
Teaching practice and teacher education: challenges and resistances in the COVID-19 context

Renata Helena Pin Pucci

Universidade São Francisco (Brasil)

Kauany Cerqueira Ferreira Bezerra

Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba (Brasil)

Luciana Haddad Ferreira

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas (Brasil)

Abstract

This study addresses teaching practice in the context of emergency remote teaching, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. In view of the imposed conjuncture and its consequent social transformations, such as the changes in the ways of configuring the teaching work, the objective of this study was to understand how Elementary School teachers dealt with the change to emergency remote teaching, considering aspects of their education and practice brought up in their statements. The study was developed from the production and analysis of narratives of the early grades of Elementary School teachers from the Municipal Education Network of two cities in the hinterlands of São Paulo. The theoretical and methodological foundation of the research for the construction and analysis of data is anchored in the cultural-historical and enunciative-discursive perspectives. The statements showed difficulties and challenges, but also lessons about teaching, deeply anchored in the teacher-student relationships, the knowledge constituted in the educational praxis, the teaching identity as constituted in the collective.

Keywords: Teacher education. Pedagogical narratives. Emergency remote teaching. COVID-19 pandemic.

Prática e formação docente: desafios e resistências no contexto da covid-19

Resumo

Neste estudo, aborda-se a prática docente no contexto do ensino remoto emergencial, deflagrado devido à pandemia da covid-19. Diante da conjuntura

imposta e suas conseqüentes transformações sociais, como as mudanças nas formas de configuração do trabalho docente, o objetivo da pesquisa foi compreender como professoras do Ensino Fundamental lidaram com a mudança para o ensino remoto emergencial, considerando aspectos da formação e da prática trazidos em seus enunciados. O estudo foi desenvolvido a partir da produção e da análise de narrativas de professoras das séries iniciais do Ensino Fundamental da Rede Municipal de Educação de duas cidades do interior de São Paulo. A fundamentação teórico-metodológica da pesquisa para construção e análise dos dados ancora-se nas perspectivas histórico-cultural e enunciativo-discursiva. Os enunciados evidenciaram dificuldades e desafios, mas também ensinamentos sobre a docência, profundamente ancorados nas relações professor-aluno, nos saberes constituídos na práxis educativa, na identidade docente constituída no coletivo.

Palavras-chave: Formação docente. Narrativas pedagógicas. Ensino remoto emergencial. Pandemia da covid-19.

Práctica y formación docente: desafíos y resistencias en el contexto del Covid-19

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Resumen

En este estudio se aborda la práctica docente en el contexto de la enseñanza remota de emergencia, desencadenada debido a la pandemia del Covid-19. Ante la coyuntura impuesta y sus consecuentes transformaciones sociales, como los cambios en las formas de configuración del trabajo docente, el objetivo de la investigación fue comprender cómo las maestras de Educación Primaria lidiaron con el cambio para la enseñanza remota de emergencia, considerando aspectos de formación y práctica traídos en sus relatos. El estudio fue desarrollado a partir de la producción y del análisis de narrativas de maestras de los años iniciales de la Educación Primaria de la Red Municipal de Educación de dos ciudades del interior de São Paulo, Brasil. La fundamentación teórica y metodológica de la investigación para la construcción y análisis de los datos está anclada en las perspectivas histórico-cultural y enunciativo-discursiva. Los enunciados evidenciaron dificultades y desafíos, pero también enseñanzas sobre la docencia profundamente ancladas en las

relaciones docente-alumno, en los saberes constituidos en la praxis educativa, en la identidad docente constituida en el colectivo.

Palabras clave: Formación docente. Narrativas pedagógicas. Enseñanza remota de emergencia. Pandemia del Covid-19.

Introduction

There was no support offered to the teacher to record classes, edit, a computer or cell phone, nothing! Everyone had simply to find a way out! (Débora, public school teacher, 2020).

Débora's outburst, a public-school teacher in a municipality in the state of São Paulo, leads us to reflect on how teachers across the country dealt, forcibly¹, with the implementation of the emergency remote teaching, especially in 2020, the first moment to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the beginning of the period in which measures to contain the spread of coronavirus in Brazil began, in March 2020, until at least mid-2022, different measures were taken in the field of education, in an attempt to comply with health guidelines and, at the same time, somehow preserve the possibility of developing didactic-pedagogical activities. Printed activity packages, video-recorded classes, radio and television broadcasts, online virtual meetings, study guidance over the telephone and exchange of messages via apps were some of the resources used by the teachers² during the period of suspension of face-to-face activities, which were interspersed, at certain times, with attempts to their return.

Throughout the entire period, unpredictability and urgency prevailed, in which decision-making occurred without much planning or analysis, based on changes in the national and international pandemic scenario. Teachers, students and families adapted to conditions that seemed temporary, but which lasted for more than two years.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, researchers in the field had already sought to map initiatives, to have a dialog with teachers and listen to their narratives, in order to better understand the limits, possibilities and challenges of teaching amidst so many obstacles, which were added to other not so recent and not at all unprecedented difficulties, arising from the scenario of

political and institutional crisis, as well as the growing and emphatic devaluation of the teaching profession. The first studies presented, still in 2020 (Araújo; Santos, 2020; Diniz, 2020; Ferreira; Barbosa, 2020, among others), offered support for reflection on the referrals and practices developed, giving visibility to different readings, choices and difficulties faced. These publications were also important to highlight how facing reality happens in a different and disproportionate way, further aggravating social inequalities.

Taking into account the imposed situation, its consequent social transformations and the demands and changes in the ways of configuring the teaching work, we direct our interest to understand how teachers in the initial grades of Elementary School in the public network dealt with the change from face-to-face teaching to emergency remote teaching in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering aspects of teaching education and practice brought up in their statements.

4 We present a narrative study, which was developed from the production and analysis of pedagogical narratives, written and oral, from teachers working in the initial grades of Elementary School in the Municipal Education Network in two cities in the hinterlands of the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The six teachers who participated in the study produced reports that talked about how they were experiencing the emergency remote teaching. Of these narratives (recorded between the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021), four were produced in text format and two were produced in audio format, sent via a messaging application.

The theoretical foundation for constructing the analyzes was anchored in historical-cultural (Vygotsky, 2000, 2007, 2010) and enunciative-discursive (Bakhtin, 2006, 2010; Volóchinov, 2017) perspectives. We understand that the teachers expressed strangeness in relation to their own practices and denounced the limitations given by the lack of resources and institutional support. At the same time, they were (trans)formed through the experiences lived in the pandemic context and registered that they felt challenged to seek alternatives to minimally enable students' learning, offering resistance to the naturalization of the remote teaching and reaffirming the power of interpersonal relationships for education and the school as a diverse and humanizing space.

Furthermore, despite being narrated in a personal way, the lessons brought by these teachers' speeches allowed us to make considerations about

what is common to the experience of many teachers, and, therefore, they invite us to think about teaching and its obstacles beyond the pandemic moment.

Theoretical-methodological path

The work of a teacher who works in the early grades of Elementary School requires mastery of different areas of knowledge. At this stage, between the 1st and 5th grade, the learning of concepts and the appropriation of different forms of meaning support the formation of the child's language and complex thinking (Vygotsky, 2000). It is up to the teacher to organize social situations favorable to development, which requires intentionality in didactic-pedagogical propositions, a dialog with culture and broad knowledge of the content to be taught, in addition to attention to children's subjectivities.

Furthermore, teaching, in the early grades of Elementary School, is not restricted to the outline of disciplinary fields, as teachers teach content from different areas of knowledge, which make up the national education curricula. The work is developed in the immersion of everyday relationships with the same group of students, assuming inter and transdisciplinary characteristics. For these and other reasons, teaching activity in the early grades of Elementary School is complex and full of specificities.

Training for such action also requires efforts and demands studies focused on the particularities mentioned here: How to become a teacher of children, remaining attentive to development issues in this age period, offering opportunities to children to recognize themselves as participants in a culture and a community, accessing historically produced knowledge and also enabling its symbolic elaboration?

We understand that the set of knowledge structuring of identity and teaching practice must be constructed by the teacher in different training contexts that articulate and complement each other. Agreeing with Gatti, Barretto, André and Almeida (2019), we realize that educational practice is linked to the effective conditions of the teaching work, and these two fields are strongly related to the conditions and premises of the teacher education, in its initial and permanent dimensions. Thus, despite the knowledge that has been produced in the area, the ways in which professional teacher education is carried out are also strongly marked by transformations in the political, economic, cultural,

scientific and/or technological fields. Such conditions are perceived when we observe, for example, the way in which the initial training of Basic Education teachers is currently put into debate due to the substantial changes imposed by the Common Core State Standards for the Initial Training of Basic Education Teachers – Resolution no. 2, of December 20, 2019, of the National Education Council (CNE, acronym in Portuguese) and the Full Council (CP, acronym in Portuguese) (Brasil, 2019) –and, more recently, by the Resolution CNE/CP no. 4, of May 29, 2024, which provides for “[...] the National Curricular Guidelines for Initial Higher Education Training for Teaching Professionals in Basic School Education [...]” (Brasil, 2024).

It is in this context of an action full of specificities and very complex, interdisciplinary and committed to humanizing education, crossed by the urgencies of a daily life profoundly altered by the change from face-to-face teaching to the emergency remote model, that the teachers who participated in the study found themselves.

6 When we look back at their narratives about the moment of implementation of the emergency remote teaching, we know what was prescribed and what was accomplished, what was possible and what was desirable, the demands and pedagogical aspirations. We look for evidence of how these teachers understand themselves as professionals in training, in a context of so much uncertainty. The narrative research presupposes attentive listening and engagement in a dialog with those who experience a given situation intensely and, therefore, they know it well.

To select participants, we contacted municipal schools in two cities in the hinterlands of São Paulo and requested them to disclose the research theme and the invitation letter to participate in the study. Those teachers who made contact and expressed interest were invited to learn about the research and fill out the Free and Informed Consent Form (ICF) using an electronic form. The criteria for participating in the research were: teaching in the initial grades of Elementary School in 2020 and 2021 and being a teacher in the municipal public network. Among those registered, eleven teachers met this requirement and six of them agreed to participate in the study.

Our choice to research with teachers is intentional and political. At a time when authorities and professionals from the most diverse areas seemed to have something to say about education, the teaching profession itself

was merely listened to. The teachers' speeches reveal contexts that were only known to them, as they were immersed in reality. Through their words, we see and can reflect on teacher training.

We say that because we understand that subjects are constituted in language and produce it in the practices that constitute them, as advocated by Vygotsky (2010). Furthermore, from a discursive perspective (Bakhtin, 2006; Volóchinov, 2017), statements are not indifferent, or even independent, of each other, they are part of a history, a social organization, a group, within which they are found, confronting ideologies, social classes and world views. In this approach, language is conceived beyond its structure involving spelling and grammatical rules, taking into account the social construction that supports the discourses. Thus, when we turn to the teachers' narratives, we understand them in this *continuum* of statements, which reflect and refract the feelings and actions of a collective during the pandemic.

Vygotsky (2000, 2010) and Bakhtin (2006, 2010) shared common interests in topics such as the issue of language, consciousness, meanings and significations. As teachers are social and enunciative beings, whose enunciations are crossed by other voices, as well as being constituted in the relationship with others, the enunciative theory of Bakhtin's Circle and Vygotsky's historical-cultural theory are necessary for the theoretical-methodological construction of this study, as we address the importance of the other in the constitution of subjects and meanings; the production of meanings present in statements that are crossed by speeches from a certain group (teachers), time and context (the pandemic context).

Furthermore, we based our choice on narratives as a research method and recording strategy, since the production of narratives also offers the participating teachers the possibility of speaking up and making themselves heard. The narrative brings the possibility of constructing new meanings about the profession and its practice. The potential of the work lies in the very act of narrating and in the meanings accessed (Ferreira; Barbosa, 2020).

With these principles in mind, we asked the participants to tell us, through narratives, how they were experiencing the emergency remote teaching. In the initial contact with the teachers, we expected to encounter difficulties regarding the teachers' availability to participate in the research. Even the teachers who were willing to produce the narratives, at some point during

the communication, they demonstrated a certain unavailability, reporting lack of time, overwork, and tiredness from virtual interaction. These reasons must be considered when reflecting on the challenging moment in the practice of these professionals during the pandemic period, with the deepening precariousness of the teaching work. Trying to make the research an opportunity to elaborate on what was experienced, and not just another assignment amidst so many demands placed on the teachers, we offered several options, so that they could contribute in any way that seemed viable to them.

To select the excerpts to compose the analyzes, we considered the objective of this text and the dialog that was possible to establish with the narratives, based on the chosen theoretical framework. From historical-cultural and enunciative-discursive perspectives, we approach statements with our counterwords. In the proposed analysis approach, “[...] a discourse is not built on reality, but always on another discourse [...]” (Fiorin, 2010, p. 35); therefore, the relationship between discourse and reality is always mediated by other discourses; consequently, our analysis occurs in dialog with the text of the narratives and other texts that make up our discursive universe on the topic. This is a listening exercise, which is not possible without otherness, since it is necessary to consider listening itself as dialogic.

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Discussion: between challenges and resistance

The narratives woven by the teachers point to different dimensions of pedagogical practice that were significantly changed with the migration to emergency remote teaching: the way of expressing affection and directing care to students; class as an integral formative experience; notion of presence and absence; uses of language and its different supports; physical and motor development linked to psychological and intellectual development; notions of temporality and spatiality.

They also announce obstacles that are not at all new, but already incorporated with a certain – and problematic – naturalness in the teaching routine, which have intensified during the pandemic: tensions in the relationship with children and their families; scarcity of spaces for dialog and training; lack of infrastructure and resources for developing the pedagogical work; little

support from management and coordination; prescriptive curriculum guidelines and assignments; lack of collegiality and collective work.

Regarding all these aspects, we observed that sometimes the teachers expressed discouragement or little strength to think about alternatives and demand better working conditions, sometimes they expressed hope and signaled possibilities of change. From this understanding, we saw that the teachers were (trans)forming themselves in the pandemic context, according to their narratives, between challenges and resistance.

By organizing the excerpts from the teaching narratives, our intention was to understand how the teachers experienced school practices during this period, in order to identify, through their statements, whether new meanings were constructed by the teachers, as we understand that their production enables the expansion and the development of consciousness and causes changes in the way they understand/experience reality (Vygotsky, 2010). In order to get closer to the meanings of the teaching practice, we need to look at the cultural and shared meanings, which are accessed by teachers and personally re-elaborated.

We resume, as a first excerpt, Débora's words:

After July, they started pushing us to record videos explaining the lessons as well. It was a "God help us!". We were apprehensive, angry teachers; after all, we had no preparation or training for this type of class! I myself spent a sleepless night planning how to do it! I went to YouTube and watched all the videos on how to record with a cell phone! I had forgotten this detail, there was not a support offered to the teacher to record classes, edit, a computer or cell phone, nothing! Everyone had simply to find a way out! And the teacher is very obedient. The order came: "You can send videos that already exist on YouTube!". We spent a lot of time watching the video to make sure it was going to work with the lesson given, editing, I don't know much about technology, I called on my husband and son to help me out (Débora, public school teacher, 2020).

Teacher Débora talks about her apprehension when she was told that she should produce videos to broadcast to students and points to the lack of preparation, training and support to produce this type of material. When we consider her narrative in the context of emergency remote teaching, taking into account the many difficulties already presented, we observe the resonance of

many other voices in the pandemic period. Several studies addressed similar difficulties mentioned by the teachers during the pandemic (Carvalho; Moura, 2021; Guimarães; Barreto, 2021). With Bakhtin (2010) we understand that discourses are constructed in a historically and socially determined time and space; thus, the meanings are built based on a certain chronotope. Rohling (2020, p. 5221) problematized the “[...] emergence of a pandemic chronotope [...]”, defined “[...] as a space-time in which a set of discursivities related to this topic [of COVID-19] is produced”.

Furthermore, we hear in the teachers’ speeches, such as Débora’s, the dialog with other speeches, taking us back to what has already been said, such as the lack of conditions for carrying out the teaching practice. From Bakhtin’s discursive theory, there are different voices that make up discourses, and “[...] these voices do not need to be marked in the thread of discourse, they are apprehended by our knowledge of the different discourses that circulate at a given time in a given social formation” (Fiorin, 2010, p. 40). The lack of skill or inadequate resources for carrying out their work tells us the precariousness of teaching exacerbated by remote learning. The teachers did not find support, at first, in the training or in the concrete working conditions for the exercise of teaching, and they sought, within their possibilities, with some anguish, the instruments and assistance needed to fulfill their classes, within what was demanded of them. The accelerated search for pedagogical resources to satisfy a teaching project, conceived without reflection and with a view to pre-determined results, reduces the teacher’s role to the technical application of teaching, going back to a technicalist perception of education.

In a way, the teacher seems to give meaning to the need for adequate professional training, which allows her to carry out her work within the workload and without needing help from volunteers to carry it out. Given the recognition of such needs, Sousa, Silva, Oliveira and Silva (2021, p. 85) state that the changes and adaptations necessary for conducting emergency remote teaching could be considered somewhat obvious and inherent to teaching practice, if there was “[...] a set of actions that would guarantee the basis for its development [...]”. However, what really occurred in everyday life were training courses at “[...] an accelerated, pragmatic level, to begin remote activities, which resulted in an intensified process of searching for salvation and resignifying practices with a view to survival” (Sousa; Silva; Oliveira; Silva, 2021, p. 85).

In this context, we realize that the conceptions of teacher education, whether initial or continued, “[...] have been supported by principles that place teachers in a subjective movement of self-salvation and self-education [...]” (Sousa; Silva; Oliveira; Silva, 2021, p. 86), in which individual efforts and the informal search for training based on poorly qualified resources and content are praised, or produced from references that are not always aligned with the educational ideals defended for public education.

This movement also causes the constant perception of inability of teachers, as the training carried out along these lines is based on obtaining accelerated, prescriptive, punctual solutions that quickly become outdated, being insufficient to ensure the development of socially referenced pedagogical work of quality.

In my family life, my mother and I are teachers, in this time of challenge, of reinventing ourselves, of learning and innovating, we help each other by sharing ideas and ways to prepare and transmit classes. We had to make new acquisitions of digital resources, materials and equipment, in particular, for support and to do our work. We had to hire a more powerful internet service. [...]. My mother, a teacher for over 20 years, had hired a private computer tutor to teach her how to deal with the basics of technological equipment (computer, printer and cell phone, used to record video and audio classes), to combine the use of technology with pedagogical practices (Alê, public school teacher, 2020).

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Teacher Alê’s speech also refers to the perspective of individual effort, which, without having an adequate structure for the work, thinks of alternatives that favor practices in the concreteness of what was being developed, a condition that places the teacher in a position of responsibility for the success or failure of the emergency teaching model. Teacher Alê’s words also point to the challenge of developing the pedagogical process in an unusual situation, using resources that she does not have or, at least, is familiar with.

Alê (2020) brings a certain naturalness when narrating the initiatives taken by her and her mother, as if it were inherent in teaching to fill, through their own effort and funding, the gaps in their training and the lack of material resources: “[...] we are teachers, in this moment of challenge, of reinventing ourselves, of learning and innovating, we help each other [...]” (Alê, public school teacher, 2020). In this report, difficulty takes on dimensions of

acceptance and action permeated by the logic of accountability and the meaning of merit, a certain idea that a good professional is one who spares no effort or resources to maintain his/her productivity.

In a time of complexity, knowing how to use media, software, virtual classrooms, recording programs, among others, has become an even greater challenge. We noticed, in their statements, that each teacher, given the limitations and resources available, was looking for ways to, in the best way, collaborate and develop a coherent and relevant proposal, faced with the challenge of developing work that made sense and had an effect on the students' lives.

We live in a neoliberal political-social context, which has the characteristic of extending capital relations to all spheres of life, in education, personal life, public policies, etc. The rationality of generalized competition, the appreciation of merit, evaluation, rankings and the individualization of social relations is permeated. In this scenario, as teachers are social subjects and constituted in this discursive universe, they reflect and refract these social discourses that bring already established conceptions of teaching practice, of the relationships established with the school, with students and with teaching itself.

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Teacher Cristina, in the excerpt below, directs her gaze to another meaning of appreciation. An appreciation not so dependent on the feeling of merit based on individual responsibility, but on the recognition that the student has for her work. The teacher places the dimension of appreciation in the eyes of others. In addition to recognition based on the returns on individual effort, there is satisfaction and fulfillment in what one does based on the perception that others have of one's work, which, in this case, is the dialectical partner in the teaching and learning processes. "And then, the appreciation, right? We rely on the student's appreciation, in believing in us, in our work, in what we do, right? I think this is already a great appreciation" (Cristina, public school teacher, 2020).

The teacher shows us that the meaning of professional development is articulated, in her experience and reading, with the validation of her intentions and practices by the students. By saying "[...] we rely on the student's appreciation [...]", Cristina (2020) states that there is recognition on the part of the student, of the quality and appreciation of the teacher's work.

Pino (2000), when discussing the role of social relations in the cultural constitution of man in Vygotsky, highlights that what enables the conversion of these relations into functions of the subject and forms of its structure is the meaning that emerges in social relations. The author explains:

Saying that what is internalized is the meaning of these relationships is equivalent to saying that what is internalized is the meaning that the other in the relationship has for the self; which, in the dialectical movement of the relationship, gives the self the coordinates to know who he is, what social position he occupies and what is expected of him (Pino, 2000, p. 66).

Thus, the meaning of social recognition of being a teacher, coming from the students, is strongly present in her words. However, it is noticeable, through the construction of her narrative, the expectation that there would also be legitimization and recognition of other instances, of her effort and work. Even though the perception of appreciation for her work comes from the students and, apparently, only from them, the teacher highlights it as “a great appreciation” (Cristina, public school teacher, 2020). In this sense, we characterize her practice, through her narrative, as resistance, from the perspective of recognizing the value of dialogical relationships that are established between teacher and student in the teaching process.

We also observed, in the teachers’ narratives, that different meanings of teacher training coexist. If, at times, the sense of survival is made explicit, in the search for minimum technical conditions so that they can carry out their work, at other times the sense of resistance prevails, which is combined with the defense of critical, effective and emancipatory training. It is not enough for teachers to have the necessary equipment to teach, but also to pragmatically master the use of technologies. Minimum conditions are needed for students to access classes, monitor activities, aspects that in themselves are points of fruitful debate and questioning, starting with the practice of teaching in the context of COVID-19.

We understand that defending the need for initiatives that support the development of skills and the provision of digital resources and tools does not mean more complete training or more assertive teaching practice. Some teachers explain an understanding of training that finds meaning in reflection and the theoretical foundation of everyday actions, as we see in Ana’s words:

I emphasize that from this moment of transition from regular teaching to remote teaching, despite using technologies in my daily life, I had to learn to master tools and methodologies to adapt to the new teaching format. This caused me nervousness and worry, because to learn something new it would take time, which I didn't have, due to my family routine, which was also transformed, because, in addition to being a teacher, I am a mother and I started working at home, in the company of my children (Ana, public school teacher, 2020).

Ana expresses the understanding that her constant training is necessary so that she can articulate and reflect on the new educational challenges that are imposed on her. At the same time, she notes the difficulty of establishing moments of in-depth study, as these are hampered when the home environment starts to accommodate the temporalities of life as a mother, teacher, student and others. The teacher narrates her understanding and the difficulty of meeting the necessary training, revealing the conflict experienced by many female teachers. In difficult times like these, with overloads, precariousness, accountability and intensification of the teaching work, the need to go beyond utilitarianism becomes even more urgent, something that demands a training movement that places knowledge at the center of valorization and unity among the scientific knowledge that guides teaching.

In his studies, Vygotsky (2007, p. 103) discussed that “[...] properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion several development processes that would otherwise be impossible to happen”. These premises point to the importance of training of the professional who will lead this process. According to Almeida, Antonio, Francischett, Ghedini and Pedroso (2012, p. 971), “[...] this educator, who lacks knowledge, will be limited to acting in the appropriation of culture by children and contributing to their cultural and intellectual development, objectives of this school stage”. We bring this understanding to affirm the importance of the teaching practice and training in the locus of educational actions and affirm that teaching action must be theoretically based and permeated by intentionality, as there must be planning and organization of social situations favorable to development so that the learning occurs.

Teacher Ana denounces, in the correlation of forces that feed and interfere in what it means to be a teacher in situations of great uncertainty,

anxiety and transformations, that even within this context of lack of support for her work, she tries to maintain a reflective attitude and seek training that help build ideas and references to critically think about the moment being experienced. She expresses the need to resist obstacles and continue teaching: “As a teacher, I confess that I had to reinvent myself, often reducing the planned content to be able to emotionally guide my students” (Ana, public school teacher, 2020); just like Alê:

At the end of this 2020 school year, despite the technical challenge of urgently adapting to dealing with digital media, I highlight the daily coping with the emotional factor. Anxiety, anguish, insecurity, perseverance and optimism permeated my days as a teacher. I end my teaching activity aware that I performed my duties efficiently in an attempt to better adapt the pedagogical contents for the moment (Alê, public school teacher, 2020).

The words “adapt”, “attempt”, “learn”, “reinvent” appear several times in the teachers’ narratives. If at certain moments they announce dismay in the face of weaknesses, at others we see actions and discourse of resistance when engaging with possibilities. The meaning of resistance, which seems to have been accessed by them, refers to the insistence on remaining active in the profession, as well as presenting traces of the denial of the mischaracterization of their work in a context as different as the one experienced: the sense of resistance manifested is that of someone who accepts discouragement and difficulties, but seeks alternatives to make the work possible. The insistence on the profession is strongly marked by difficulties and the fight for better conditions for the work to be carried out. The desire to carry out such discussions in the exercise of the profession, without giving up on it, is evident.

In teaching, as a social and identity process, we transform and are transformed. The higher mental functions, specifically human and constitutive of the psyche, are constituted in social life and essentially depend on the specific social situations in which we participate. In this case, the class is a situation that triggers reflection and potentially generates teacher development. In this sense, Góes (1991, p. 21) speaks of a subject that is interactive, that is not formatted, in a passive way, by the environment, since “[...] there is a necessary interdependence of the inter- and intra- subjective planes, the genesis of one’s knowledge is not based on only individual resources, independent of

social mediation or shared meanings". It is assumed, therefore, that knowledge is constructed in subject-object interaction. In this sense, we understand resistance not in the sense of conservatism (resistant to change), but rather in the possibility of learning from the situation and expanding its field of development. Teachers, therefore, allow themselves to be affected and interact with the situation, experience it and learn.

Teachers Ana and Alê also bring us elements to understand how the education of emotions and affections is present in the teaching practice, signaling how difficult the dimension of work was in emergency remote teaching. Alê talks about the different weaknesses of that moment: added to the urgency in dealing with technologies is the effort to better adapt pedagogical content to the moment and the perception that students have a great demand for emotional support.

The teachers warn us that, faced with demands (institutional, from colleagues, families, and themselves) for better performance in remote classes, their focus on professional development sometimes shifts towards the instrumental aspects of *conducting classes*, while the current situation and the conditions of isolation required even more attention to welcoming, paying attention to the reactions and emotions of children, who were also grappling with their own limitations in access and technological knowledge.

In this sense, the teachers' narratives express the feeling of unpreparedness and lack of support to think of better strategies to deal with the students' affective demands. The meaning of affection seems to be closely associated with physical proximity, the possibility of touching and being touched, of establishing some intimacy that comes from the sensorial experience: by exchanging glances, by listening to an outburst or mumbled lament, by changing the rhythm of breathing, by hearing a voice choked with crying. These possibilities are suppressed in emergency remote teaching, and the teachers found themselves distanced from the children and understood that it was not possible to even notice their manifestations.

Vygotsky recognizes the cognition-affect unity by granting emotion a *status* similar to that of cognition in the constitution of different psychological processes. The affective dimension, in the author's work as a whole, can be understood as a dimension of psychic life, which, in its unity, is inextricably constructed by affections, emotions, feelings, intellect and cognition (Falabelo,

2010) and, furthermore, which it develops and transforms in a mediated way and in the course of the subject's historical and social development. Understanding emotions as a constitutive part of psychic functioning, we can say that they mobilize and affect individuals in their relationships with others and with knowledge.

Elisa's writing helps us think about the meanings of affection created in the context of remote classes, bringing yet another point to the debate: the affection and emotions of the teachers themselves.

COVID-19 has affected our psychology and changed the school environment in such a way that I believe it will never be the same again. It was a very stressful time, little time to adapt to the technologies, students, parents, guardians, would call me in the morning, afternoon, night, Sunday and holiday, to ask for help. [...] and also participate in school meetings and take care of myself and my family (Elisa, public school teacher, 2020).

The concern with the physical and mental illness of teachers is an emerging theme in the academic field, especially when dealing with Basic Education. For a long time, the teaching work, especially for teachers in the early grades of Elementary School, was understood as an easy task, requiring little effort and minimal training. The ideas that teachers are like "aunts", caring for children out of pleasure and affection without needing recognition or adequate compensation, or that teaching simply involves watching children play without intentionality or mediation, discredit the work of teachers and mask the challenges and pressures of the teaching profession. In the remote teaching scenario, there are also the difficulties of not having time limits, workload and workspace.

This set of factors affects the way teachers see themselves and recognize themselves in the profession. Just as Vygotsky (2000), who places the perception of the self-emerging from/in social relations, Bakhtin (2006) also asserts in a similar way, when stating that we are formed from the other, through words, which we already receive with an imbued value. The author explains:

Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my name, from the external world through the mouths of others (my mother, and so forth), with their intonation, in their emotional and value-assigning tonality. I realize myself initially through others:

from them I receive words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself [...] (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 173-174).

The signification of teaching always seems to be full of meanings linked to devaluation, overload, difficulty and demands. Marinho (2020), when bringing data from research carried out by the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação* (CNTE) [National Confederation of Education Workers], portrays that, in the scenario of the pandemic, with many uncertainties, whether old or current, it was noticed how much teachers suffer from health issues due to daily stress, professional exhaustion, lack of recognition and favorable working conditions, poor diet and lack of physical exercise. If some of these factors already existed and were perceived daily in the lives of teachers, they became even more exacerbated due to the pandemic.

Excessive work, according to Pontes and Rostas (2020), leads teachers to reduce their hours of rest and sleep, to give up their leisure activities to complete the work demands that gradually increase. In the same sense, Ferreira and Barbosa (2020) talk about teleworking that overloaded teachers due to the lack of time to restore their physical and mental health.

18 Amid all the uncertainties, Cristina shows us the nuances of affirming her practice among difficulties and resistance. She expresses her position of disbelief in remote teaching and the difficulties of facing the pandemic in the educational context, at the same time that she asserts herself as a teacher and proposes to think about possibilities:

I am delighted to be able to share. Not only the experiences we are living, but the things I learned along the way... since my undergraduate studies up to this point, and I am always available to contribute. [...]. And... I think we... don't know about the others, but I studied to contribute to society, to help, to guide, to make this pedagogical part really work. [...]. Anyway, we're trying, we're fighting, but it doesn't work. In no way is it working (Cristina, public school teacher, 2020).

What catches our attention is the willingness to learn. Here, learning does not appear in the name of personal and professional growth, or an invitation to leave the complacency in which teaching practice was configured in some aspects, but we understand it as a form of resistance. We observed that teachers move, betting on the possibilities and potential of teaching in the

midst of uncertainty, committed to humanization, not through the idealization of a utopian practice, but through the affirmation of a meaning of a practice that forms, constitutes and, in this dialogical movement, it also produces humanity.

Finally, we observed how much the dynamics of *being a teacher* and all the dimensions that comprise it are linked to the relationship with others, who share their historical and cultural context. Débora, Alê, Elisa and Cristina understand the meanings of their teaching work, based on what they see of themselves and their profession in others and in social relationships. Regarding this, Vygotsky (2010) states that the subject is constituted historically and in interactions. This means that the production of meanings observed here, expressed in the teachers' words, is carried out based on common signifiers, socially produced and circulated, which are accessed in different contexts. The process of signification takes place in the articulation between signs – elements that carry meanings and allow us to access them – and personal meaning, a combination of the individual's experiences and subjectivities that results in the development of consciousness (Vygotsky, 2007).

In the same direction, from an enunciative perspective, “[...] consciousness takes shape and being in the material of signs created by an organized group in the process of its social intercourse” (Voloshinov, 2017, p. 97). From this approach, we infer that consciousness can only be explained from the ideological and social environment, by pointing out the ideological formation of the sign.

Fontana (2010) points out that *being a teacher* is developed in the interactive dynamics of the production of meanings, which are articulated and opposed, harmonized and rejected. These different ways of being and doing make up the practice and the different conceptions that teachers have about it. Their subjectivity is configured in this multiplicity of meanings that integrate the unity of being a teacher. When we understand that teachers are immersed in social and historical life, their various movements in relation to their practice are loaded with meanings that come to them from others, such as the meanings that have been constructed, mainly in the relationship with students, as demonstrated here.

Final considerations

With the aim of understanding how teachers from the initial grades of Elementary School dealt with the change to emergency remote teaching, considering aspects of training and practice brought in the context of the research, we found, in the teachers' statements, a clear and realistic reading, marked by difficulties and confrontations.

To access what the teachers experienced, we carried out a narrative investigation, which, in addition to enabling us to listen to their experiences, allowed us to access the meanings constructed about their profession and practice in a unique context. In line with the historical-cultural reference and the enunciative-discursive perspective, we engaged in a dialog with the teachers' statements understood as socially, culturally and historically constructed, crossed by other discourses and constituted in the relationship with others.

The teachers talk about the lack of infrastructure and preparation for the use of technological resources, associated with the expectation of a caricatured performance, placed on them. In the midst of the attempts, we observed a practice and a sense of training linked to survival, a hurried, solitary and pragmatic training and a self-responsibility for making the ongoing teaching and learning processes accessible to students.

In their speeches, the teachers deeply feel the absence of students and protest against the lack of training support and working conditions, revealing how teaching was even more romanticized and, as a result, disqualified in its professionalism during the period of emergency remote teaching. The teachers also highlighted that the demands imposed on them went beyond their workload and interfered with their daily tasks, without considering that they themselves also needed to deal with personal demands and face their own fears and uncertainties in the face of the new virus.

However, within the statements, we have detected acts of resistance in teaching, which invite us to think about permanent training beyond the pandemic period. Faced with the adverse situations that frequently plague the teaching profession, we consider the persistence of teachers in defending the guiding principles of the pedagogical work, the search for information and support, as well as the establishment of dialog and strengthening of work

groups. These are actions that we characterize as resistance to a hegemonic logic that discourages and causes tiredness.

In contrast to the many obstacles they denounce, the teachers describe the work that is possible. In it, we see the insistence on carrying out the teaching practice – on the possibility of learning from what is experienced and expanding their field of development and learning –, attention to others, to students' emotions, to welcoming, and the willingness to learn and share knowledge, as well as the search for training and an investigative and creative attitude to promote teaching and learning.

Notes

1. This text presents a summary of broader research on teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research subjects are teachers from the state public school system in two cities in the hinterlands of São Paulo. Their names have been changed to protect their identities. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Consubstantiated Opinion no. 4,307,978).
2. In Brazil, many young students are used to call the teachers "aunt/auntie".

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Prof.ª Dr.ª Renata Helena Pin Pucci

Universidade São Francisco (Brasil)

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação

Líder do Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisa Histórias de Vida, Narrativas e Subjetividades
(HiNaS)

Orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8880-4243>

E-mail: renata_pucci@hotmail.com

Ms. Kauany Cerqueira Ferreira Bezerra

Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba (Brasil)

Grupo de Estudo e Pesquisa Histórias de Vida, Narrativas e Subjetividade (HiNaS)

Orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6549-0889>

E-mail: kauanyferreira.psi@gmail.com

Prof.ª Dr.ª Luciana Haddad Ferreira

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas (Brasil)

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação

Vice-líder do Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisa Histórias de Vida, Narrativas e
Subjetividades (HiNaS)

Orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8440-7347>

E-mail: haddad.nana@gmail.com

Name and E-mail of the translator

Janete Bridon

De olho no texto

deolhonotexto@gmail.com

Received on 17 mar. 2024

Accepted on 31 may 2024

