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Higher Education Policy and Management, Technology and Possibilities in Times of Covid-19*

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ABSTRACT

This work aims to analyze the challenges that the current pandemic scenario resulting from Covid-19 has imposed on institutions of knowledge (universities), understanding that the movements generated in them are incorporated into the changing field of Higher Education, in the strength of its diversity of trajectories and in their interconnections, interests and interlocutions. Public policies are discussed based on official documents impregnated by contradictions and questions, in the face of contemporary needs, on issues of technology and sustainability and the way in which HEIs respond to them. The analysis categories emerged from the set of information resulting from webinars promoted by RIES (South Brazilian Network of Higher Education Investigators) and from the case study of a community university (UPF). The perspective of analysis makes use of academic productions linked to public policies in facing challenges prompted by technology and sustainability and institutional reactions made public. The study evidences the adoption of new strategies in academic management. It is time for higher education to face institutional autonomy. The visualization of possibilities for living in a better and sustainable world can be strengthened in the conduct of management, considering needs, commitments, experiences of different HEIs and the role of technology in these processes, especially in the current pandemic context.

KEYWORDS

Public policy in education. Management. Higher education. Technology. Sustainability. Pandemic.

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Política e Gestão da Educação Superior, Tecnologia e Possibilidades em Tempos de Covid-19

RESUMO

Neste trabalho objetiva-se analisar desafios que o presente cenário pandêmico decorrente do Covid-19, tem imposto às instituições do conhecimento (universidades), entendendo que os movimentos nelas gerados estão incorporados ao campo em mudança da Educação Superior, na força de sua diversidade de trajetórias e nas suas interligações, interesses e interlocuções. Discute-se políticas públicas com base nos documentos oficiais impregnados por contradições e questionamentos, face às necessidades contemporâneas, nas questões de tecnologia e sustentabilidade e o modo como as IES a elas respondem. As categorias de análise emergiram do conjunto de informações decorrentes de webinars promovidos pela RIES (Rede Sul Brasileira de Investigadores de Educação Superior) e do estudo de caso de uma universidade comunitária (UPF). A perspectiva de análise faz uso de produções acadêmicas ligadas a políticas públicas no enfrentamento de desafios incitados pela tecnologia e pela sustentabilidade e a reações institucionais tornadas públicas. O estudo evidencia a adoção de novas estratégias na gestão acadêmica. É o momento da Educação Superior se defrontar com a autonomia institucional. A visualização de possibilidades para viver num mundo melhor e sustentável pode ser fortalecida na condução da gestão, considerando necessidades, compromissos, experiências de diferentes IES e o papel da tecnologia nesses processos, em especial no contexto pandêmico vigente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Política pública em educação. Gestão. Educação superior. Tecnologia. Sustentabilidade. Pandemia

Política y Gestión de la Educación Superior, Tecnología y Posibilidades en Tiempos de Covid-19

RESUMEN

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar los desafíos que el actual escenario de pandemia producto del Covid-19 ha impuesto a las instituciones del conocimiento (universidades), entendiendo que los movimientos generados en ellas se incorporan al cambiante campo de la Educación Superior, en la fuerza de su diversidad de trayectorias y en sus interconexiones, intereses e interlocuciones. Se discuten políticas públicas a partir de documentos oficiales impregnados de contradicciones y cuestionamientos, frente a las necesidades contemporáneas, en temas de tecnología y sustentabilidad y la forma en que las IES les dan respuesta. Las categorías de análisis surgieron del conjunto de informaciones resultantes de webinars promovidos por la RIES (Red Sur Brasileña de Investigadores de Educación Superior) y del estudio de caso de una universidad comunitaria (UPF). La perspectiva de análisis hace uso de las producciones académicas vinculadas a las políticas públicas frente a los desafíos suscitados por la tecnología y la sustentabilidad y las reacciones institucionales hechas públicas. El estudio evidencia la adopción de nuevas estrategias en la gestión académica. Es hora de que la educación superior enfrente la autonomía institucional. La visualización de posibilidades para vivir en un mundo mejor y sostenible puede fortalecerse en la conducción de la gestión, considerando necesidades, compromisos, experiencias de las diferentes IES y el papel de la tecnología en estos procesos, especialmente en el actual contexto de pandemia.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Políticas públicas en educación. Administración. Educación superior. Tecnología. Sustentabilidad. Pandemia

Introduction

Throughout the civilizing process, the context has imposed multiple challenges to knowledge institutions, such as universities. Their elaborations of complexity and continuous attempts at improvement generate in them rescue or innovative movements of institutional processes in their procedures and objectives.

What happens in the practices and in the institutional movements reverberates in the constructions of the theoretical fields in their becoming. It is understood that the movements generated in them, in the strength of the diversity of trajectories and their interconnections, interests and interlocutions are incorporated in the dynamic field of Higher Education. To shed light on such movements and challenges, especially those generated or imbricated in crucial moments for the life of the planet and the human species, such as this one in which the pandemic caused by Covid-19 is spreading around the world, is the main objective of this work.

This study had its origin motivated by two sets of webinars promoted by RIES¹ in 2020, the year of the outbreak of the pandemic in most countries, and especially in Brazil. Under different modalities, the methodology of documentary and case study was adapted, considering the limitations that the moment of social distancing imposes on people and institutions. The legislation (laws, provisional measures, opinions, and resolutions), selected among those available on the official sites, served as a reference for the analysis of its content around the intended objective, constituting the study's referential base. Based on the speeches of the invited specialists and on the questions of the listeners participating in the webinars mentioned above, the categories of technology and sustainability emerged. The specific case study (of the UPF), developed through documentary research, was complemented by telephone contacts and e-mails. Access to data and institutional information was obtained by consulting the institution's website (UPF, 2020), as well as by contact (via e-mail) with the Vice-Rector of Undergraduate Studies, which made a communications advisor available for various clarifications. Thus, the sources consulted from this institution consist of data and information that were published in the period between March and November 2020. It is worth mentioning that, through the Internet, it was possible to check news on the websites of TV stations, radio stations and local newspapers, from the state and the country, and especially on UPF Radio and UPF TV.

¹ RIES - South Brazilian Network of Higher Education Researchers brings together researchers in the field of Higher Education (HE). In 2020, it developed two stages of webinars that were led by its members and guests with links in universities in Brazil and abroad. The first stage, entitled EBES on the WEB, had as scope the pre-launch of EBES - Brazilian Encyclopedia of Higher Education (MOROSINI, 2021). This stage was developed from May to June 2020 and focused on the themes of ES Policy and Evaluation, ES History and Management, ES Teacher and Student, ES Curriculum and ES Internationalization (<https://www.even3.com.br/ebesnaweb>). The second stage, held between August and September, constituted the series of webinars on the theme of Knowledge Networks in Higher Education, coordinated by members of the (PPGE/PPPG/UFSM). It prioritized the deepening of the themes discussed via chat in the pre-presentations of the EBES, around the highlights made by the participants. In addition to regulatory frameworks, it brought to discussion the curriculum and remote education, the demands, challenges and strategies produced by the HEIs in the management processes, the implications of the history curriculum and the internationalization and interfaces of curriculum and ES (<https://farol.ufsm.br>).

The article brings, in a first moment, the detail and critical analysis of public policies and political-institutional responses linked to the university and the institutional reactions made public. In the second moment challenges incited by technology and sustainability and possible management strategies to deal with them in the flow of institutional policies and responses are identified and discussed. In the third moment, institutional publicized examples are brought to the surface to, finally, make reflective referrals.

The perspective of analysis makes use of academic productions linked to public policies in facing challenges with links instigated by technology and sustainability. The reflective directions are indicative of institutional possibilities beyond the confrontation of the pandemic, seeking to re-signify the role and commitment of Higher Education.

1 Public Policies and Institutional Autonomy

Higher Education, understood as a right, needs to be analyzed and understood within the spectrum of public policies, which are within the set of social policies, which, as Höfling (2001) points out, originated from the popular movements of the 19th century, in the search for guarantees of rights for all citizens. Therefore, these are policies formulated involving the interplay between multiple interests of different segments of society and, for this reason, they constitute a contradictory and complex process. Thus, these policies are emanated from government actions, seeking to produce effects on society in general and on certain groups and are a reflection of the compositions and economic and ideological clashes. (FRANCO, 2021).

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) respond differently to public policies. Even though there are, from these policies, legal determinations, there is a shadow region in which a certain amount of creativity would be possible in the implementation of Higher Education actions. Thus, an effective way to analyze how HEIs react and respond to public policies is the event of the covid-19 pandemic, which had a broad impact both inside and outside the institutions.

By its characteristics, the best way to deal with the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus was through social isolation. This had an enormous impact on education, because human education is essentially communal. It presupposes dialogue, interaction, direct contact, group formation (CAMBI, 1999). One can say that, until then, it has always led to agglomeration. This required governments to make decisions, otherwise society would fall into a vacuum. In Brazil it was no different from other countries. It was necessary to take measures in the political sphere to guarantee access to education and the regularity of the offer of this right. In the case of Higher Education, it is necessary to keep in mind the Brazilian scenario, with about 75% of enrollments in private institutions (INEP, 2020), and most of them in for-profit institutions. Thus, decision-making about educational policy needed to take this into account. And, as Bobbio et al. (2010) state, even though social policies are usually what is called State policies, governments choose the paths based on their ideological visions

and the set of interests at stake. This is how the measures taken by the Brazilian government in 2020 were marked by the neoconservative viewpoint and, as such, served the interests of institutions linked to private groups in Higher Education. In any case, the policies are directed at all institutions: public, community, and private.

It was under this condition that the Federal Government took some measures in the beginning of 2020, when the pandemic of the new coronavirus reached the national territory. In other words, it made policy. Based on the proposition of the Ministry of Education, the Provisional Measure 934/2020 was published (BRASIL, 2020a), later converted into law (Law 14.040/2020) (BRASIL, 2020b). In the same direction, the National Education Council (CNE), in its Plenary Council (PC), approved a normative set (Opinions n° 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16 and 19/2020) (BRASIL, 2020c, d, e, f, g, h). The many revisions after Opinion CNE/CP 05/2020 (BRASIL, 2020c) demonstrate the complexity of the theme and the diversity of the interests involved. Finally, the Opinions CNE/CP 19/2020 (BRASIL, 2020h) was approved by the Minister of Education on December 10, 2020 and generated the Resolution CNE/CP 02/2020 (BRASIL, 2020i). In the elaboration and approval movement of such legal pieces it is noted that they bring some concessions and, also, restraints. Here are considered **concessions**, the rules that allow some flexibility of the pre-existing rules so that the systems and educational institutions could cope with the adverse conditions generated by the pandemic and the health measures resulting from it. Concessions, on the other hand, parallel to the concessions made, place limits on institutional innovations or strategies to avoid abuses that could compromise the students' right to education and society's right to receive adequately trained graduates of the educational systems.

One can perceive, in this set of decisions, an ideological bias, but also a very pragmatic bias, translating the concern to avoid abuses. This type of crossroads is pointed out by Sguissardi (2008) as a reflection of the internal contradiction of liberalizing and regulatory measures, typical of Brazilian Higher Education policy after the military regime.

We will now list and comment on the main concessions. The first refers to the number of school days (removing the obligation to fulfill the 200 school days in 2020), and at the same time allowing that the school year of 2020 could be extended to the year 2021, due to the need to implement social withdrawal and the uncertainty about the duration of this withdrawal, since the World Health Organization (WHO) already indicated that the restrictive measures should be at least 20 weeks, but that, in fact, they were longer than expected.

In the same direction, bearing in mind that the best way to cope with this long-lasting situation would be the use of asynchronous distance education tools (without the simultaneous presence of students and teachers), a second concession was the authorization of the use of non-face-to-face activities even by institutions that were accredited only for face-to-face teaching. It is interesting to note that the Opinions CNE/CP 05/2020 (BRASIL, 2020c), as well as its revision (Opinions 09/2020) (BRASIL, 2020d), refer to the distance education modality, which is defined in Decree 9.057/2017 (BRASIL, 2017). As of Opinion 11/2020 (BRASIL, 2020f), the expressions "remote learning process", "remote teaching" and "remote

activities" appear, already incorporating what has come to be called, throughout the country, "emergency remote teaching" to distinguish it from the distance learning modality. This means that accreditation or authorization was not being granted for the offering of distance learning courses, but for the use of distance learning strategies to face the social distancing necessary to avoid the proliferation of the pandemic virus.

A third concession, inspired by initiatives such as Italy's (STUDENTS..., 2020), which sought to hasten the entry of new health professionals to deal with the emergencies arising from the pandemic, the Provisional Measure already mentioned proposed, in its Art. In Law 14.040/2020 (BRASIL, 2020b), fruit of Provisional Measure 934/2020 (BRASIL, 2020a), this theme appears in § 2 of Art. 3).

As mentioned before, this set of legal norms also made some *restrictions*, to prevent the pandemic from generating an anarchic situation in the educational sector. The first contention, concerning all levels of education (except for early childhood education), concerns the maintenance of the workload of activities. In other words, although there was the possibility of not meeting the school days, the workload was maintained. This was a complicating factor, since the most widespread practice in Brazil is to consider that the workload of a classroom course corresponds to the hours that students and teachers spend together in the classroom. In this way, the indetermination that already occurred in distance learning courses became widespread, causing each HEI or each course to define what it understood as compliance with the teaching-learning workload.

A second containment measure refers to practical activities. Their substitution only by non-presence activities could be admitted when this did not harm the education and did not affect the nature of the activity. Again, it is up to the HEI to define what would constitute such a condition.

Because of the previous measure, what can be considered as the third containment measure is the understanding that professional education should become a parameter for decisions regarding the substitution of practical activities for non-contact activities. It concerns especially internships, considering that for each area of knowledge and for each professional area, the consequences of this substitution tend to be diverse.

The simple compilation of the decisions does not show the temporal problem. In fact, society and the HEIs were impacted. The number of reviews, of CNE's opinions, the attitude of the Government in making partial approvals and requesting reviews of CNE's opinions, culminating with the final approval, which originated a Resolution only in December 2020 (Resolution CNE/CP 02/2020) (BRASIL, 2020i), show that it was not a clear policy, which is coherent with the negationist position taken by the Federal Government. All this was reflected in the reactions from educational institutions. There was an initial moment when it was not exactly clear what to do. Although the WHO was warning of a different forecast, there was an expectation that the restrictions would soon pass, as happened with the H1N1 flu pandemic a few years ago. Especially after the first CNE opinion, HEIs needed to position themselves.

Adopting non-presence teaching procedures as an institutional strategy was one of the possibilities. The use of communication and information technologies started to spread, giving rise to what was called emergency remote learning. Especially in Higher Education, this was the strategy adopted by most private, community and confessional institutions. Most public HEIs, on the other hand, decided to wait a little longer to see how to solve it. This delay can also be attributed to the democratic process, which involves many collegiate bodies and, therefore, takes longer to make decisions in public institutions. In addition, one cannot ignore the resistance to the use of distance education procedures in many Brazilian HEIs.

One can make some conjectures about this widespread doubt. In Brazilian culture (and history) it is usually understood that politics is built upon the publication of laws and regulations. It is common, in the field of Education, to have strong debates about legal limits and policies. A good example is the definition in the Law of Directives and Bases (Law 9.394/1996) (BRASIL, 1996) of the minimum number of graduated teachers (masters or doctorate) in a university or the minimum number of hours that a teacher in public institutions must dedicate to teaching. Such parameters are used as policy benchmarks, that is, as a proposition to be followed to the letter and not as a starting point (the minimum acceptable and, therefore, a sign of low quality).

The same occurs regarding public evaluation systems. Both the National System for Evaluation of Higher Education (Sinaes) and the much older Capes evaluation policy are commonly seen as determinants of how to do it, which mischaracterizes the very nature of an evaluation process. Thus, instead of inducing quality, it tends to standardize practices. Although this is not the intention expressed in the official documents, the behavior of institutions, courses and graduate programs moves in this direction. This is often reported, in the case of institutional assessment and undergraduate courses, by Sinaes, to the fact that it has strong regulatory consequences (NUNES, 2012). On the other hand, the experience of universities regarding the post-graduation evaluations tends to be even more limiting, because it is directly related to funding. Thus, it can be concluded that the exercise of autonomy is seen as a risk of loss of resources, which leads to a more conservative stance by the institutions. It is within this institutional culture that HEIs reacted to the policy related to the 2020 pandemic. When regulations do not tell you what to do, but what you can do, it is difficult to take an attitude.

Faced with this scenario, three types of reactions from HEIs could be perceived. Some have automated the reactions. They directly applied the measures. For example, they immediately decided to abbreviate courses in the Health area, even though, due to the form adopted, they may have affected the quality of the education. They adopted procedures typical of distance education, without even a process of preparation for this modality, confusing the use of techniques with the modality. This behavior was adopted mainly by private institutions. Other HEIs delayed their reactions. They were impacted. They decided to wait and see what would happen. They bet on the temporariness of the social withdrawal (which was, yes, temporary, but it was long). And they ended up reacting when there was no way to delay any longer. This group includes the public institutions. It cannot be denied that there was a third

group of HEIs that acted within a strategic rationality, based on criteria of teaching quality, responsibility, and social commitment. This does not mean that they have not faced problems and difficulties.

These actions or reactions must do with the function of teaching. In other words, they are related to the constitutional principle of teaching autonomy. This is a demonstration of the difficulty, not only of the governments, but also of the institutions themselves, in making this constitutional principle a reality. It can be said that the possibility of overcoming this difficulty is through a management process that values teaching.

2 Of the Management Strategies in Technology and Sustainability

The possibilities that open for the exploration of management strategies in Higher Education, in the emerging context, are many. This is what the second moment of this work points out, in which challenges evoked by technology and sustainability are identified and discussed, keeping in mind the pandemic moment, the theoretical field constituted and in movement of academic management, in the flow of institutional policies and responses. By identifying them, we have subsumed the possibility, if not to overcome them, at least to manage them, i.e., to deal with their presence without being engulfed by them, thus preventing them from becoming walls in the achievement of institutional objectives, which signals their strong strategic potential. Thus, we adopted the categorization of challenges in academic management substantiated by the perspectives of technology and sustainability in and of Higher Education.

The choice of these categories is based on the concept that it is pertinent to remember that Higher Education management involves organizational and relational forms or modalities inherent to decision-making processes, both in institutions and in Educational Systems, even though they differ in principles, assumptions and, consequently, in perspectives. It is necessary to keep in mind that such differences transit in the educational and scientific macrosystems and present a complex nature that is characterized by the interrelation of areas and fields: multidisciplinary knowledge with interdisciplinary perspective; processes and functions; emerging events; objectives and purposes; institutional responsibilities and commitments before society (FRANCO and LONGHI, 2021).

Both technology and sustainability are distinguished by a double face that brings challenges while modulating and signaling them in strategic directions in the context of Higher Education. This double face, in the pandemic moment, moved constitutive elements in the field of institutional management, whose characterization came from academic writings and speeches about Higher Education, as a theoretical field, led by academia in the two sets of webinars promoted by RIES. In this movement, the two categories emerged in the speeches of the invited specialists and in the questions of the participating listeners. Thus, the two categories of challenges in management are delimited and subsumed as technology and sustainability in the mediation of challenges and in the mediation of strategies. In the analytical process, subcategories were uncovered for being aligned with technology and sustainability and their mediations.

2.1 Technology and Sustainability in Mediating Challenges

Some conditions from which challenges spring, also shape and modulate them. And the first of them comes from knowledge about institutional life and its purposes. It is classic, but always current, the emphasis given to the final objectives, commitments, responsibilities, and procedural objectives, with their relational compositions that sustain the processes that aim at the finalistic achievement. The compatibility between purpose and processes, as reflected in the institutional size of HEIs, their levels, their extension, the community environment (sometimes quite large in large Brazilian universities), the format of collegiate decisions or of managers, the areas of basic and applied knowledge, the professional and academic training of their staff, whether teaching, administrative or support, offer the body of subsidies necessary to meet the challenges. Without forgetting that these conditions have a constitutive (founding) and institutional (legitimizing and legalizing) character. Identifying the challenges and knowing how to separate them into priorities means dealing with the substance of the institutions.

The administrative process, in its different versions and modalities presented by the various theoretical currents, always involves an anticipation of a desirable future (the plan and its processes), a procedural coordination, and an evaluation based on control over processes and achievements, redirecting them if necessary. It feeds on technology but aims at institutional and environmental sustainability. Thus, it is not surprising that the challenges involve questioning and that these feed the evaluation process and the institutional and organizational control to anticipate and prevent problems from occurring, avoiding them, redirecting goals and options. The way these processes occur, although they could be mediated by technology, associated with the imposition of social distancing makes management need to reprogram itself so that institutional life can continue its course, relying exclusively on the technological means available. In a similar way, the concern with environmental and financial sustainability advocated by the institution becomes more tangent and worrisome with the presence of a global threat, such as the pandemic.

Thus, two subcategories stand out in relation to technology and sustainability: the investigative institutional involvement and the mitigation of socio-institutional distances.

2.1.1 Investigative Institutional Involvement

Only HEIs with a strong investigative involvement can identify problems and challenges inherent to them. This is the case of the challenge of fostering the training of future teachers, primarily for the initial years of schooling, since from then on, an investigative culture is developed that could be called a root culture. This culture is the one that can sprout in the community's alma mater since early schooling is potentially the one that can decisively contribute to a vision of the world and an attitude towards it and science that mitigates the social-institutional distances and the distributional shortages typical of high-consumption societies.

The administrative competencies for an investigative institutional involvement go beyond process management, as they encompass the cognitive, socioemotional, and sociocultural areas. These provide coherence of action, security, and temperance in decision making that can help to the extent that participants are aware of their resources and knowledge, of community resources, and know how to use them sparingly, which is close to sustainability. Knowing what one knows and what is available can contribute to the adaptation to other spaces, in the use of technology, and in the actions that aim at the sustainability of the institution and of life itself.

2.1.2 Broadening Participation Possibilities

It is one of the great challenges that goes through the issue of institutional, urban, inter-municipal, state, and even international mobility. Physical presence becomes prohibitive in pandemic peaks and is taken over by the possession of some technological instrument - cell phones, laptops, computers, and their domain. The question that arises and that spreads across groups, spheres, educational levels is how to interconnect the development of an investigative culture with the development of institutional and international culture at home, which brings with it the attenuation of socio-institutional and knowledge distances. It is in this sense that there is a widening of possibilities for participation because of the pandemic movement itself, if teachers, managers and servers know how to collaborate effectively with students, the ultimate goal of HEIs. The new ways of forming local, inter-institutional, international, and regional partnerships, bearing in mind the issue of mobility at home becomes a precondition. So are provisional consensuses - deep Habermasian roots - in the face of the real enemy, the pandemic. It is subsumed, also, that institutions know the sense and meaning of the scientific field (BOURDIEU, 1983), with its implications, and that they ask themselves who is interested, at this moment, in fomenting abyssal differences.

2.2 Technology and Sustainability in Strategy Mediation

While the first category of challenges is aimed at identifying them, the second focuses on the challenge of meeting challenges through strategies. Technology and sustainability are understood here as mediations of strategies or signaling them. Educational policies are regulators of what happens in Higher Education. But they also contemplate possibilities that are open to professors, administrative agents, university managers, and, the students. It is necessary to identify the spaces of freedom. Thus, in the knowledge society, it becomes a strategic and indispensable task to know the process of teaching and learning. Extension courses and programs for teachers/managers/servers are necessary and go beyond specialized knowledge in their respective areas of knowledge or disciplinary fields. They also need to have knowledge that is incorporated into their professionalism as higher-level teachers, or as those who provide management or service support for teaching. Administrative agents and servers need to have some knowledge of these processes, to act with "eyes wide open" to paraphrase a famous filmmaker.

Technology and sustainability as strategic mediations require, as a first step, the clarity of purposes, responsibilities, and commitments, as well as the perspective and plan for adopting procedures to achieve them. Decreasing the possibilities of chance is a condition for strategic procedures. It implies the importance of discussing where Higher Education wants to go. Two categories directly or indirectly surface: inclusive modulations and "domestication".

2.2.1 Inclusive Modulations

Just as cultural expression modulates speech, technological inclusion modulates participation. In the voice of participants of the aforementioned webinars, one of the great weaknesses of the pandemic moment is the absence of students in person at the HEI. But as the voices themselves remind us, crises are cyclical in nature, and it is necessary to face such movements. In this context, the HEIs, in their management, seek to clarify what they want to achieve and how to contribute so that there are conditions and access to technological resources that modulate the participatory environment. In the turbulent environments of the pandemic, AUDY (2020) understands that what he calls "the 3 Cs of innovation", knowledge, creativity, and courage, are fundamental. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity seem to make up this turbulence, and the 3 Cs are what anticipate a certain stability in the surrounding acceleration. Such components are imbricated in the assertion that "...we need to deploy disruptive proposals such as hybrid education, minimum income, affirmative policies, world-class innovation ecosystems." (AUDY, 2020, p.5).

2.2.2 New Academic Environments or "Domestication" of the Workspace

Some challenges precede the pandemic times such as the oscillation of undergraduate education (certifying) from education as a service or as a right to education, which becomes highly questionable in teacher training. Such a challenge is intensified in the emerging context with the domestication of the workspace, whose technological mastery and residential adaptation assume greater proportions in the engagement of efforts. The protagonists of the teaching and learning processes desire a sound and better future by entering remote and even hybrid education. Uncertainties can pose barriers to creative adaptation to emerging contexts. Management, especially, has a responsibility to facilitate processes. Better use varied knowledge, apply what you know, make use of the intentionality of expert eyes on each of the issues and challenges; the problem points away. In recent years there has been an expansion of "expertises" in Higher Education, causing the emergence of new centers of study on the theoretical field which can serve as a convergence point for rethinking the re-initiation of practices. In the voices of the webinars, the expansion of boundaries in the traditional Eurocentric culture (knowledge, language, geopolitics, variety of procedures), the plurality of new actors, new students, new centers of study, the new ways of forming partnerships, the new networks, the new ways of acting, open many possibilities.

Several points of convergence that emerged in the speeches of the specialists who participated in the set of webinars and the reflections developed here allow us to glimpse the continuity of innovation in the management of Higher Education. A first point to highlight is the expansion of the use of technology in all possibilities of teaching, whether remote, hybrid

or face-to-face. Technology is configured as a strategic mediation for the socialization of knowledge, exchanges, construction of new knowledge, and even sustainability of HEIs, their responsibilities and commitments. The trend that can be glimpsed is its post-pandemic permanence.

Another relevant point comes from the possible new configurations of the disciplinary field in the management of Higher Education. Bourdieu's (1983) classic discussion about the scientific field and the imbricated clashes arrive in Higher Education privileging categorical parameters of the field under the criteria of prevalent research themes and approaches: teaching and learning, course programming, student experience, quality, policy system, institutional management, academic work, knowledge (TIGHT, 2003). The author highlights the following descriptors for institutional management: managerial practice, leadership and governance, institutional development and history, institutional structure and economic scale, and accountability. These descriptors somehow make management present in all categories of Higher Education. In Brazil, Sander (2007), Bittar and Oliveira (2004), as well as researchers from networks and research groups such as RIES, Rede GEU, Rede Universitas, and CEES are some of the examples that bring together researchers and research groups on the subject and have contributed to the expansion of the theoretical field of Higher Education and its management, including in the movement of new academic environments.

The increase in the importance assumed by networks in Higher Education has become significant, substantiated in the use of their spaces for studies and even new configurations of the management of Higher Education as a theoretical field. Academic networks have changed the world and demanded innovations that have supplanted even traditional publications because of the Internet and the information² economy. What aggregates and seems to be the amalgam for the new times is collaboration in the way of operating and in the production of knowledge itself, the motto of the networks.

The last point to highlight is that Higher Education managers are recognized as being responsible for policies, for the administrative organization, for planning, development, and improvement of higher education, and for the construction of knowledge. They participate, in a democratic way, in the conduction of the system or the life of HEIs as directors, teachers, technicians, leaders; they live with tensions and risks; with the emerging and the established; with paradoxes and conflicts, with agreements and dissensions (FRANCO and LONGHI, 2021).

3 Of the Institutional Copies

In this pandemic context, still far from being overcome, considering the characteristics present in the global world, institutional responses become relevant and, when propositional, acquire greater significance. They represent the optimistic propulsion force that is

² This is what Moreira (2012) exemplifies, showing cases in which the online market surpasses the paper market while at the same time more social forms of academic production emerge.

indispensable to overcome the impasses and unknowns that permeate society in general, in its most diverse segments. University institutions are, by nature, seeds of new ideas and generators of new knowledge. Therefore it is important, at this moment, to seek to examine different institutional responses capable of offering clues, indicating procedures, with the intention of fomenting a university management capable of overcoming deadlocks and turning towards new possibilities. To concretize this search, we took as an example a community university, whose explanation is presented below.

In Brazil in general, but especially in Rio Grande do Sul, there is a range of HEIs called Community HEIs - Community Institutions of Higher Education, according to the legal framework established by Law No. 12.881/2013 (BRAZIL, 2013). They are not public, that is, they are not maintained by the public power, but neither are they private like those maintained by the private corporate initiative. They are non-state public; they do not have an owner, nor distribute profits to shareholders; the financial results, arising from their tuition and other educational and research services they develop, managed by their maintainers (usually foundations) are reinvested in the institutions themselves meeting their educational and scientific purpose. They are, therefore, autonomous, financially self-sufficient, with the possibility to compete for public edicts.

They are linked to the Federal System of Education. Most of them were created in the middle of the last century, by the initiative of community leaders, tired of waiting for public Higher Education in their communities of origin, who made countless efforts to offer their young people the opportunity to advance in higher levels of education (LONGHI, 1998). They have joined forces, created entrepreneurial strategies, committed themselves to their surroundings, become regionalized, and continue to face adversities in an associative and articulated way (COMUNG, 2020)³.

Characterized by democratic and participatory management initiatives (respecting the institutional peculiarities), they periodically choose HEI leaders and representatives of local communities, especially city halls, for their councils and supervisory bodies (SCHMIDT, 2009). They often lead Regional Development Councils, actively participating in the State Technological Development Poles and other regional collective action fronts.

The scenario that is presented to Higher Education in general and to the HEIs that depend on their communities to maintain their financial balance, coupled with the maintenance of infrastructure and teaching and technical staff is deeply affected by the circumstances imposed by the health, economic and social crisis. In this conjuncture the role of institutional management is challenging. There is a huge contingent of students who need to reposition themselves in their intentions to continue their studies in these HEIs. Many students and their families needed, and still need, to contingency expenditures. The proposals

³ In Rio Grande do Sul, these institutions are articulated through Comung (Consortium of Community Universities of Rio Grande do Sul). In Santa Catarina, they are congregated by Acafe (Associação Catarinense de Fundações Educacionais). At a national level, the community institutions are congregated by Abruc (Brazilian Association of Community Institutions for Higher Education).

of hybrid education necessarily imply in agile technological investments in addition to the maintenance of the institutional body of professors, technicians and employees, indispensable to the achievement of the purposes of Higher Education, which means a great challenge from the point of view of sustainability.

However, such difficulties have not prevented the management of these HEIs from keeping them active and committed to their mission, seeking to make fundamental decisions for planetary sustainability in the face of global survival and of the institution itself during the economic-financial crisis that has taken place. Without a doubt, it still requires a lot of agility and creativity in the use and expansion of all resources, especially the scientific and technological ones. In an attempt to illustrate and also to analyze the effort undertaken by one of these Community HEIs, we present below the exits and impasses experienced by the University of Passo Fundo - UPF, during this period. It is becoming increasingly important to seek in the experience lived, in order not to waste it (SANTOS, 2004), the obstacles and advances obtained (FRANCO and LONGHI, 2008). The deepening of knowledge needed for science to be prudent and able to give sustainability to human life, weakened by the pandemic, cannot disregard the importance of institutional autonomy and sustainability as highlighted by Burton Clark (2006), in his studies on the entrepreneurial University.

The large amount of institutional information obtained, as already specified in the Introduction of this text, allowed, after analyzing its content, the establishment of two major categories to classify the actions of institutional management, in face of the pandemic: a) institutional macro-decisions - understood as those that involved the Institution as a whole, covering various areas of knowledge, mostly in an interdisciplinary way although always bearing in mind the area of health in its diversity and complementarity - mostly such actions had a direct reflection on the local and regional community; b) teaching, research and extension actions - understood as those directed especially to the academic area (involving students, employees and faculty) whose consequences also reached repercussion in the local and regional community.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of the main management actions developed by UPF during the period from the beginning of the pandemic in the region (March) until mid-November 2020. Throughout the pandemic, many other decisions were made with specific objectives like those presented in this table. It is worth highlighting some for their relevance and impact on both the academic community and the local and regional community.

Table 1. Management actions developed during the pandemic - UPF 2020

Institutional Macro Decisions	Actions in Teaching, Research and Extension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention and Control Committee - COVID-19 - Center for Emergency Operations in Health and Education at the local level - local COE-E - Contingency plans - steps - Creation of the website: http://www.upf.br/coronavirus - FUPF's Financial Flexibility Policy - Loaning of computers to students - Articulations with and among the UPF Campi via RadioUPF and UPFTV (Youtube) - Community Partnerships - City Halls - other HEIs - Municipal Associations - Telecare - Territorial Care Network Program - Regional Health Observatory - Covid-19 Diagnostic Laboratory - Network of Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remote teaching - hybrid modality different platforms - Practical activities and internships according to protocols - Interdisciplinary formative activities about the pandemic (debates, formative meetings, sharing experiences, in the various undergraduate and graduate courses) - VII Knowledge Week - on line - Balcão do Trabalhador (Worker's Desk) redirected to the pandemic - Music classes for teenagers - Cartilha com orientações e cuidados sobre a Covid-19 e a Diabetes - On-line events- Seminars, meetings, gatherings - Theoretical and practical classes - Center for Realistic Simulation - Tutorials for students and faculty - Create online workshops (for seniors) - Equipment Production - Aprons and Masks - Automation prototype based on emergency manual ventilation - 3D printing of face shields and respirator valves for Covid-19 referral hospitals - Elos Solidário - fundraising campaigns - FEAC Responds - online consultations - UPF Extension School: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minicourses (free). - Dialogues Series (4 meetings) involved the Rector's Office, community leaders and special guests.

Source: The authors - research on the HEI's website.

The Prevention and Control Committee was the first institutional macro decision made by the Rector's Office with the objective of immediately protecting people's health and establishing general lines of procedure to preserve safety during other academic activities.

Another was the *Financial Flexibility Policy* issued by the Rector's Office, concerned with offering the community ways to cope with the financial limitations of families and the students themselves, reflecting on the institutional sustainability. The mentioned Plan presents various discounts linked to punctuality of payments; regularization of defaults; opportunities for payment in installments through negotiation, through an exclusive online channel for dealing with financial issues.

The *Call Center* was developed in an interdisciplinary and interprofessional way, counting on different students, professors, and employees from health courses (medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, pharmacy, and psychology). The service worked during the three shifts, using the university phones and cell phones provided by the City Hall to provide services also via "Whats App", providing information, clarifications, support, and solidarity to more than 11,000 (eleven thousand) people (at the last data release, in November 2020). This service originated the *Territorial Care Network Program*, with direct service actions in the community and by telephone service, collaborating in epidemiological surveillance. Students and teachers from 14 (fourteen) undergraduate courses, 2 (two) Multiprofessional Residency Programs, and Extension Projects, went to the most vulnerable territories in the city to conduct home visits. The actions were carried out with the purpose of tracking covid-19 cases, strengthening primary care actions to expand the possibilities of care for the chronically ill, situations of social vulnerability, and possible treatments interrupted by the pandemic context. In addition, formative actions on themes such as the pandemic, domestic violence, and reality readings were developed with all those involved. This strategy has so far reached about forty thousand people directly and indirectly.

A last highlight should be made to several institutional programs that already existed, but when they were redirected to collaborate with the pandemic, they were given a new meaning. For example, *the Balcão do Trabalhador* (Worker's Desk), which exists in the headquarters and in other UPF campuses, has become a space where the community can seek information about difficulties arising from the pandemic, such as labor laws, layoffs, reduced working hours, survival protection, rights and duties of the business class and the employees and collaborators. If the managers of these programs had not mobilized themselves in the solidary insertion of Call Center, some areas would have remained alienated in face of the global problem materialized locally.

The constant use of the media and the technology available at the headquarters and on the campuses of the Institution have guaranteed the realization of countless activities that used to be face-to-face such as the *Creati* workshops for the elderly, music classes for teenagers, the Extension School, as well as allowing the realization of new activities such as the *Rectory Dialogues* series, the elaboration of specific booklets about the disease and other fronts as the table shows.

Not all actions were new in academic life, but they certainly provoked readjustments that were innovative in the sense that such significant social and pedagogical gains were not expected during such a global crisis. New forms/models of management emerged from solidarity, from mutual help, from the simple fact of listening to people whose voices had never had the opportunity to be heard, regardless of age or social condition. In the case of the UPF, Call Center in partnership with public services was able to reconfigure unimagined demands that could be captured directly from the people and now serve to redirect teaching, research, and extension projects. By being solidary, by serving the community, the Institution received much more than it imagined. The lessons of the experience will undoubtedly

contribute to the performance of managers and in the continuing education of faculty, staff, and students. However, such advances do not mean that the crises are over. Resistance to change and stagnation pervade academic life today.

4 Reflective Paths

More than conclusive, the present study allows for referrals that may open space for additional reflections and arguments, with reference to the principle that diversity of opinion, when anchored in reliable data and information, comes close to capturing the interpretations and meanings of the surrounding realities.

The experience, in 2020, of having to manage Higher Education during the pandemic of the new coronavirus brought to light the challenges of achieving academic autonomy beyond discourse. Along these lines, it is noteworthy that the policies emanating from governmental actions and directed to society in general and to Higher Education in specific, affect decisions. The compositions that have a presence in this level of education are indeed challenging, due to the economic and ideological clashes potentiated by the pandemic entourage. It is undeniable that the issuing of governmental decisions, in the scope of Higher Education, has brought more possibilities than determinations.

However, the advance towards autonomous and innovative decisions has come up against the institutional culture of reaction rather than protagonism in Higher Education institutions. It is in this environment that the two major categories were built from pronouncements in the webinars promoted by RIES: technology and sustainability in the mediation of challenges and strategies. These categories, substantiated in the investigative institutional involvement and in the attenuation of socio-institutional distances, are indicative of the introduction of new modes of relationship and operation in institutional life, both in inclusive modulations and in new academic ambiances ("domestication" of the workspace) for the category linked to the strategic issue. It is clear that the visualization of possibilities for living in a better and sustainable world can be strengthened when conducting management, considering needs, commitments, experiences of different HEIs and the role of technology in these processes.

In the case analyzed, the institutional management was challenged to mobilize its human and technological resources, involve academic and community leaders. The testimonials of students and other participants show that interdisciplinarity and the diversity of areas, acting together, the concern with sustainability in all senses, made them grow and understand the importance of the collective, of solidarity, and of the commitment of Higher Education to the local community and to life in the world.

The panoramic view of the HEIs' reactions, as well as the specific look at one HEI, taken in this article, indicates that the pandemic was an opportunity for the exercise of autonomy. But for this it is necessary to make an adequate reading of the educational and

health policy measures. First, it is urgent to understand that concessions are not rules. They do not mean measures that must be taken, but the opening of possibilities for emergency and (perhaps) innovative measures. Second, it is important to understand that limits are not mere obstacles, but measures to avoid abuses. Autonomy goes hand in hand with the limits of institutional coexistence, and they are not in opposition to innovation. After all, we are dealing with a social right. It is understood, then, that Higher Education can emerge strengthened from the pandemic if institutional management really seeks to develop academic-pedagogical innovations (in the broad sense of the expression). This means valuing the act of teaching as a collective and authorial process, especially if articulated with research and extension. Those HEIs that reduce teaching to the transmission of knowledge, often automated, relegating the teacher to a mere relay (or application controller), are condemning the country to retrogression. It is the same movement that leads Higher Education to assume a subordinate position in relation to the hegemonic countries. It is understood that there is only Higher Education (worthy of the name) if managers, teachers, students, and administrative staff play a leading role. This is an institutional commitment to be assumed with society as a whole.

A final crucial point, closely related to social law, is that in the pandemic and governmental context of the year 2020, certain concepts have acquired new meanings, which imply theoretical constructions and institutional practices beyond those that, until then, predominated. This is the case of the very meaning of technology and science that have expanded, have come out of their floodgates, because at the same time that these concepts pointed to greater autonomy, they brought the bias of the demand of the norm generated in politics - of the fight for survival. The re-signification of technology is forwarding the new meanings that sustainability itself is taking on. Besides the environmental, institutional, and economic vision, technology is accompanied by the sustainability of a healthy and safe human being in all its environments, whether physical, institutional, social, or economic. Higher Education and its management are at the core of survival, as a social right and as a civilizing commitment. Higher Education management can occupy an unprecedented space in the process of re-signifying S&T for survival. It is the new sustainability of the human being and his habitat, a substantive challenge that Higher Education and the use of technology can make emerge from the 2020s.

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