizing the factors that generate such a phenomenon (both in the “pre” and “post” pandemic, at all levels of teaching) and possible solutions. As seen, EAD brings a series of challenges that fall both on the teacher, as well as on the student and the educational institution, with dropout being one of the serious problems observed both in the context of Basic Education and in the context of Higher Education.

When it comes to Higher Education, we have EAD already consolidated as a non-face-to-face teaching model, allowing greater access to information that causes the phenomenon of educational evasion. However, for basic education, including Elementary and Secondary Education, EAD is still a significantly recent novelty, motivated by the need for isolation and social distancing in the Covid-19 pandemic, which made physical presence in the classroom unfeasible.

Nowadays, EAD has not just become a teaching possibility, but rather an indispensability for the maintenance of education and to prevent students from being left without educational support. Evasion, in this sense, is a great evil in the development of Brazilian education, going against the constitutional precepts of Education as a Social Right of all citizens and contributing to perpetuating a historical panorama of discrediting the quality of education.

Ignoring the problem of dropout in current Brazilian EAD at all levels constitutes an aggravating problem, so that researchers in the field of education seek to focus on exploring the causes and factors that generate this school dropout, assuming that recognition of these aspects provides a search for appropriate solutions. From topic 3.4 of the present study, we sought to demonstrate how the search for solutions occurs, involving cooperation between the school/teacher/student triad, with all agents involved acting to the extent of their capabilities to provide coping with the problem, always considering that evasion is a historical problem in Brazil, and must initially be mitigated in order to be combatted more vigorously. In no way has any attempt been made here to minimize or simplify the problem, as it is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, with a search for solutions that is equally complex. What is certain is that, at a time when Distance Education is the only way to provide continuity of teaching and learning mediated by the internet, evasion must be combatted at all levels, consolidating EAD as a valid model in guaranteeing persecution of quality education.

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