

CADERNOS EBAPE.BR

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ISSN: 1679-3951

Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Escola Brasileira de
Administração Pública e de Empresas

Costa, Breno Giordane dos Santos; Espigão, Helga Silva; Pinto, Marcelo de Rezende
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Cadernos EBAPE.BR, vol. 20, no. 3, 2022, May-June, pp. 387-400
Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública e de Empresas

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120210044x>

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Professor or youtuber? The COVID-19 pandemic, changes in social practice, and the adoption of technologies for distance education

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Abstract

This article discusses the results of a study aiming to understand how the migration from in-person to distance learning due to social distancing practices to contain the COVID-19 pandemic occurred (or has been occurring). The theoretical framework was based on practice theory, and data were obtained through interviews with 12 professors of different Brazilian higher education institutions. The data were analyzed following the principles of French discourse analysis. One of the conclusions is that mastering a certain technology is not enough for an individual to use it in professional activities. The professors interviewed indicated the need to change a few subjective elements, more specifically, modify understandings and the chains of value and projects inherent in the practice of classroom teaching. The research findings contribute to researchers involved in the field of consumption interested in finding out what happens when a group of consumers adopts a new technology during a rupture or uncertain moment. In addition, the results shed light on why some consumers discover the advantages of certain products and technologies without adopting them in daily activities.

Keywords: COVID-19. Social practices. Adoption of technologies.

Professor ou youtuber? A crise da COVID-19, as mudanças de práticas sociais e a adoção de tecnologias para o ensino remoto

Resumo

Nosso artigo discute os resultados da pesquisa em que o objetivo foi entender como a migração do ensino presencial para o ensino remoto ocorreu (ou tem ocorrido) devido ao distanciamento social provocado pela pandemia da COVID-19. O framework teórico do trabalho é a teoria da prática. Os dados foram obtidos por meio de entrevistas conduzidas com 12 professores de diferentes instituições de ensino brasileiras. Os dados foram analisados seguindo o princípio da análise de discurso francesa. Uma das conclusões é que dominar uma certa tecnologia não é o suficiente para o uso individual em atividades profissionais. Considerando os professores entrevistados, foi necessário a mudança de alguns elementos subjetivos; mais especificamente, eles precisaram modificar alguns entendimentos e cadeias de valores e projetos inerentes à prática de ensino presencial. Os achados do nosso trabalho podem contribuir para pesquisadores envolvidos no campo do consumo e para interessados em encontrar o que acontece quando um grupo de consumidores adotam uma nova tecnologia durante uma ruptura ou momento de incerteza. Além disso, os resultados também lançam luz sobre porque alguns consumidores conhecem as vantagens de certos produtos e tecnologias, sem, contudo, adotá-las em suas atividades diárias.

Palavras-chave: COVID-19. Práticas sociais. Adoção de tecnologias.

¿Profesor o youtuber? La crisis de la COVID-19, cambios en las prácticas sociales y adopción de tecnologías para el aprendizaje a distancia

Resumen

Nuestro artículo analiza los resultados de una investigación en la que el objetivo fue comprender cómo ocurrió la migración de la enseñanza presencial a la remota debido al distanciamiento social provocado por la pandemia de COVID-19. El marco teórico del trabajo es la teoría de la práctica. Los datos se obtuvieron a través de entrevistas realizadas a 12 profesores de diferentes instituciones educativas brasileñas y se analizaron siguiendo el principio del análisis del discurso francés. Una de las conclusiones es que dominar una determinada tecnología no es suficiente para el uso individual en actividades profesionales. Considerando los docentes entrevistados, fue necesario cambiar algunos elementos subjetivos; más específicamente, ellos tuvieron que modificar algunos entendimientos y cadenas de valor y proyectos inherentes a la práctica de la docencia presencial. Los hallazgos de nuestro trabajo pueden ser un aporte para los investigadores involucrados en el campo del consumo y para los interesados en saber qué sucede cuando un grupo de consumidores adopta una nueva tecnología durante una disrupción o momento de incertidumbre. Además, los resultados también arrojan luz sobre por qué algunos consumidores son conscientes de las ventajas de ciertos productos y tecnologías sin adoptarlos, sin embargo, en sus actividades diarias.

Palabras clave: COVID-19. Práticas sociales. Adopción de tecnologías.

Article submitted on March 13, 2021 and accepted for publication on December 09, 2021.

[Original version]

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120210044x>

INTRODUCTION

Changes in sociotechnical patterns – not only from a contextual perspective, but also from an individual change perspective – have been widely investigated in different fields, even in practice theory studies. From the debates related to change patterns, the scenario and the sociotechnical regime emerge without, however, acknowledging the role of agents at the micro level (Geels & Schot, 2007). Regime, on the one hand, is to be understood herein as a cognitive and technical system to which several experts belong; scenario, on the other hand, refers to contextual issues, namely economic, institutional, cultural, and political (Geels, 2004). For instance, the work of Crivits and Paredis (2013), where they investigated social practices of food consumption, adopted this regime perspective.

It is worth considering that from 2020 some of the current sociotechnical patterns have been undergoing drastic changes in the scenario provided by contextual issues related to the coronavirus pandemic. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic ended up changing inevitably several business practices (Campbell, Inman, Kirmani, & Price, 2020), e.g., the relationship among individuals, the relationship between company and employees, consumption patterns – more importantly, the crisis pushed individuals to live with and depend on technology. In such context, it is easy to realize that the crisis affected educational practices, considering that educational institutions – regardless of their structure or size – had to operationalize new ways of teaching. Thus, teaching practices had to move from classroom teaching towards a remote or distance education. However, such turn relied on a sudden change that had to be made by professors to use technology applied to education. In other words, professors were compelled, in a short space of time, to adopt new technologies, which were not often used and frequently unknown by many of them. Therefore, COVID-19 can be considered an event that, in Schatzki (2019, p. 7) words, is “something happening” that starts a change in the practice *plenum*. This event provoked social distancing and served as a factor to adopt new practices associated with these technologies.

Practice theory, therefore, can also be considered a flexible approach in several areas of knowledge – however, two of them seem to be more related to the phenomenon studied herein: education and consumption (of technology, in this case). In the consumption field, the number of studies involving practice theory have been consistently growing over the past few years (Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Warde, 2005, 2014). To define consumption of technology, we are going to use the large definition of consumption written by Warde (2005, p. 137):

I understand consumption as a process whereby agents engage in appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes, of goods, services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not, over which the agent has some degree of discretion.

With this in mind, when a professor uses Youtube or another digital tool, this is an act of consumption inside performances of practices. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that practice is a central element used to understand social phenomena and consumption (Warde, 2005). Practice is what makes individuals intelligible among themselves and forms complex social systems (Schatzki, 1996, 2002; Wittgenstein, 2009). The adoption – or consumption – of new objects or technologies, including learning and emergence of new meanings, is also a field of interest for social practice researchers. The work of Owen, Mitchell, and Gouldson (2014), for instance, shows the role played by small business consultants and companies in the adoption of technologies capable of promoting alternative energy sources to reduce carbon emissions.

We think that is important to understand what is involved in scenarios of changing. This is the focus of several studies on practice theory literature (Blue & Spurling, 2016; Gonzalez-Arcos, Joubert, Scaraboto, Guesalaga, & Sandberg, 2021; Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Schatzki, 2019). Following these studies, we seek for the change. The discussion showed herein contributed to the motivation of carrying out research whose aim was to understand how the migration from classroom teaching to distance education practices occurred (or has been occurring) due to social distancing stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and which elements were involved. Thus, it will be necessary to understand which were the substantial changes that have been occurring for professors to alter their practices by adopting – for instance – digital technologies in distance education. In order to achieve the research aim, we present a qualitative research approach with a focus on French discourse analysis.

The scenario provided by the COVID-19 pandemic triggered several calls for paper in scientific events and periodicals – including areas other than health – to understand and solve issues and problems that emerged during the pandemic. Thus, our work may contribute to a general understanding – from a practice theory perspective – of the necessary transformations that must occur for individuals to adopt new technologies. By understanding what happened during the shift from proximate to distance learning, our paper sheds light on the elements and practices that might consolidate even in a post-pandemic scenario. Understanding how consumption practices and patterns and the adoption of technologies transform and consolidate may have managerial implications as well.

This paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we will present elements related to the practice theory, the definition of social practice, and its components. Subsequently, we will briefly explain the methodological procedures and the reason why we chose them; the data analysis section will present the results obtained from data collection, as well as the discourse analysis. Our conclusions are drawn in the final section, in which we emphasize the main findings of this paper, its contribution to literature, and indications for future studies.

PRACTICE THEORY

The practice theory has brought, from the 1970s onwards, an alternative to objectivist Durkheimian approaches in social sciences (Reckwitz, 2002). Considering one of its origins in Wittgenstein's (2009) language games, which perceives the intelligibility among individuals because of the immersion in continuous, routine, and contextualized practices, the practice theory was later consolidated by Giddens' (1984) structuration theory and by Bourdieu's (1977) studies on habitus and conditions of production. The latter author, in the book entitled *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, demonstrates how a variety of daily and located practices forms a system of specific social regularities when referring to his studies in the Algerian region of Kabylia.

The idea that daily practices will structure the social world is also relevant to Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. According to the author, social structures present a duality because they are composed of practices they helped to create and control and, in addition, they also provide a space for their transformations through the same practices. Thus, by locating between social structures and individual action, the practice approach has been used in several knowledge fields, in which sustainable consumption (Hampton, 2018; Huttunen & Oosterveer, 2016; Lehtokunas, Mattila, Närvänen, & Mesiranta, 2020; Røpke, 2009) and pedagogy are to be found (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors, & Edwards-Groves, 2014; Schatzki, 2017).

It is important to say that there are several practices theories. At the fall of the twentieth century and the rise of the twentieth-first century, some important line inside practice theories emerged. The cornerstones were the works of Reckwitz (2002) and Schatzki (1996). After that, Elizabeth Shove and colleagues started a strong line of research with an empirical approach (Magaudda & Mora, 2019). The work of Shove and Pantzar (2005) in the investigation of Nordic Walking created a model of practice (better explained by Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012) which after was used by Magaudda (2011) to create a visual tool to see the change of practices. These works will be explained better below. At this point it is important to stay that we use this kind of practice theory started by these authors. In the upcoming topic, we will present the components of practice to analyze their transformations and relations to the social world.

Components of practice

In accordance with Schatzki (1996, p. 106), "a practice *is* a manifold of doings and sayings (basic actions)". However, the author further develops his arguments stating that a set of doings and sayings becomes a practice only if the members (of the practice) express a variety of understandings, rules, and teleoffective structure, forming a *nexus of doings and sayings*. Thus, in order to correctly comprehend the concept of practice, the author states:

Three major avenues of linkage [of doings and sayings] are involved: (1) through understandings, for example, of what to say or do; (2) through explicit rules, principles percepts, and instructions; and (3) through what I will call "teleoffective" structures embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions, and moods (Schatzki, 1996, p. 89).

Schatzki's doings and sayings and the organizers of practices (rules, understandings and teleoaffective structure) were interpreted by other authors as *performances/forms of competence* and *meanings* (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, 2012; Woremann & Rokka, 2015); in addition, the *objects* and the artifacts were included to the model of practice (Magaudha, 2011; Shove & Pantzar, 2005, 2012). Thus, with the interpretation provided by Shove and Pantzar (2005, 2012), social practice has three central elements: *objects*, *meanings* and *forms of competence*. Forms of competence are specific activities related to the bodily manifestation of the practice in the relationship with the world. Meanings are related to what one thinks and says about certain things in a specific community of practice and to associated images (Schatzki, 1996, 2017; Shove & Pantzar, 2005, 2012). Finally, objects constitute the material part of practice. In addition, when integrating to the dynamics of the relationship among components, the object of a determined practice can also require the consumption of other associated objects (Magaudha, 2011; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2005).

At this point, it is possible to understand practice as a social dynamic phenomenon that (1) depends on the relations among the internal elements, (2) may be disperse in time and space (Plessz & Wahlen, 2020) in order to (3) attract new practitioners (Shove & Pantzar, 2007b), (4) modifies an internal reaction chains involving every constituent element (Magaudha, 2011), and (5) depends on the social and historical context of the place where the practice is performed (Shove & Pantzar, 2007a).

There are two other issues that can be added to the characteristics of practice. The first one refers to learning. Practices produce learning (i.e., knowledge that is acquired and transformed) and, at the same time, they depend on this learning for their own survival (Schatzki, 2017). According to the author, learning is central to practices because these practices must be learned by participants; however, what they learn are not the practices per se, but how to deal with them (Schatzki, 2017). The second issue refers to consumption. In accordance with Warde (2005), consumption is an integrative part of social practices, whether in its traditional form of exchange or in its contemplative form. Thus, consumption researchers can use the approach proposed by social practice to study transformations in consumption patterns and learning associated with this social phenomenon, for instance. Therefore, the approach used herein does not distance itself from the theoretical framework of the practice theory when trying to unravel the elements involved in the adoption of new technologies due to contextual pressures.

Transformation in consumption practices

Studies that use the practice theory to approach the social phenomenon related to consumption show that, for changes in patterns or routines of what is consumed (consumption practices) to occur, it is necessary to establish a relationship between elements of the social structure and the agency of individuals (Crivits & Paredis, 2013; Hargreaves, 2011; Lehtokkunas et al., 2020; Thomas & Epp, 2019). These structures can be, e.g., material and technological infrastructures (Morley, 2016) or social and institutional ones (Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 2019, 2021).

Such relationships are didactically approached by Magaudha (2011) with the elaboration of the circuit of practice. The author develops a model with practice elements (objects, doings, and meanings) and shows how these elements inter-relate in the transformation of a consumption practice. Thus, in a case analyzed by the author, the meanings and activities of practitioners were transformed due to a prominent change in the way of storing music insofar the emergence of the iPod and digital storage arises.

As we have said, changes in practices have been investigated by several researchers. It is not by chance that infrastructures (also technological) have been inserted in the discussion of practices (Magaudha & Mora, 2019) as one of the causes of change (Shove, Trentmann, & Watson, 2019). In this case, materiality is very present in the discussion. On the other hand, natural events are also responsible for the change in society (Schatzki, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic is an example. Whether material infrastructure or natural phenomena, these things are interwoven with practices. The study of Phipps and Ozanne (2017), for instance, seeks to show how the consumers changed their consumptions habits during the drought period in Australia. The most recent work (Gonzalez-Arcos et al., 2021) discussed the "resistance to sustainability interventions" during the free plastic bag policy in Chile. It is important to show that practices are social, and we live in a constellation of practices, or in a practice plenum (Schatzki, 2019). Because of that, the change of practices needs to be analyzed under broad lens, because all phenomenon is part of bundles of practices and material arrangements in some way (Schatzki, 2016a).

However, the circuit of practice created by Magaudha (2011) is very functional in order to grasp the movement of change. We have adapted the tool proposed by the author in order to grasp the organizers of practice (understandings, rules and teleoaffective structure). The circuit is revealed in 4.2.

METHOD

We intend herein to identify the components of practice present in the specific case of professors, who had to abandon classroom teaching due to the social distancing caused by COVID-19 from March 2020 onwards; now these professors need to transmit knowledge to students through the internet and associated digital technologies. In order to analyze such shift in the educational system and consumption patterns, we adopted a qualitative research approach. In the case investigated herein, the consumption of new technologies occurs in a broad way through purchase, use, or in contemplative form (Warde, 2005). We interviewed 12 professors teaching in different high education courses (graduate and undergraduate) and institutions. The data was collected through semi structured questionnaire and the interviewees were selected through snowball sampling. The interviews were carried out with Google Meet and subsequently recorded and filed; in total, we obtained a little more than 758 minutes of audiovisual material for analysis.

To analyze data, we will make use of the French discourse analysis because it is a technique that allows us to unveil the social structures that “speak” through individuals’ discourses; we consider that practices and their elements form and are formed by such structures (Bakhtin, 1986; Gill, 2000; Orlandi, 2003). Following Schatzki (2016b) we understand the discourse as the result of the sayings of practice inside bundles of practices and material arrangements. Sayings are the discursive part of the practices. Because of that, we use herein discourse analysis to investigate practices. Similar approaches have been made by Schäfer (2017). The author argues that make discourse analysis to investigate practices “takes into account the crucial part of objects, knowledge, symbols, discourse, structure, and processes in everyday life” (Schäfer, 2017, p. 4). Hakala, Niemi, and Kohtamäki (2017) also use a similar approach to investigate legitimization practices. What we have made in our analysis is to take sayings from the interviewees to access the discursive layer of the practices.

Thus, in line with Wittgenstein (2009), language depends on the context of the individuals using it and on the practices of which it is part. Not by chance, the discourse analysis was only possible after the linguistic turn caused initially by Wittgenstein’s work (Chouliaraki, 2018). Our research, however, tends to turn back to the essence of the author’s reasoning in *Philosophical Investigations* because we understand that in the language there is no fixed or intelligible meaning for everyone, but a meaning that depends on the position of the word in the language game. For such, the author makes a comparison between language and chess game. It is not possible to play chess just knowing the name of the pieces; it is necessary to understand how these pieces move and which method rules the game.

When one shows someone the king in chess and says, “This is the king”, one does not thereby explain to him the use of this piece unless he already knows the rules of the game except for this last point: the shape of the king (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 18).

We used the notion of language games by Wittgenstein to show in some citations how the individuals use the mastered language to express their inner processes and how these processes are tied to the world (the discursive fragment 2 shows it very well). On the other hand, we have put Wittgenstein in our account also to demonstrate that our research has an epistemological point of departure: The break with the Cartesian epistemologies where the meanings are statical (Taylor, 1993). In order to operationalize our analysis, as we said, we followed the sayings to achieve the several elements of practice and material arrangements. To show the quotes, we have adopted pseudonyms for the interviewees as a way of preserving their identity. Box 1 provides an overview of the professors’ profiles.

Box 1
General profile of the interviewees

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Teaching course	Educational level	Hours per week	Teaching years
Vitor	M	44	Administration Accounting	Graduation Post-graduation (<i>lato sensu</i>)	8	12
Charles	M	43	HR management Personnel administration	Post-graduation (<i>lato sensu</i>)	20	11
Lucia	F	41	Administration Accounting	Graduation	16	12
Marta	F	45	Physiotherapy	Graduation	12	19
Francisca	F	44	Advertising Public relations	Graduation	12	14
Elizabete	F	41	Accounting	Graduation	12	12
Jonas	M	61	Administration	Graduation Post-graduation (<i>lato sensu</i>)	3	21
Elza	F	44	Dentistry	Graduation Post-graduation (<i>lato and stricto sensu</i>)	40	11
Sofia	F	29	Transport engineering	Graduation	40	2
Sueli	F	46	Physiotherapy	Graduation	16	18
Henrique	M	48	Agronomy	Graduation Post-graduation (<i>lato and stricto sensu</i>)	40	15
Diego	M	35	Accounting	Graduation	20	8

Source: Research data.

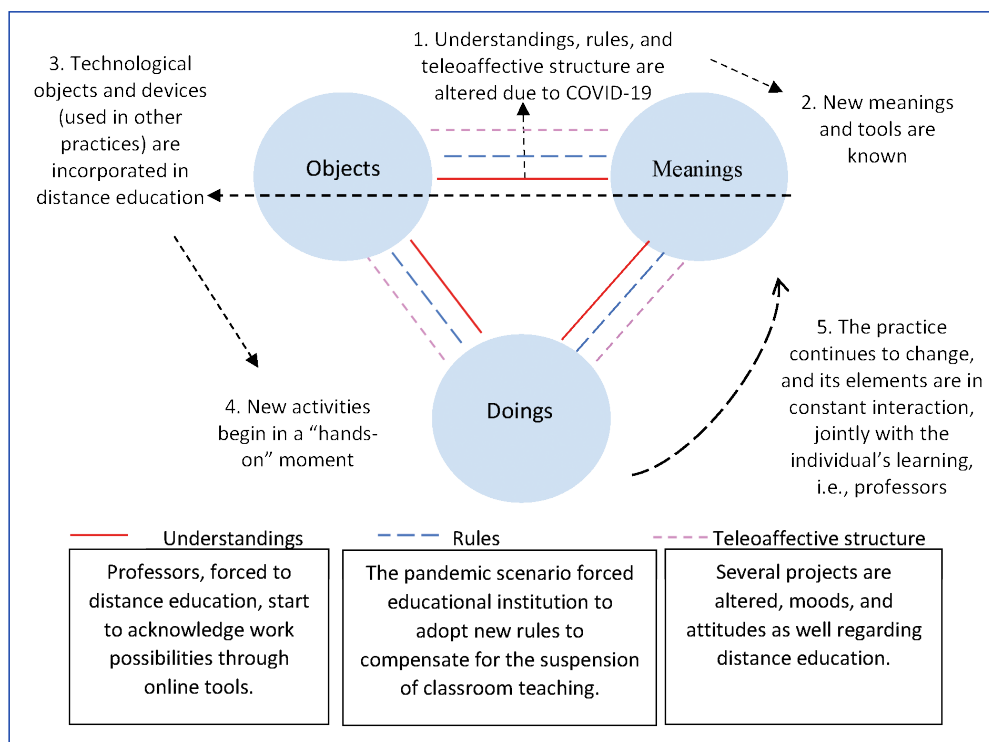
Finally, the discourse analysis we've made has been sought specifically by the elements of Magaúda's (2011) circuit of practice. The doings, meanings and objects guided us through the data set in order to reveal the circuit and the change of practice. As we can see, Figure 1 shows our version of the circuit after we use it to analyze our data set. On the other hand, as we saw emerge from the data, the change of practice passed through three phases: the sudden social distancing, efforts and consolidation of new practices, and the professors' volunteer efforts. The next section was organized like these three (almost) chronological phases. During the discourse analysis, in the next section, we will highlight a few discursive fragments from the data collected which we understand to be more illustrative.

DATA ANALYSIS

Subsequently, we will use a visual didactic resource to illustrate the behavior of the practice under transformation based on the moment in which the institutional scenario determines the suspension of classroom teaching. We will make use of an adapted from Magaúda's (2011) circuit of practice to illustrate the transformation that occurred during the shift from classroom teaching to distance education.

Figure 1 illustrates the components that make up the practice and a chain of relationships among them so that the change initiated by nexus' elements triggers the transformation of the entire practice. These transformations take place in a community of practitioners and are part of the subjectivity of their holders, since practice is essentially social (Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 1996). The numberings that precede the small texts narrate the events concerning each element and their purpose is to assist the reader in analyzing the transformation; it does not mean that the events followed an exact chronological order.

Figure 1
Practice under transformation: from classroom teaching towards distance learning



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

First, the pandemic and the institutional scenario were events that triggered the alterations in the understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structure of practice. After that, the meanings of teaching tools, e.g., YouTube arises. Henceforth, the material world and the technological devices are incorporated in practices and new activities begin performing. The learning inside practices doesn't stop, and the practice, in its performance, continues to change. This is the circuit of practice that we've adapted and used to analyze the data set.

The analysis will be divided in three sections, whose aim is to guide the reader through the debate of the themes that emerged from the data. The first section will approach the moment in which the institutions ceased classroom teaching, forcing professors to adopt new consumption forms of digital technologies for distance education. The second section approaches the efforts made by professors in order to adopt such technologies. And, finally, we will analyze the effort promoted by the interviewees to ensure the quality of distance education. The most illustrative discursive fragments that represent the general reality of interviewees will be transcribed for a detailed discourse analysis.

Elements of changing practice 1: the sudden social distancing

With the social distancing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the second half of March 2020, classroom professors – especially in undergraduate courses – were forced by their institutions to continue to transmit the content of their classes through digital technologies. The professors, without any previous experience in distance education, had to suddenly adapt to this new reality, as stated by the interviewees.

It is possible to consider the moment in which the institutions required for professors to teach in distance education as the turning point and the beginning of transformation of practices at the individual level, i.e., professors. Thus, the external environment and social structures, respectively, formed the 'trigger' that initiated the transformation in the teaching practice for the interviewed professors, which is in line with other studies that approached the role of structures that trigger a transformation in social practices (Bourdieu, 2000; Hampton, 2018; Paddock, 2017; Trees & Dean, 2017).

At the individual level, it was possible to observe a certain level of stress and anxiety when professors realized they were being forced to initiate a transformation in the practice, as if they were entering an unknown world. Practices are social, dispersed, and shared and the individual is somehow part of a practitioner's community (Plessz & Wahlen, 2020; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996; Shove & Pantzar, 2007b). Therefore, it was no accident that many professors, when adopting sudden practices, sought in a network of practices all the information they needed, triggering consequently a change in understandings, which is one of the elements of practice and possibly the first in the chain to undergo transformations.

All professors interviewed had a source of information to support them during this period of transformation, be they YouTube videos, courses provided by the institutions where they teach, tutorials, or advice from colleagues. Discursive fragment 1 illustrates such situation.

(1) [...] When I felt I wanted to record my lessons, I started to watch some video lessons on how to record video lessons [laughs]. I wasn't researching how to teach the online class, but which tools I was going to need to use [...]. I started watching YouTube videos, which was something I didn't used to do before, but I knew the tool. We started our own channel to post the videos and the students would have the open access to them. So, I knew YouTube existed and it was used for online teaching, but I just had never used it (Sofia).

Unsaid words can also be part of the discourse analysis (Saraiva, 2009) and, in this case, the lexical selection "I knew YouTube existed and it was used for online teaching, but I just had never used it" indicates that the interviewee was aware of YouTube's potential to transmit online classes, but she had never seen it as a project. Perhaps – using the components of practice for analysis – it occurred because Sofia did not have proper understanding and teleoffective structure to the practice of distance education until the turning point. These issues will be discussed below.

When confronting the existing technological structure with the several social practices and the classroom teaching practice mastered by the interviewee, it is possible to affirm that knowing that YouTube exists is not enough. The professor may use such tool, but it is necessary that his/her understanding about it changes to the point of definitively adopting it in new teaching practices.

The understandings about things, which make up social practices and blends activities, meanings, and objects of practice according to Schatzki (1996), refers to how the individual perceives the possibility of his/her relationship with them. For instance, understanding about a computer encompasses what I can do with it, such as writing e-mails, watching videos, accessing the web, etc. Thus, in order to incorporate lesson recording to the new practice adopted by the interviewee, it was necessary to modify the understanding of the professor regarding some tools and the forms of content. Sofia, in another moment of her speech, strengthens the idea that knowing about a tool is not enough to use it; she informs, however, that she intends to keep the practice of presenting recorded lessons also in classroom teaching.

The role and power exerted by educational institutions over professors are essential to shaping this new practice by influencing elements of social practices, which are transformed into a chain of relationships. In this case, there is an indication that the nexus' element understanding was one of the first to be transformed, which enabled the beginning of the transformation of the practice. Jointly with understanding, there is another nexus' element that was transformed during the adoption of new practices: teleoffective structure. Discursive fragment 2 illustrates this issue.

(2) [...] Let's say I slept on the 17th as an accountant, and I woke up on the 19th as a youtuber. [...] I believe it didn't take me long to get used to the online system. Even due to my teaching style. I used to joke with my students that my whiteboard is now Word because I share my screen and write the content in Word. Now Word is my whiteboard, and my handwriting became Times 12 (Diego).

A Wittgensteinian analysis allows a few considerations about the context of the interviewee Diego. Here we understand language games as the ability to use the words to make his inner thoughts clearer. To play a good game, in this sense, means to have mastered the rules of a language in a specific context. In his language game, assuming that his interlocutors are familiarized with the lexicons and associated meanings, such as "youtuber" and "Word", Diego intends to demonstrate how this new virtual teaching practice comes close to classroom teaching. The lexicons were selected exactly to demonstrate Diego's effort to make a sort of copy of the practice instead of a deep transformation in its subjective components. Considering that teleoffective structure encompasses "ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions, and moods"

(Schatzki, 1996, p. 89), one can understand – not only through the language game, but also through the semantic course and the characters present in Diego’s speech (accountant, youtuber, Word) how social structures (i.e., environment of institutional and legal rules) ended up guiding projects and tasks and transforming moods, beliefs, and emotions. The change that occurred in the teleoaffective structure of the practice will be evidenced in the upcoming section, since some prejudices about distance education were overcome by the interviewees, who confirmed to adopt new digital platforms in classroom teaching in a post-pandemic scenario.

Elements of changing practice 2: professors’ efforts and the consolidation of new practices

After participating in a new community of practice (distance education), the interviewed professors – working under new rules, with new understandings, and inside a new teleoaffective structure – started to give new uses to their objects (technological devices, such as the smartphone), learn new meanings (they learned, for instance, what Google Forms is), and start new activities (such as orientation of works through meeting applications). At this point, every element of practice is activated and transformed after the initial “trigger”.

(3) [...] Now I think all tests are going to be online, really! Do you know why? I discovered in Google Forms that I can make a new test, and the results are immediate. So, the first tests had only multiple-choice questions, the next ones will have discursive questions because now I’m getting better at this. If there’s one thing, I hate is to mark tests, I am the professor who doesn’t like to correct tests, I know it’s not positive, it’s a flaw. [...] Who wants to cheat won’t be able to write the test, because I gave them less than an hour to write it [...] you can shuffle questions and answers, within them you can also shuffle. So, it’s pointless to ask your friend on WhatsApp for help, because if he gives you attention, he won’t have time to write his own test. [...] I didn’t know I had that possibility. [...] I gave them the test and it was fantastic! The result is immediate, and I don’t have to mark tests [...] (Henrique).

In discursive fragment 3, it is possible to identify the adoption of a new tool not only during the suspension of classroom teaching, but routinely in their practices even in a post-pandemic scenario. It is worth highlighting that routine is essential for the survival of practices (Schatzki, 1996). Through the lexical selection “the next ones will have discursive questions because now I’m getting better at this” indicates a still ongoing practice, i.e., incomplete and under transformation. In addition, it shows that learning is also an element that permeates every practice and acts in maintaining its longevity over time (Schatzki, 2017).

In discursive fragment 3 it is also possible to identify the learning and the use of methods to avoid students from cheating. Thus, one can observe that old practices, such as the creation of obstacles to hinder students’ cheating end up being discreetly reconfigured within new practices (Shove & Pantzar, 2007a). When making clear that it is possible to see new possibilities in Google Forms and that it has brought him a certain relief considering he is “the professor who doesn’t like to correct tests”, Henrique indicates an alteration of understandings in the teleoaffective structure of his practice, which triggers a reaction in all other components.

The consolidation of meetings through specific applications is also an illustrative example of the transformation of a new practice. These applications are an example of tools that were only known but not utilized because their subjective relationship with individuals had not yet been transformed, in this specific case, professors and online teaching platforms. Thus, the crisis provoked by COVID-19 was the driver of this change. There are some reports stating that orientations in term papers, for instance, can be carried out virtually without loss of quality in orientation. In addition, in universities located in large urban centers, it indicates a way to reduce commute time. Finally, discursive fragment 4 illustrates a practice under transformation, associated with learning, that tends to consolidate itself in a post-pandemic scenario.

(4) [...] All my contact with the student was 100% in person and today I believe some issues can be continued online, some discussions, the content can be recorded and contribute to learning, or some complementary content recorded (Vitor).

The Wittgensteinian analysis shows a language game used by the interviewee Vitor. When analyzing that his “contact with the student was 100% in person”, Vitor’s speech indicates a linguistic resource used to emphasize a turning point in his teaching practice, considering that he affirmed that the institutions at which he works used educational systems to send messages and materials to students, in addition to contact – even if less intensively – per e-mail. Thus, the contact to students was not literally “100% in person”, but in the practical, automatic, unconscious, and fluid use of the language, these resources appear. In short, the transformation of the practice from classroom teaching to distance education, in addition to the adjacent subjectivity, needed this abrupt rupture caused by a social crisis scenario due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the linguistic resources used by the interviewees, they all indicate a moment that marks a transformation.

Accordingly, the transformation of the practice was not fluid and natural, but rather traumatic and highly perceptive for the professors. Say that the transformation of practices was not fluid does not mean that they didn’t occur, but that they had some sort of resistance (like the Gonzalez-Arcos et al., 2021 work, see also the resistance in fragment 7 below).

Conflict with social structures and professors’ volunteer efforts

We highlighted so far, the role that social structure played on individuals and the practice that took shape. However, one important issue found in the research corpus is the conflict between professors and educational institutions; the efforts made by professors go beyond what is institutionally required from them to maintain the quality of teaching. On the contrary, one can perceive a movement from the individual towards coercion structures.

(5) [...] I sent an e-mail informing we were about to start the class, all the basic orientations [...], and a written tutorial for the student... Because I understand that if I needed it, he is also going to need it. So, I sent him this information. At the first moment, it was more like a talk, not a teaching content [...] The first thing I did was to record a video on my cell phone saying: - Guys, I am not a robot, I have my own limitations because I don’t teach the computer, I know how to deal with people. So, I tried to humanize this class: - I am a professor with knowledge, etc., but I am not youtuber, so please forgive the mistakes that I will eventually make (Elza).

Discursive fragment 5 illustrates the effort of the professor in trying to “humanize this class”. In the context of the practice of distance education, the lexicon humanization can be considered a case of refraction (Saraiva, 2009); i.e., when the sense is moved from one context to another. According to Professor Elza, humanizing actions are the ones that aim at reproducing – even if imperfectly – the existing interactions in a face-to-face context. Exposing her own fragilities, “mistakes that I will eventually make”, is the way that the professor found to get closer to the student who is physically distant and create an empathic relationship. The characters identified in her speech (robot, youtuber), which she counteracts, emphasize her place as teacher only recently introduced to distance education.

Whether through humanization or the production of tutorials, which was the situation mentioned by Professor Elza in a different part of her speech, it is possible to realize an effort from the teacher that goes beyond what is requested by educational institutions. Such effort, based on the argument exposed herein, would not have happened if the teleoffective structure that composes the practice had not been altered, as it is the definer of projects, motivations, values, etc.

The arguments indicated in Discursive fragment 5 is added to some other reports of attitudes that circumvent structures imposed by the institutional environment, whether by doing something beyond what is mandatory, as illustrated in Discursive fragment 6, or by not complying with imposed rules, as in Discursive fragment 7.

(6) [...] I really missed this face-to-face contact with the students. So, I decided to propose something right in the middle of the semester because I felt that our relationship was getting too cold, too professional, and not very personal. Then I proposed some happy hours. This is the way it was: before or after class... with the morning class, it was a collective coffee break. We would all turn on our cameras, each one in their own home, each one with their own snacks, and then we did not talk about class, we talked about life. [...] And with the evening class it was a real happy hour, at the end of the class everyone would drink whatever they wanted to drink, beer, anything, they would have some appetizers, and we would talk about different matters (Marta).

(7) I created this WhatsApp group with my students, but we are not allowed, [the institution] does not allow any sort of contact with students, only through the institutional online platforms. [...] This proximity with my students improves the classes, I do participate in a WhatsApp group with them, they always text me on WhatsApp [...] (Elizabeth).

One more time, as observed in Discursive fragment 6, the professor interviewed makes use of a device to humanize her classes, and she used the lexical selection “that our relationship was getting too cold, too professional, and not very personal” to express how she felt. In everyday language, the lexicon cold is normally used to qualify distant relationships which, in turn, are the opposite of warm relationships. Generally, the physical distance between the students and the professor brought her a feeling of coldness, which Marta tried to overcome by creating a few relaxing moments in the meetings mediated by digital technology.

Discursive fragment 7 goes beyond; it exposes that the professor is aware of the imposed rule she is breaking. Anyway, the professor chooses to take that risk and still improves the proximity with students, which – according to her – “makes her class much better”. In this point, it seems clear that the proximity with students, whether in classroom teaching or in distance education – becomes part of the teaching practice; the professors interviewed try to replicate this proximity in the new practices, despite the social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Studies that approach the adoption of new practices, technologies, and consumption patterns demonstrate how the pressure provided by social structures act on individual decisions. The crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the scenario of educational institutions, which had to suspend classroom teaching consequently. Thus, classroom teachers had to suddenly change several activities, use of objects, meanings, and other subjective conceptions, such as structures of value and understandings. Such alteration is complex and lies between the objective and subjective components of the practice, as illustrated in Figure 1; such articulation can be understood as the main contribution of this paper to literature.

Aiming to understand how the transformation of the practice from classroom teaching to distance education due to the social distancing provoked by COVID-19 occurs, our study made use of the components of social practice as an observation map. Through a qualitative research method and discourse analysis, it was possible to draw some conclusions. First, acknowledging a new technology does not mean that the individual will use it in his/her professional activities. In the case analyzed herein, the interviewees had to change a few subjective elements; more specifically, understandings and a chain of values and projects of the practice of classroom teaching. Only after this change it was possible to use software and other objects in the practice of distance education. Knowing and using YouTube or smartphones was not enough to insert the professors into the new practice of teaching.

Second, after a chain transformation in the components of the practice, it was possible to realize that the professors, even in a post-pandemic scenario, intend to adopt a few of their new learnings in classroom teaching. It demonstrates a transformation in the practice, in every understanding, teleoaffective structure, rules, meanings, activities, and objects. Finally, one may realize that there was an effort that went beyond what was originally required by the educational institution in the practice of distance education. Such effort demonstrates a change in the teleoaffective structure of the teaching practice because teleoaffectivity drives and determines a hierarchy of values, attitudes, and personal projects. This effort was made in order to bring elements from a practice in classroom teaching to distance education, which some interviewees referred to as humanization, i.e., a physical and emotional proximity with students, which got lost during distance education. To promote informal conversations and happy hour moments that occurred thanks to the physical proximation of students in the virtual environment, it is possible to observe what Shove and Pantzar (2007a) called fossilization of practices; in other words, when elements of old practices are found in recent practices, considering that practices transform from one to another.

In the sudden transition from professor to youtuber – a personality who appears in the speech of some interviewees to illustrate the distance education teacher that makes use of digital technology, as observed in Discursive fragment 2 –, the speeches indicate an intermediate path in a post-pandemic scenario, where classroom teachers, with transformed practices permeated by learning, will be more creative in the classroom, bringing to students the production of videos, application of virtual tests, and even online orientations for term papers.

The findings of our work are relevant for marketing professionals interested in finding out what happens when a group of consumers adopt a new technology, or – conversely – why some consumers get to know the advantages of certain products and technologies but are unable to adopt them in daily activities. In the latter case, studies with a social practice approach that comprehend a chain of subjective elements (such as understandings and teleoaffective structure) may have managerial implications. On the one hand, in the case analyzed herein, the chain reaction was caused by a change in the rules of educational institutions, which forced professors to adopt a new practice.

On the other hand, the environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic emerges as a research field for researchers interested in exploring social phenomena, moving a little away from the managerial sphere. Therefore, public managers or third sector organizations can study or bring about significant changes using the approach provided by the practice theory. Public administration institutions, for instance, could carry out more effective health promotion campaigns if they could reach out to the understandings and teleoaffective structure of the population's practices.

Future studies, in a post-pandemic scenario, could verify which technologies and learnings from distance education were effectively adopted and learned. In other words, we consider that is essential to continue investigating how the future of the classroom and education, in general, will be in the post-pandemic in order to investigate how the change of practices will reflect on improvements of teaching-learning processes. In addition, from a student point of view, future research should assess if the change in the practice of teachers generated results in students' learning. We judge relevant to pursue the answer inherent in the title of this paper: What should we expect from education professionals after the COVID-19 pandemic? Which role should they play, educator, teacher, or youtuber? A little bit from each one? All of them? Or something other than that?

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