



## THE INDIVIDUAL FACING THE PANDEMIC

### O INDIVÍDUO EM FACE À PANDEMIA

**Hannah Gomes de Freitas<sup>1</sup>**

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7828-1437>

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3021272958786686>

Universidade de Brasília, UnB, Brasil

E-mail: [hannah.gomes10@gmail.com](mailto:hannah.gomes10@gmail.com)

**Nelson Adriano Ferreira de Vasconcelos<sup>2</sup>**

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3925-7279>

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/0559809816196874>

Universidade Católica de Brasília, UCB, DF, Brasil

E-mail: [vasconcelos.naf@gmail.com](mailto:vasconcelos.naf@gmail.com)

#### **ABSTRACT**

*This text is an essay in which the authors present their reflections about the pandemic situation caused by the spread of the new coronavirus Sars-CoV-2. The pandemic context has intensified several social issues faced by Brazilian society, a time when psycho-social reflections are necessary to position ourselves as human beings capable of changes and adaptations to the experienced reality. In this perspective, the text in question aims to provoke readers to critically observe the situation experienced from new perspectives, which go beyond the health calamity, as well as reflect on new educational possibilities and dialogues brought by the social isolation scenario.*

**KEYWORDS:** COVID-19 pandemic. Socioeconomic crisis. Social transformation.

#### **RESUMO**

Este texto é um ensaio no qual os autores apresentam suas reflexões sobre a situação pandêmica ocasionada pela disseminação do novo coronavírus Sars-CoV-2. O contexto pandêmico tem intensificado várias questões sociais enfrentadas pela sociedade brasileira, momento em que as reflexões psicossociais são necessárias para nos posicionarmos como seres humanos capazes de mudanças e adaptações à realidade vivida. Nessa perspectiva, o texto em questão visa provocar o leitor a observar criticamente a situação vivenciada sob novas perspectivas, que vão além da

<sup>1</sup> Natural Sciences student by University of Brasília (FUP-UnB).

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3021272958786686>. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7828-1437>

E-mail: [hannah.gomes10@gmail.com](mailto:hannah.gomes10@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Master's Degree by Post Graduating Program in Education of University of Brasília (PPGE-UnB), PHD student by Post Graduating Program in Education of Catholic University of Brasília (PPGEdu-UCB). Member of research group on Federal Education Policies.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/0559809816196874>. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3925-7279>.

E-mail: [vasconcelos.naf@gmail.com](mailto:vasconcelos.naf@gmail.com).

calamidade sanitária, bem como refletir sobre novas possibilidades educacionais e diálogos trazidos pelo cenário de isolamento social.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Pandemia de COVID-19. Crise socioeconômica. Transformação social.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization - WHO, a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease, when an outbreak affecting a region spreads across different continents with confirmed transmission from person to person (SCHUELER, 2020). It was thus that on March 11, 2020, the Director-General of WHO declared the state of contamination by the new coronavirus as a pandemic, when more than 115 countries indicated declared cases of infection (OPAS, 2021).

This situation started in December 2019, in the province of Wuhan, China, when a new coronavirus, from the family that causes the SARS and MERS infections, was detected. Initially, the disease was referred to as "mysterious viral pneumonia", which victimized a 61-year-old man after the infection worsened with respiratory symptoms, culminating in his death from cardiac arrest on January 9, 2020.

At the time, with the increase in cases in the city Wuhan, which was identified as the epicenter of the outbreak, the measures adopted were to isolate neighboring cities to prevent the transmission of the virus, however, with the Chinese New Year holidays approaching, as well as trips abroad, the spread of the new coronavirus spread to several regions of the Chinese country, until it spread worldwide, until it was declared by the World Health Organization as a pandemic.

The events that followed were aimed at containing the spread of the virus. Although several measures recommended by the World Health Organization were adopted, using information sheets<sup>1</sup>, they were not enough to contain the spread of contamination, which has already affected more than 99 million people worldwide, leading to the death of more than 2 million human beings, and that continues to increase daily, according to graphs that show the growth curves and variation of contamination by the coronavirus Sars-CoV-2 released by the WHO.

Such a scenario caused sudden changes in the forms of behavior and organization of cities, which mostly when adopting the strategy of social isolation, witnessed social, educational, and behavioral impacts, the outcome of which will still be known and analyzed.

## The value of the human being

The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus allows us a profound meditation and self-knowledge, it directs us to observe life as never before, at least, with more clarity. It makes us realize the ephemerality of time and the fragility of being. It also makes us reflect on the fact that we are vulnerable and how much life can escape us in a matter of days; how much humanity is exposed and unprepared; how much small things can be ignited to promote chaos. We were hit by an invisible plague, a tiny virus that ended millions of lives, in a morbid count that seems to have no end.

The conjuncture in the report has led us to unprecedented crises. It triggered an economic crisis, in the public health system, a crisis in the educational field and, in

addition, a crisis of values, which affects our morals and leads us to know the culture of the society in which we operate, which opened the inequality neglected by the owners of power. The pandemic revealed the fragility of the human being and of a social and political structure that was clearly not prepared for a crisis, whatever it was. It caused us pathological and existential discomfort, brought hopelessness and disillusionment to better days.

However, extreme situations lead us to appreciate details that were previously ignored, thus provoking valorization of the being in its synthesis, of health as the most valuable asset, of austerity - which crossed the barriers of class, gender and race, as an initial step towards a fairer society, and in solidarity as an unaffordable patrimony of society, deciphered the priceless value of being and that full health cannot be bought or achieved with the administration of drugs, demonstrating that prophylaxis is the best medicine. It revealed the irresponsibility of the anti-vaccine discourse showed that investment in science is indispensable for the development of any country. Furthermore, he demonstrated that the greatness and sovereignty of any nation should not be calculated by military power, because it is useless in the face of a health crisis. He revealed that education is the primary step for the development and valorization of science, and that joining forces at times like this, promotes the achievement of better results.

### **Past pandemics: what has changed?**

Throughout history, humanity has faced several pandemics, namely: Black Death, in the 14th century, which wiped out almost all of Europe, Spanish Flu in the early 20th century and now faces yet another, the spread of Covid-19 by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

At the time of the 14th century Venetian states, the disease incubation period was unknown, and many other things of a scientific and sanitary character to which we now have access, in this way, preventive measures were given by common sense. The quarantine (the isolation of the sick for forty days) was based on religious belief, whose symbolism alludes to the spiritual passage of Jesus Christ would have been made through the desert, as there are in biblical stories.

Anyway, still without a scientific basis, it was practiced to keep the sick away from healthy individuals, which in a way worked. Only with the passage of time and the development of scientific studies and techniques, the field of knowledge went from assumptions and from religious to scientific bias. However, even following the removal and seclusion protocol of the patient, people continued to contract diseases, which then indicated greater problems that were not being considered: the vectors.

After that, the discussions started to revolve around public health. They then raised sanitary measures to contain the spread of pests. In this sense, in the mid-1800s, health and sanitary conventions began to be raised as crucial points to contain the decimation of the population by pests.

However, pandemics have a relevant role in economic control, which has always been considered, including the subjugation by economically developed societies. It is common for someone to want to take advantage of all situations, even if they are extreme. In this sense, the solutions presented to raise improvements to the health calamity occurred in a subtle way, since, in the moment of the rise of powers

that would become worldwide, trade and economy could not be placed at the expense of the other, the that, disregarding the arrangements of powers that are already defined, it is remarkably like today, given that the importance given to profits almost always outweighs the importance given to life.

Much time has passed, and we continue to suffer with the emergence of the pandemic. Some historical problems have been suppressed but we have not come close to extinguishing them all. Science has developed a lot and today we have access to information that was not of common scope in the past. Scientific and technological development led to the elaboration of studies that today direct the sanitary measures that we take based on the study of virus incubation, virology, since in the 19th century there was no mastery of this area of knowledge.

However, health is not always a product of individual choices, as it is also associated with the environment, unless we see: the individual, if he seeks to choose healthy choices, as well as having a balanced diet, physical activities, and regular sleep, consequently he will have healthy life and will be less likely to develop disease. However, this practice depends on individual choices and financial and social conditions to be guaranteed, still counting on the interference of the environment in which we live.

Once the individual is exposed to an inadequate environment, with noise and air pollution, whose food comes from plantations irrigated with pesticides and that his subsistence condition fits in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability, the roots of a healthy lives are deeper than what is superficially observed.

In this tuning fork, it should be noted that health and quality of life are linked to social conditions, and it is up to the state to appreciate the good environmental and socioeconomic development of its society so that the reflexes are positive.

### **What is the preparation of humanity in the face of crises?**

As mentioned earlier, with the emergence of the pandemic, we realized the fragility of the human being, as well as the fragility of the governmental system that we have. Regarding a worldwide scale, there are several ways of coping with crises. Santos (2020) points to the crisis caused by Covid-19 as an exceptionality, however, the problem it mitigates, as well as the economic crisis, is permanent, which aims at legitimizing the concentration of wealth (SANTOS, 2020) and poor income distribution that generates inequality and social injustice.

We are today facing a financial market that is developing internationally, through globalization. In view of the above, we realize that the evil to which we were affected, traveled by plane around the world and contaminated an unprecedented number of victims, which differs from situations experienced by humanity in past years, when the crises were of political scope, with the explosion wars, which concomitantly destroyed the environment and people; in addition, war power was a priority, thus, basic needs of the population were left aside, thus causing exposure to diseases and mass deaths.

Over the years, and overcoming armed clashes between countries, we are faced with an invisible evil, and it is up to us to adopt measures to contain it.

When observing the growth trajectory of the contamination growth curve, we follow the maneuvers of different countries, in different ways. Governments adopted

measures that they thought were prudent until the World Health Organization directed care and measures common to all. However, we are exposed to different levels of responsibility, which raise questions of a sociological scope such as: is the responsibility of taking care of and avoiding risks to each other the same in all? Do people have the same conditions to take care of themselves? Is everyone able to maintain social isolation - a way of containing the spread of the virus - even though many need to take to the streets, facing public transport to guarantee their subsistence?

We then start to think that in the face of a pandemic situation, all the things we are surrounded with are variables related to risk and can even potentiate it.

The world is experiencing a condition never faced by the generation of this century, even though it has access to much knowledge about similar past situations. This time, however, the challenge is up to our generation to develop strategies to deal with the problem in question.

The main role in curbing the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is that of the government with community leaders. This alignment must be crucial for taking security measures, but it is not just about these characters, it is up to each one of us to do our part as far as possible. Develop strategies not only to avoid the disease, but also to continue all the mechanisms that move society, as well as education.

Regarding the latter, there is the reflection that scientific education, with a view to literacy and scientific multi-literacy, contributes not only to the educational recovery but also to a new look at the movements that have occurred in society and on how we can develop learning proposals that address the moment experienced not only with clarifications in the scientific field, but also pertinent to the environment and society.

In this sense, the discussions to be developed will encompass a larger scale of magnitude, possibly bringing solutions that promote knowledge and that encourage teachers, schools and students to develop strategies in the face of future critical situations, since, in the 21st century, we still perish as our ancestors perished. In different ways, however, the fact that it has not been overcome over the years demonstrates that we have not developed the common way of dealing with crises, demonstrating that we have not yet mastered all the technological and scientific resources we have, and that humanity still has a lot to do. to evolve so that we can endure future crises.

However, if the future has not yet arrived, it is up to us to shape the present to overcome the phase we are facing and return to the aforementioned "normality". But what normality would that be? Will we again have the same customs that we had before the pandemic? What are the projections we can make about humanity? Will we go through a reconfiguration? What are the lessons learned from this collective experience?

The answers will be built and reflected from new social and educational practices, whose initial motivation, the pandemic, certainly imposes a historical landmark in these times in which we live.

### **Will we go back to "normality"?**

Currently, a lot is heard about "going back to normal". People attributed to this term the meaning of having their daily activities resumed, returning to their usual

practices, before the beginning of the intense reduction of interpersonal interaction. However, this so-called normality leads us to unveil the discussion of the existence of a standardization of customs, of a normality that would be common to all.

However, it is noticeable that the world is composed of an immeasurable diversity of cultures, societies, customs, and habits. If in a classroom, which is just a cut-out of a sample universe, we can perceive aspects such as these, in a global observation, we will then realize that it is impossible to determine a standardization in the way of life of the individuals that constitute society. In this sense, the point evidenced is that the world reinvents itself and is reborn each day, constantly changing and in this way, one cannot speak of returning to normal, but of resuming life after social isolation.

We realize that relationships have changed, and that the world will not be as it was. Now's generations will proceed with more caution in the face of invisible risk. Technology and technological devices have changed since the crisis, bringing more convenience to people and greater mechanization of activities. What used to depend on getting from one city to another, now depends on a click on an application, it just depends on the network and internet connection. Gradually, we became dependent on tools that were once luxury and are now almost indispensable.

In view of the above, it is also necessary to develop new teaching strategies that are appropriate to the current situation. Since the school is characterized as a social institution of control and perpetuation of the current logic (RAAD, 2016), the licensee in face of the pandemic needs to outline strategies that are in charge of bringing teaching to the reality experienced in order to mediate the solutions, taking on new meaning, new methods and should require instruction as a principle of pedagogical practice, since this, in the course of teaching, awakens in the individual processes of internal development, a sense that incite them to life, set them in motion, start all other life processes.

Thus, school practices also develop students autonomy, protagonism and potential that will not depend on the school environment alone. Lessons and knowledge may be available to the student at a click distance, however, for this reality of virtualization of the school environment, it is necessary not only the preparation of the licensee, but also of the teacher, students, and the entire school community. It should require a technical structure, agents that will promote the analysis of the quality and efficiency of teaching and, of accessibility common to all. In this scope, the challenge pointed out will also need government support, since education is a human right (UDHR, 1948) and this needs to be at the common level, valid as a rule for basic education institutions to specialized study centers.

### **How will we get out of this long period of lockdown?**

With the crisis over, with the development of vaccines and drugs that are safe and guarantee the return of social interactions without reservations, how will humanity behave? Currently, the news in the newspapers indicate numbers and increasing mortality rates, which creates discouragement, insecurity and is also a trigger for the generation of fake news, omission of data and manipulation of information. Monitoring too much news is even associated with the poison of the century, and in this case, the best solution is to manage access to the news to be aware of only what is necessary.

Although the situation is not ideal, it is necessary to have hope for better days, in a future that is approaching with new expectations, with new contributions to the end of the crisis. The statement that the world has changed, that the pandemic has motivated a new world configuration, is undeniable. There will be reports in the history and documentary books of a world before and after the pandemic. The changes are presented in several aspects that can be observed, if we do not see interpersonal relationships will change once and for all! People will be more careful to keep in close contact with each other, avoid very warm manifestations and even simple things, such as greeting (shaking hands) will fall into disuse, as a form of prophylaxis. Thus, these relationships will cool down, and may provide a significant increase in diseases such as depression and anxiety caused by eventual loneliness and, in the adaptation to the new world configuration, motivated by the pandemic.

Systemic hygiene and practices such as leaving shoes outside when entering the home, even though Asian cultures already have this habit as a common practice, will extend to different cultures around the world; the shows that used to accumulate thousands of people in a single environment, favoring disagreements, harassment and theft, will take place remotely, being able to be accompanied by those interested, individually, in the comfort of home, with family or even, inside cars in parking lots, in drive in system. In addition, new entertainment formats will be developed; films and series will gain even more viewers, theatrical performances will be broadcast on screens and the predictions we can make are that the diffusion of technology, mobile data transmission and the internet will become increasingly indispensable.

Work relationships will also undergo significant changes: meetings may be held by teleconference, so that it serves people in different places, without risking delays, so that decision-making may take much less time. People will avoid, in their work environments, maintaining close contact, aiming to contain contagion by the most diverse diseases, in this way, it does not take long for bosses and big businessmen to give up physical workspaces, just as Banco do Brazil did, afterwards the home-office proposal is very resistant. The great tendency, even after the pandemic, is that the teleworking regime gains more and more strength. Let us see, with people at home, the rates of contagion decrease, the properties of large shopping centers will tend to be vacated, generating savings for millionaire rental contracts, as well as also reducing the expenses with transportation of employees, since they no longer will need to get from their homes to work. As a result, the use of individual vehicles will be reduced, also generating sustainability to the environment, given that the emission of polluting gases will be reduced; thus, time can also be better used, generating increased productivity, since sometimes commuting between work and home takes hours on account of the distance and the large number of vehicles on the streets, causing congestion and generating stress that can be reduced.

Now it is also the trigger to raise the great question of sustainability, and the less is more. The decrease in consumerism will also be one of the significant trends that the world should follow, since with the opening of the economic crisis, the demand for superfluous things will tend to decrease, generating then the appreciation of durable goods and the great demand and investment in the sector as the latter is crucial.

In this sense, all the most diverse types of jobs and business will gain new configurations, they will have to be rethought to meet what will be considered the "new

normal". The restaurants and bars will have their operations reorganized, to attend only by appointment, or even extinguished, through tele-delivery services where people can access the menu by cell phone, through applications, and make requests from the comfort and security of their homes.

Schools and educational institutions will also experience significant differences. Technologization of education should be developed, almost like a forced development in the face of the pandemic. Thus, knowledge and teaching should be available to students, and not the other way around; distance learning will gain more and more strength and it is up to future teachers to rethink tomorrow as a new creation opportunity, aiming at new possibilities.

Finally, there will be many changes to be made, and then, it is necessary to believe that the current challenges and situations will be overcome and will bring beneficial changes to the new way of life. It is necessary to believe that humanity has the capacity to reinvent itself and reconstruct itself regardless of the situation, as previously mentioned by educator Paulo Freire in a special interview "we can reinvent the world" (FREIRE, 2018). In this way, we will emerge from this crisis stronger and more prepared, with more positive expectations, credibility in science and education, and with the certainty that we are the main agents of transformation in the world.

## Bibliography

Declaração Universal dos Direitos Humanos (DUDH), 1948. Available from: <https://nacoesunidas.org/artigo-26-direito-a-educacao/>. Access in: 29 jun. 2020.

FARGA, A. M. Pandemias do passado, velhas quarentenas e novos ensinamentos. **El País**, Cidade do México, 09 apr. 2020. Available from: <https://brasil.elpais.com/sociedade/2020-04-09/pandemias-do-passado-velhas-quarentenas-e-novos-ensinamentos.html>. Access in: 29 jun. 2020.

FREIRE, P. "Nós podemos reinventar o mundo". NOVA ESCOLA, 07 mar. 2018. Available from: <https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/266/paulo-freire-nos-podemos-reinventar-o-mundo>. Access in: 29 jun. 2020

SANTOS, B. S. A cruel pedagogia do vírus. Coimbra 2020: Edições Almedina, S.A., Apr., 2020. Available from: <https://www.cpalsocial.org/documentos/927.pdf>. Access in: 29 jun. 2020.

RAAD, I. As ideias de Vigotski e o contexto escolar. Artigo Especial. Edição 100, Volume 33. 03 feb. 2016. Available from: <http://www.revistapsicopedagogia.com.br/detalhes/22/as-ideias-de-vigotski-e-o-%20contexto-escolar>. Access in: 29 jun. 2020.

World Health Organization - WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic [Internet]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 [cited 2020 May 4]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>. Access in 22 jan. 2021.





WELLE, DEUTSCHE. China tem 1ª morte por misteriosa pneumonia viral. Brazil, jan.2020. Available from: <https://g1.globo.com/mundo/noticia/2020/01/11/china-tem-1a-morte-por-misteriosa-pneumonia-viral.ghtml>. Access in: 26 jan. 2021.

SCHUELER, P. Notícias e Artigos. O que é uma pandemia. FUNDAÇÃO OSWALDO CRUZ. Brazil, out. 2020. Available from: <https://www.bio.fiocruz.br/index.php/br/noticias/1763-o-que-e-uma-pandemia#:~:text=Segundo%20a%20Organiza%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20pandemia%20%C3%A9,sustentada%20de%20pessoa%20para%20pessoa>. Access in: 26 jan. 2021.

**OPAS. Folha informativa COVID-19 - Escritório da OPAS e da OMS no Brasil.**

Brazil, jan. 2021. Available from:

<https://www.paho.org/pt/covid19#:~:text=A%20recomenda%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20da%20OPAS%20e,ou%20outra%20parte%20do%20corpo.&text=Fumantes%20e%20usu%C3%A1rios%20de%20produtos,de%20infec%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20por%20COVID%2D19%3F>. Access in: 26 jan. 2021.