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TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT REMOTE TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ONLINE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

PERCEPÇÕES DOCENTES E DISCENTES SOBRE O ENSINO REMOTO NO ENSINO SUPERIOR: PESQUISA QUALITATIVA ONLINE

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Abstract: This study analyses the impacts and challenges of emergency remote teaching in Higher Education institutions in Porto due to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. We carried out an exploratory study of a qualitative nature to analyze the perceptions of teachers and students about the digitalisation of the teaching and learning process in Higher Education. Data were collected through semi-structured online, synchronous interviews with ten professors, who accepted to participate, and balances of the lived experience written and made available on the Moodle Platform by ten students. Subsequently, content analysis and triangulation were carried out with the support of the Nvivo Software. The study revealed that remote teaching in Higher Education had an impact on reinforcing the training of teachers and students in using new technologies and on changing pedagogical practices. In addition, it can contribute to researchers' reflections on online data collection in qualitative research.

Keywords: Emergency remote teaching; Digitalisation of the teaching and learning process; Digital platforms; Qualitative Research; Online data collection.

Resumo: Este estudo analisa os impactos e desafios do ensino remoto de emergência nas instituições do Ensino Superior do Porto devido à crise da COVID-19 em 2020. Realizámos um estudo exploratório de natureza qualitativa para analisar as percepções de professores e estudantes sobre a digitalização do processo de ensino e aprendizagem, no Ensino Superior. Os dados foram recolhidos através de entrevistas online semi-estruturadas e sincronizadas com dez professores, que aceitaram participar e balanços da experiência vivida, escritos e disponibilizados na Plataforma Moodle, por dez estudantes. Posteriormente, a análise e triangulação de conteúdos foram realizadas com o apoio do Software Nvivo. O estudo revelou que o ensino remoto, no Ensino Superior, teve um impacto no reforço da formação de professores e estudantes, quanto à utilização de novas tecnologias e à mudança das práticas pedagógicas. Além disso, pode contribuir para as reflexões dos pesquisadores, sobre a coleta de dados em linha, na investigação qualitativa.

Palavras-chave: Ensino remoto de emergência; Digitalização do processo de ensino e aprendizagem; Plataformas digitais; Investigação qualitativa; Coleta de dados online.

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1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is still ongoing, had as consequences a health crisis, an economic crisis, and a paradigm shift in both work and education areas. If, until then, Information and Communication Technologies were occasionally used by teachers, with the implementation of emergency remote education[4] (GAEBEL *et al.,* 2021) and, later, mixed education on a global scale, everything changed through a shared effort, and in very little time. "It implied a massive upscaling and enhancement of digital capacities and resources (…) this was a stress test for the institutions and their members" (GAEBEL *et al*., p. 12). As confirmed by these authors, "with individual institutions confirming through the 2020 survey that "more progress had been made in four months than in four years" and witnessing "colleagues doing things they would have declared as impossible a few weeks before" (GAEBEL *et al*., p. 12).

Thus, thanks to educational policies aimed at the continuity of the teaching and learning process, supported by the use of new communication and information technologies and by intensive, formal and peer-to-peer continuous training, it was possible to continue the teaching systems and teaching activities and research. Hence, the acceleration of digitalisation[5] in teaching and learning in Higher Education is taking place in a path of transformation, which has been consolidated in the last two years and constitutes the focus of our initial study.

As it is well known, the ongoing digitalisation process underwent a substantial increase, expanding to very different sectors of society. Regarding Higher Education (HE), which was not immune, this change was not restricted to teaching but also encompassed/included research. Moreover, the use of digital platforms and tools was not restricted to teaching practices. It also expanded to scientific research and the dissemination of information; the Webinar format has, for instance, allowed and continues to allow the meeting of researchers from around the world to disseminate their studies and results.

Indeed, in a pandemic context, with its necessary sanitary measures, the so-called lockdown, the study that was at the origin of this article could not have been carried out

[4] "Emergency remote teaching is a temporary shift to fully remote solutions for teaching due to crisis circumstances that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses" (GAEBEL *et al*., 2021, p.7).
[5] "Digitalisation is the transformation of all sectors of our economy, government and society based on the large-scale adoption of existing and emerging digital technologies" (RANDALL *et al*., 2018, *apud* by GAEBEL *et al*., 2021, p.7).

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without the use of digital platforms, as well as without the digital skills acquired or developed by researchers and participants (teachers and students) during 2020. In addition, these conditions enabled communication between researchers and participants, data collection and dissemination of results.

A spectrum of opportunities was therefore put together, with new practices and challenges, both for the teaching and learning process in Higher Education, as well as for qualitative research (QLR).

2 The challenge of digitising teaching and learning processes

Until 2020, pedagogical practices in Higher Education encompassed both traditional education and new technologies (MONTEIRO; LEITE; SOUZA, 2018). However, before the pandemic, the digitalisation of teaching and learning processes was only widespread in Distance Education (RODRIGUES *et al*., 2020).

Currently, educational practices in Higher Education integrate technological platforms: "technological devices that support teaching and integrate various functions to facilitate academic activity for teachers and students. As well as they offer a support that allows the distribution of educational content and organize courses" (RIGO; ÁVILA, 2009, *apud* CAMPOS POSADA *et al*., 2017, p. 3), both in face-to-face and online teaching. In the last two years, digital platforms have gained prominence and enhanced the deepening of digital skills, in terms of the teaching and learning process, interpersonal communication (between students, teachers and students and teachers) and research and dissemination of scientific knowledge, between others. The progressive digitalisation of the teaching and learning process led to a break in traditional pedagogical practices in Higher Education, which induced the search and application of new methodologies, and the combination of in-person and non-face-to-face classes (ARORA; SRINIVASAN, 2020). Although this change required a new way of teaching, learning, interacting, and collaborating and involved an effort to train all educational stakeholders, many teachers and students did not master the digital skills necessary for online teaching and learning.

This scenario stimulated the emergence of a new teaching and learning paradigmtends to be more focused on the student, incorporating and making the most of new technologies (MARTINS *et al.,* 2019). This shift from the focus of the pedagogical action from the teacher to the student posed new challenges and to that extent, boosted

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more questioning, research, reflection, and innovation in Higher Education (VALE *et al.*, 2021).

3 The Digital Transition in Qualitative Research

The digitalisation of human interaction and communication, facilitated by the popularization of the Internet's virtual space at the end of the 20th century, immediately aroused the interest of researchers in the Social Sciences, giving rise to new objects of study on interaction in the virtual space, as well as to new approaches in the field of qualitative research, such as virtual ethnography (HINE, 2000; ANGROSINO, 2009), which has been making its way and has been in existence for over two decades.

The strengthening of virtual communities and the popularization of social networks reinforced the shared use of cyberspace and online sociability (SALVADOR *et al.*, 2020), making it possible to collect data in online discussion forums and enabling a dialogic approach, focused on discussion, and deepening of selected scientific themes. This context favours digital communication strategies with participants and data collection, which have beenasserted and consolidated in the field ofqualitative research (FLICK, 2018).

Correspondingly, several authors argue that interviews and focus groups can be conducted online (LIAMPUTTONG, 2011; WILLIAMS *et al.*, 2012; BORDINI; SPERB, 2013), both asynchronously and synchronously, where the participants meet in real-time in a chat room or discussion forums (LIAMPUTTONG, 2011). Currently, information and communication technologies present a set of resources that enhance the interaction between participants, both specialized systems in *Online Focus Group,* such as *Groupmap, Focusgroup.com, FocusGroupIT or EcoToolFG*, and general systems for other purposes, but that can be used as Zoom, Teams, and Google Meet (CARNEIRO *et al.*, 2020).

Although online data collection is today a relatively common practice, namely in the field of market studies and health (BROWN; SKELLY; CHEW-GRAHAM, 2020), among others, until 2020, this was not widespread in qualitative research. This explains why, in the current context, Wa-Mbaleka and Costa (2020) mention that in qualitative research, when necessary and with permission, teleconference and videoconference tools can be used to conduct virtual interviews using digital tools provided by the Higher Education Institution which configures a safe, ethical, efficient, and effective data collection method.

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It is recalled that, in Portugal, because of the lockdown, in March 2020 and the move to remote teaching in Higher Education, many of the initiated empirical studies saw their data collection suspended or postponed in anticipation of the evolution of the pandemic situation, which was a challenge when it came to the continuation of scientific research projects, in time of the pandemic. As it is well known, the curriculum of Higher Education courses integrates, in different cycles, empirical studies carried out in the scope of internships, master's dissertations and doctoral theses.

The need to continue scientific research, in the context of studies carried out in institutional and transnational projects, as well as its dissemination at conferences and other events of a scientific nature, encouraged many researchers, among others Ana Mouraz *et al*., (2021), to change practices and accept the challenge of using online data collection, making the most of the technological platforms made available by the respective Institutions.

4 Methodology

Aware of the relevance and importance of studying the impacts of ongoing changes in Higher Education and considering our previous experience, we asked ourselves how to carry out the study and collect data in the context of the pandemic and social alienation. By weighing the benefits and risks, we proactively reacted (WA-MBALEKA; COSTA, 2020), and outlined an investigative design that allowed us to conduct the interviews and collect other documents, maximizing the digital platforms made available by the institution and contemplating the principles and precepts of qualitative research, as well as respect for quality criteria, credibility, reliability, and ethics.

We carried out a qualitative exploratory study which aimed at zanalyzing the impacts generated by the reinforcement of the digitalisation of teaching and learning in Higher Education through the analysis of the perceptions of teachers and students about the experiences lived in the context of ongoing change (YIN, 2015).

The study thought of to achieve the referred objective was conducted in two Higher Education Institutions (one private and one public) in Porto. The recruitment of participants began by sending all subjects invitations by e-mail and focusing on undergraduate students and professors who taught at this level of education.

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The study included interviews and opinion essays. We interviewed ten tenteachers who taught in different first-cycle courses of Higher Education in Porto. They are identified in the text by T followed by a number. In addition, we collected opinion essays concerning the experience of remote teaching in Higher Education in order to take different perspectives on the issue under study and to seek the heterogeneity of perspectives, characteristic of Qualitative Research (GUERRA, 2006). These essays were written by ten students attending different courses of the two institutions under analysis and are identified in the text by S followed by a number. All 20 participants accepted the invitation addressed to them, stimulating them to participate in the study, which in the first group presumed the authorization to be interviewed and in the second, to be available to report specific situations in writing an opinion essay.

The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a script to frame and clarify the information collected. They were previously scheduled according to the availability of each of the teachers, carried out online, synchronously, and recorded via Zoom, the platform provided by the Higher Education institutions, in June and July 2020. A procedure close to the verbal exchange in a face-to-face interview (FLICK, 2018). The students asynchronously produced opinion essays, written documents of the *bilan de savoir* type (HAEBERLI; JENNI, 2015), sent them via Moodle, a communication platform frequently used by both public and private Higher Education institutions in Portugal.

After transcribing the interviews, we conducted a thematic content analysis of the documental corpus with the support of Nvivo Software (RICHARDS; RICHARDS, 1998) version 12 Pro software. A well-known Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software that supports the handling, management, search, and display of data (FLICK, 2018) and allows greater rigour in the analysis procedures (AMADO, 2014).

The thematic content analysis included four stages: a careful and active reading, or floating reading of each text, the organization of the system of categories, the coding of all material, and the verification of all codified registration units. The first stage, dedicated to the vertical and floating reading of each document, identified relevant themes (AMADO, 2014) that gave rise to categories defined as posterior or emerging.The second, dedicated to the construction and consolidation of the category system (codebook), combined two strategies (FLICK, 2018), the consideration of categories previously established and categories emerging from the texts during the first stage of the

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analysis process, such as interpersonal relationships, student(s) teacher interaction; opportunities in access and use of technologies or teachers' working time.

Once the researchers established the system of categories, we moved on to the third stage, namely the coding of all the material, with the registration unit used being the phrase that conveys an idea, which can be expanded to the paragraph for reasons of meaning. Finally, the fourth stage consisted of verifying all the codified material by each one of the coders.

The following strategies were followed to ensure the quality of the research: a triangulation of data (DENZIN, 1989), or the collection of different types of data, a coding of the data by two of the researchers, and careful checking of the units of register coded in each of the categories.

In this study, current ethical issues were considered. The Informed Consent Form took place regarding the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, protection of individuality, the anonymity of the participants, and the destination of the data collected.

5 Results and discussion

The purposes of this article are to disseminate part of the results of a qualitative exploratory study regarding the impacts of digitalization, via technological platforms, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, on both teaching and learning processes in HE and additionallyreflect on the implementation of a qualitative study conducted using digital platforms. Thus, the following text relates to part of the impacts and challenges of increasing digitalisation in this educational field. In the sixth section, we present a brief researchers' reflection on the potentials and challenges produced by the process of digitizing the collection of data in the field of qualitative research, raised by our participation in the workgroup "Strategies of Qualitative Research in Times of Pandemic", at the 1st International Congress on Methodology: Current Methodological Challenges - Qualis 2021 (VALE; MARTINS; COIMBRA, 2021).

5.1 Remote Teaching in Higher Education: Perceptions of teachers and students

Data analysis allows us to state that, despite the mandatory and abrupt nature of the integration of remote teaching in Higher Education, both the majority of teachers and students considered the lived experience to be globally positive, not only because it allowed for a sure standardization in a short space of time, but also for having allowed

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knowing and exploring the virtual space from a pedagogical point of view, with particular emphasis on technological platforms (Teams, Zoom, Moodle, among others) and for having furthermore awakened the desire to develop and deepen digital skills, to make the most of the pedagogical potential of these digital platforms and promote integration in the virtual ecosystem.

5.1.1 Access to technological platforms and online training

In general, both teachers (T) and students (S) considered it a positive experience and valued the availability, by the institutions to which they belong, of access to technological platforms and online training on their use.

> It was a universe that I wanted one day to explore, and the need gave me some time to acquire knowledge and create a basis of trust for the use of digital platforms for teaching (...). It is not comparable. Before March I did not know and had never used the platforms I now master. In the past I only used Skype. Currently, I use with domain the platforms provided by the University: Teams and Zoom (T1).

> So, we gradually overcame the challenges... the first was to understand what the platforms could do for us. And the help and collaboration of the tutorials and the University were important to draw attention, to the fact that some colleagues would have more difficulty using online resources, but I had no great difficulties, because I am passionate about technology (S3).

Although it was implemented at different paces, the rapid transition to the emergency remote teaching model in Higher Education during 2020, became possible with i) the reinforcement of "training for" (FABRE, 1994), the use and /or maximization of digital platforms (Zoom, Teams, and Moodle) in the teaching and learning process, and ii) the rapid adaptation of teachers and students to teaching, learning and assessment practices more suited to the virtual model.

5.1.2 Teaching, learning and assessment online

Most teachers, aiming to improve student engagement and participation, claim to have tried to integrate remote learning, by changing the organization of workand teaching strategies, reducing expository moments and adapting both synchronous and asynchronous activitie. More precisely the first were carried out, individually or in groups, in person in a (virtual) time and space shared with the teacher and the second ones were carried out in a space outside the classroom and at a time selected by the student.

These strategies align with the OCDE (2020) guidelines for the use of digital media.

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> After March 2020, regarding the theoretical component, there was a need to reduce the duration of the teaching moments and the practical activities needed to be adjusted to distance learning and had to be reinforced with asynchronous activities. Small work groups were also created to be carried out collaboratively among the students and with the teacher (considering the resources provided by the platforms for monitoring by the teacher of the work to be done (T5).

> Regarding the use of digital platforms, (...) I have nothing to point out as negative, they were great platforms as an intermediary channel between teachers and students, as well as moodle. Through the platforms the learning was more active and participatory for some students. (...) I had no difficulty in dealing with the methods applied by the teachers, since they applied active methodologies (S4).

Another change that had to be introduced in this context was online assessment, an issue that did not meet with consensus among the participants. For most teachers, this change was the main challenge and raised severe doubts not about the use of new technologies but about ensuring the credibility and fairness of the process.

> After March 2020, the main challenge I found was to "invent" effective forms of assessment which, in my opinion, is the most delicate issue in the context of distance learning. Suddenly having to adapt the type of assessment test to a context in which students can consult everything with little or no supervision of the temptations of committing academic fraud was my main difficulty (T7).

> I also think that doing some assignments and some tests that were submitted on Moodle, was the most correct and safe way, and I think it was a very adequate solution and it went in the best way, without any problems (S6).

In the students' group, as seen in the excerpt above, with one or two exceptions, online assessment did not pose any challenges and was considered not only safe but also the appropriate solution. In summary, the opinions of teachers and students regarding this issue are diverse, which allows us to infer that this is a topic that needs further study, attention, and debate.

5.1.3 Advantages of remote Learning

Although they acknowledge some challenges presented to Higher Education in the pandemic context, all participants recognized several advantages to remote teaching, Figure 1, and using digital platforms in an educational context.

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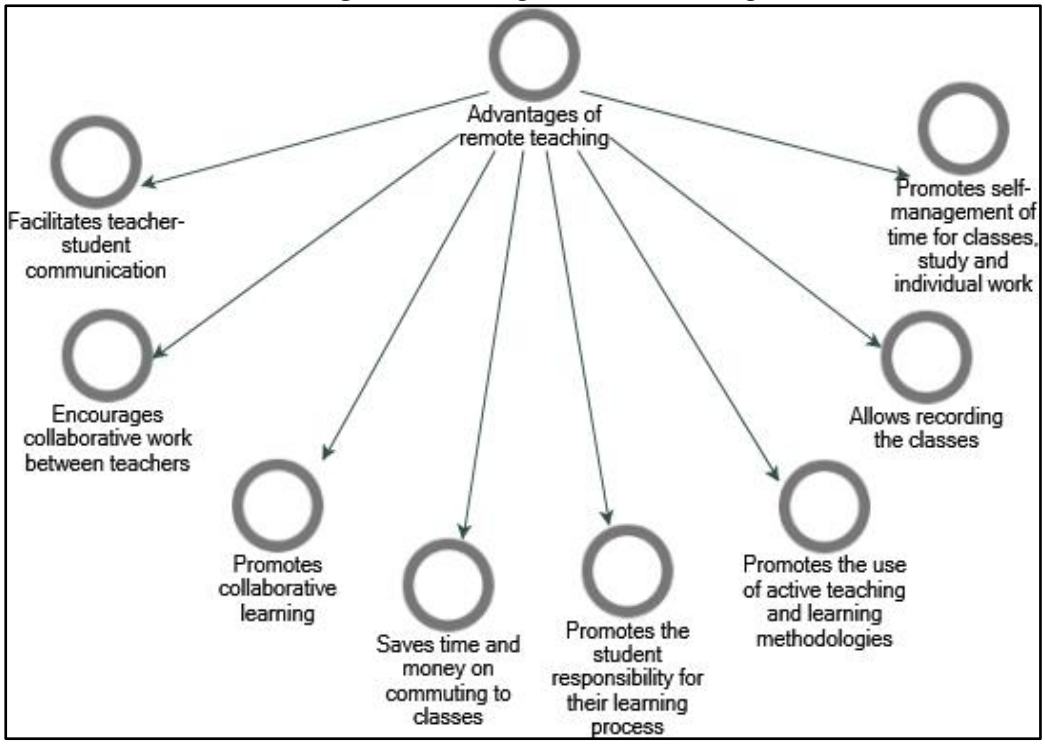
Figure 1: Advantages of remote teaching



Source: the authors

The professors emphasized: i) the ease of communicating and establishing more personalized relationships with students; ii) collaborative work between teachers or between teachers and students; iii) the promotion of collaborative learning; iv) the reduction of time and money in travel to classes; (saving time and money when travelling to classes) v) the greater responsibility and involvement of the student in the teaching-learning process and vi) the progressive use of active teaching and learning methodologies.

> After March 2020, in asynchronous classes, through the use of Moodle platform, I used the following active pedagogical practices: class question, practical exercises, based on the subject taught in the synchronous class and quiz. In synchronous classes, I used (...) reversed class, using (...) presentation of assignments with topics to be explored, debates around the topics taught, with questions posed to students who, in this way, deepened their knowledge (T2).

Indeed, the study allows us to infer that the use of technological platforms led to the research of active methodologies and strategies, Figure 2, by a significant part of teachers, which fostered a progressive interest in the student-centred teaching model and pedagogical issues in higher education.

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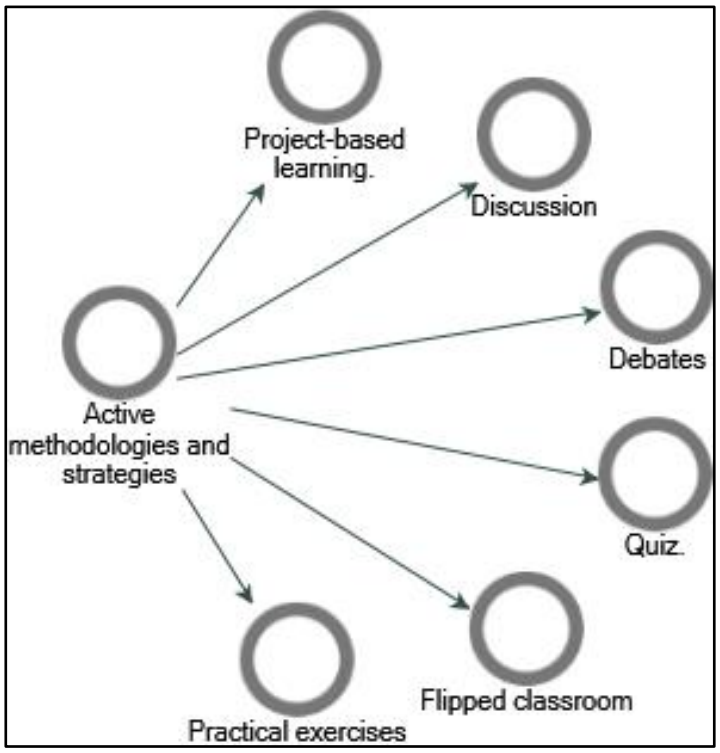
Figure 2: Active methodologies and strategies



Source: the authors

However, some students recognize that not all teachers could interpret the demands of remote teaching, so they did not adopt more interactive and attractive forms different from those they used in the face-to-face context. Nevertheless, most students recognized and corroborated the dynamics of changing pedagogical practice.

> We started to schedule online meetings between colleagues and after class period, and the work was literally done in groups, with live text readings, debates on controversial aspects, and this for me was the best part! I learned a lot from my colleagues, and I had the feeling that I was contributing in a unique way to their learning, in work among peers (S 3).

Students, in addition, to reiterate some of the advantages mentioned above add others: vii) the recordings of classes and the possibility of watching synchronous classes from home; viii) the learning of time self-management, whether attending classes or individual work. They also reported the ease of attending a more significant number of classes for working students and the possibility of attending specific courses for people who live far from Higher Education Institutions - widely recognized potentialities of the distance learning system. It is important to remember here that the greater involvement of students in their learning process and the self-management of work and study time are factors considered essential in the predisposition to learn or *apprenance* (CARRÉ, 2005).

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5.1.4 Projections on the future of Higher Education

Despite the potential of new technologies, the preference of many teachers, and most students, is based on the face-to-face teaching model. However, both teachers and students were aware of the irreversibility of the digitalisation of teaching and learning processes, which has been underway in Higher Education since 2020, and the consequent need to continue investing:in deepening pedagogical knowledge when it comes to teachers and in deepening digital skills for both groups, which is in line with recent studies (ALMEIDA, 2020). Teachers have been investing more in training, collaborative work and reflection on technological means and digital platforms. A trend that points to the transformation of the teaching role underway in Higher Education.

In summary, the experience of emergency remote teaching in the 2019-20 school year, contributed to reinforcing the recognition of the importance of personal interaction in the pedagogical relationship and in the learning processes, which does not happen "in isolation, but in partnership, in contact with others and with the world" (TEODORO; VASCONCELOS 2005, p. 83). Such recognition has placed education systems, including Higher Education, with the challenge of finding a balance between the growing appreciation of the use of new technologies and digital platforms and the preservation of face-to-face interaction, which is essential to meaningful and transformative teaching and learning processes (ILLERIS, 2013). The progressive adoption of the hybrid system of teaching and learning, in the academic year 2020-2021, in several institutions represents an attempt to incorporate the use of digital platforms and, at the same time, monetize the benefits of the face-to-face world and the world in the field of Higher Education - and reveals a new object of study.

6 Reflection about a qualitative study online: an experience in the pandemic time

The analysis and reflection on the methodological path followed in this study allowed us to understand that doing research using digital platforms or online qualitative research (SALVADOR *et al*, 2020; WA-MBALEKA; COSTA, 2020), not only made it possible to carry out the study during the time of a pandemic, as it revealed to us some potential of "digital qualitative tools" (WEBER; MOTA; ANTONACACHI, 2019).

First, the collection of online interviews ended up facilitating the participation of interviewees, even though data collection coincided with the end of the academic year, a period in which teachers are usually overwhelmed with work.

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Second, the flexibility of time and space for data collection. Unlike traditional interviews, which had to be carried out at a previously scheduled place and time and involved travel. The interviews took place at flexible times, more advantageous for the participants (lunch breaks, weekends, …) and took place in more personalized environments, allowing the observation of contexts. This, in line with other authors (LIAMPUTTONG, 2011; WILLIAMS et al., 2012; BORDINI; SPERB, 2013) leads us to state that online interviews facilitate the participation of geographically dispersed informants, with little time or difficulty to travel.

Third, the interview conducted in real-time, synchronously (LIAMPUTTONG, 2011, FLICK; 2018) via a technology platform, allows interaction and communication as in the face-to-face interview, and in addition to access to the interview content, it allows the interviewer to perceive the non-verbal communication of the respondent, the silences, the hesitations, as well as their body language. This in line with Weber *et al.* (2019), allows us to state that the collection of online interviews is suitable for qualitative studies, in which real-time interaction and observation of body language are essential.

Fourth, obtaining the respondent's prior consen facilitates video recording of the interview, facilitating and enriching the content analysis with observational elements that audio recording does not allow. In addition, it facilitates the availability of videos to participants, a validation procedure for qualitative research.

Fifth avoid travel and, accordingly, added expenses. Again, this is an advantage of QLR online compared with other studies involving considerable investment.

In summary, the availability of digital platforms by Higher Education Institutions, in response to the constraints generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, ended up facilitating the adhesion of researchers to online qualitative research, which reveals a new trend. This is attested by several communications presented to the Qualis 2021 congress, including that of Ana Mouraz *et al.*, 2021.

This trend is not surprising because the history of qualitative research is full of examples of new technologies that, more quickly or slowly, have been incorporated into its practices. These transitions were not peaceful and led to long debates among researchers, supporters, and critics but eventually reached maturity. So, it was audio recorders that came to replace notetaking during or after interviews, later replaced by digital recorders and smartphones. Without forgetting the software programs developed to support the analysis of qualitative data, such as Nvivo, among others, which greatly facilitated the traditional analysis. Or the contemporary digital platforms, which have

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proved essential, in the current context, among other aspects, for disseminating research results in seminars and congresses, nationally and internationally. Therefore, this transition, still ongoing, in qualitative research, despite continuing to require analysis and reflection, is presented as irreversible.

The new technologies offer new ways to carry out research and new topics and challenges. The use of technological platforms for data collection and, more specifically, the conduct of interviews poses some challenges, namely:

i) the (in)accessibility to all contexts and social groups, which depends on the quality of coverage of the geographic context network and the quality of the devices of the participants, interviewer(s) and interviewees;

iii) maintaining the involvement of participants in studies of a more participatory nature;

iii) the focus on technology may overshadow the paradigmatic framework of research work.

Recognizing the advantages and challenges posed by using new technological tools in the field of qualitative research, after this experience, and the exchange of reflections with other researchers involved in similar experiences, we cannot fail to observe that we are experiencing a new transition, in the field of qualitative research.

7 Final considerations

The emergence of the pandemic of COVID-19 in 2020 had several consequences: a painful health crisis, an economic crisis of yet unknown dimensions and, at the same time, a reconfiguration in the paradigms of teaching in Higher Education and qualitative research, whichwas accelerated by the reinforcement of the digitalisation of teaching and learning processes and qualitative research methods and strategies. Until then, information and communication technologies were used occasionally by teachers and researchers, whether qualitative or not. However, with the implementation of emergency remote teaching, on a national and global scale and the consequent generalization of digital platforms made available by Higher Education institutions, practices have changed.

The paradigm shifts implied increased training effort for all stakeholders since many teachers/researchers and students in 2020 did not yet master the digital skills needed to use the technological platforms. Although it was not the initial goal, itended up

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influencing and benefiting the way of investigating and communicating in the field of qualitative research. Universities, nationally and internationally, have been able to react and adapt to new technologies. Likewise, researchers have been able to adapt and benefit from using digital platforms, or "digital qualitative tools", for data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Information and Communication Technologies and technological platforms represent an asset, if not for all, for part of the studies that integrate qualitative research, provided that it is important to underline the uses of digital platforms are made following the foundations of the paradigms in which the studies are inscribed. So, the development and deepening of this trend depend on the preparation and involvement of researchers in debates about the use of digital platforms in qualitative research in general and in particular for ethnographic, biographical and narrative studies.

Finally, since this is an exploratory study, it would be essential to continue carrying out studies using new technologies, accompanied by reflections and debates among researchers, to overcome potential challenges and produce knowledge about the research trend provided in the current context.

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