



**THE CHALLENGES IMPOSED ON EDUCATION BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
AND THE NEW STRATEGIES: A REPORT OF EXPERIENCES**

***OS DESAFIOS IMPOSTOS À EDUCAÇÃO PELA DA PANDEMIA DO COVID-19 E AS
NOVAS ESTRATÉGIAS: UM RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIAS***

***LOS DESAFIOS IMPUESTOS A LA EDUCACIÓN POR LA PANDEMIA DEL COVID-
19 Y LAS NUEVAS ESTRATEGIAS: UN RELATO DE EXPERIENCIAS***



Florencia Cruz da Rocha EBELING¹
e-mail: flotoni@uol.com.br

How to reference this paper:

EBELING, F. C. R. The challenges imposed on education by the COVID-19 pandemic and the new strategies: A report of experiences. **Doxa: Rev. Bras. Psico. e Educ.**, Araraquara, v. 24, n. esp. 2, e023026, 2023. e-ISSN: 2594-8385. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30715/doxa.v24iesp.2.18645>



| **Submitted:** 22/07/2023
| **Revisions required:** 10/08/2023
| **Approved:** 18/09/2023
| **Published:** 31/10/2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. Paulo Rennes Marçal Ribeiro
Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

¹ University Center of Barra Mansa (UBM), Barra Mansa – RJ – Brazil. Faculty in the Undergraduate Psychology Program. University Center of Barra Mansa (UBM).

ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the world, and education was no exception. This experiential report is part of studies conducted by the Violence Observatory at the University Center of Barra Mansa in 2020 and 2021. The work is justified by the importance of shedding light on the role of municipal-level educational management during this critical period for reflecting on and making decisions regarding Brazilian education. The objectives were to understand how the pandemic affected the work of these managers, explore the use of technology in promoting learning, and assess how students were supported during this period. It is descriptive qualitative research, with the primary references being legislation, Bourdieu; Passeron (2008), and Freire (1996). The research subject consists of a live discussion with education secretaries from three municipalities in the Médio Paraíba region. This work contributes to a reflection on the impacts of the pandemic on the teaching and learning process.

KEYWORDS: Education. School Management. Pandemic.

RESUMO: A Pandemia da COVID-19 causou grande impacto no mundo. Na educação não foi diferente. Esse relato de experiência faz parte de estudos realizados pelo Observatório da Violência do Centro Universitário de Barra Mansa em 2020 e 2021. O trabalho justifica-se pela importância de se trazer à luz a questão da atuação da gestão educacional de nível municipal nesse período de grande importância para reflexão e tomada de decisão a respeito da educação brasileira. Objetivou-se compreender como a pandemia afetou os gestores no seu trabalho, entender a utilização da tecnologia na promoção da aprendizagem e perceber como os estudantes foram atendidos nesse período. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa descritiva, tendo como principais referenciais: a Legislação, Bourdieu; Passeron (2008), Freire (1996). O objeto de pesquisa configura-se numa live com secretários de educação de três municípios do Médio Paraíba. Esse trabalho contribuiu para uma reflexão dos impactos da Pandemia no processo de ensino de aprendizagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Gestão escolar. Pandemia.

RESUMEN: La pandemia del COVID-19 causó gran impacto en el mundo. En la educación no fue diferente. Ese relato de experiencia hace parte de estudios realizados por el Observatorio de la Violencia del Centro Universitario de Barra Mansa en 2020 y 2021. El trabajo se justifica por la importancia de traer a la luz, la cuestión de la actuación de la gestión educacional de nivel municipal en ese período de gran importancia para reflexión y tomada de decisión respecto a la educación brasileña. Se objetivó comprender como la pandemia afectó a los gestores en su trabajo; entender la utilización de la tecnología en la promoción del aprendizaje; perceber como los estudiantes fueron atendidos en ese período. Se trata de una pesquisa cualitativa descriptiva, teniendo como principales referenciales: la Legislación, Bourdieu; Passeron (2008), Freire (1996). El objeto de pesquisa se configura en una live con secretarios de educación de tres municipios del Medio Paraíba. Ese trabajo contribuyó para una reflexión de los impactos de la pandemia en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Gestión escolar. Pandemia.

Introduction

This experience report is part of a study conducted by the Violence Observatory research group at the University Center of Barra Mansa (UBM) during the social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is descriptive qualitative research that aims to understand: how the pandemic affected school administrators in the performance of their work and how they dealt with this "new normal"; to understand the use of technology in promoting student learning; to perceive how students were assisted in the face of school limitations. The research object used is a live event held in 2021 with the participation of education secretaries from three municipalities in the *Médio Paraíba* region. The event, divided into three segments, initially covered topics: communication, school, parents, and students; remote teaching; internet access; teaching and learning. It then addressed the issue of school meals during the pandemic. Finally, it discussed the strategies for the challenges posed in relation to new approaches to public school management, teacher training, the teaching-learning process, and technology infrastructure.

The preparation of this report is justified by the relevance of addressing the role of municipal educational management during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is essential to promote reflection and support decisions related to education in Brazil and the teaching and learning process.

The Experience Report

Starting in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), imposed a new perspective on the world in various aspects. Social isolation has differentially affected people of all ages, including children, youth, and adults, in multiple countries, significantly impacting the global educational system. Millions of students and teachers were affected by the suspension of schools due to the pandemic. In this crisis, the school community, including families, had to deal with unpredictability, and in this context, new ways of teaching and learning were required.

Thus, the Violence Observatory research group at UBM conducted various studies throughout the years 2020 and 2021. This report originates from a live session with the education secretaries of three municipalities in the *Médio Paraíba* region.

In the first stage, topics related to communication between the school, parents, and students, remote teaching, internet access, and the teaching-learning process were addressed.

Participants emphasized the uncertainty that permeated the transition to the new and unexpected scenario, resulting in insecurity in the face of significant changes in educational processes. They highlighted this uncertainty both regarding parents and guardians as well as students. They stated that providing education to such a diverse audience became a complex challenge. It was not a matter of acceptance difficulty for students' families since, initially, the situation was seen as temporary. The real challenge was the extent of school closures, which persisted for almost two years. This led schools and their professionals into a continuous cycle of reinvention and adaptation over this period.

The pandemic also triggered a profound reflection on the quality of education in all municipalities, offering participants a valuable opportunity to acquire knowledge and understanding of the reality that often went unnoticed by municipal administration. One of the education secretaries shared the adopted strategy, which unfolded in three phases: in the first stage, at the beginning of the pandemic, the education department developed educational materials focused on student interaction and entertainment with their families. These materials included educational games, recreational activities, and music without emphasizing curriculum content or hours. It is worth noting that the involvement of families had a noticeable resurgence in their role in their children's education during the pandemic.

In this context, it is worth recalling that Opinion No. 05 of the National Council of Education, dated April 28, 2020, established guidelines for the reorganization of the school calendar and the possibility of counting non-face-to-face activities as part of the fulfillment of the minimum annual workload in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This opinion clarified that the

The term "non-face-to-face activities," in this opinion, refers to activities to be conducted by the educational institution with students when their physical presence at the school premises is not possible. Implementing non-face-to-face educational activities aims, first and foremost, to prevent students from regressing in their learning and to avoid the loss of connection with the school, which could lead to dropouts and abandonment (BRASIL, 2020, our translation).

In the second stage, as reported by one of the participants, activities began to be integrated based on the Common Core Curriculum (BNCC). The primary objective was to revisit the skills and competencies developed before the pandemic, also providing an assessment of students and their families' accessibility. This was intended to address challenges related to providing education to students, considering the persistent connectivity limitations

that affected students' families, teachers, and educational institutions due to Internet access and quality issues. The completion of this diagnosis took place over two months.

The third phase was characterized by the search for communication channels between the school and families, teachers, and students, as there was a need for closer interaction among educational actors. WhatsApp was chosen as the application for this purpose, and the communication process was monitored by the school, identifying that the Internet would not be the best means to deliver school activities to students due to the limited access by both students and teachers. Printed materials were chosen instead. The participant's account aligns with the supplementary research from Pnad Contínua (IBGE, 2018 apud DUARTE; HYPOLITO, 2020, p. 743, our translation)

[...]Between October and December 2018 (the last period of available data from the supplementary research in the IBGE databases), 25.3% of individuals over ten years of age in Brazil reported not having used the Internet. When considering the student status, Pnad Contínua reveals that 14% of this audience stated they had not accessed the Internet during that period. Among them, 38.1% mentioned that the main barriers preventing their access were the service cost (26.4%) or the cost of the necessary equipment for connection (11.7%). In absolute numbers, this represents more than 4 million students at various educational levels, stages, and school networks.

The participant's account was corroborated by the other secretaries regarding internet access and the use of printed materials for students, adding Facebook as a communication platform. Another hindrance to the use of online devices during that period, according to the participants, was the unpreparedness of teachers to use technology for education.

Almeida and Valente (2011), argue that the training of teachers for mediating teaching through ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) requires certain conditions to be met. These conditions involve creating opportunities for teachers to build knowledge about aspects related to computer use, having an understanding of teaching, learning, and knowledge implicit in the software, and understanding why and how to integrate the computer into the curriculum and how to implement this in their pedagogical practice.

These considerations by the author remind us of the complexity of teacher training for the pedagogical use of ICT, and during the pandemic, they had to provide, in most cases, a massive movement that was insufficient for building technological fluency in these teachers.

Stating that ICTs are the solution to the dilemmas of education is far from accurate, but they can suggest possible paths for collaborative practices and more horizontal relationships between teachers and students at all educational stages. Recalling Freire (1996), education is

always historical and situated and should contribute to learners (teachers and students) identifying themselves as social and historical beings, as thinking, transforming, creative, and dream-fulfilling individuals.

The participants emphasized the need to consider alternative ways of teaching and learning. As a result, some strategies were adopted in 2021, such as creating diagnostics to signal the progress of the process to teachers, working in a network, school groups developing planning for the entire network with bi-weekly feedback on the process, monthly teacher training, adopting parallel recovery, reinforcement classes upon the return to in-person learning, and particular schedules for classes with greater difficulty (DOMINGOS; PINHEIRO; SOUSA JUNIOR, 2021).

The strategies conceived and employed with the purpose of ensuring the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process within the national public sphere encountered numerous barriers. One of the most significant is related to cultural issues, specifically the influence of family cultural capital. This influence has long been highlighted by Bourdieu and Passeron (2008) as a factor of extreme relevance to students' performance. Access, consumption, and familiarity with cultural goods can determine a student's academic success. On the other hand, many of these barriers could already be observed before the pandemic, such as the continuous training of teachers for using ICTs and the difficulty of education whose content makes sense to students, is part of their lives, and is closely related to their context. Social isolation highlighted old problems in Brazilian education.

The second segment of the live discussion addressed school meals and their importance during the vulnerability caused by social distancing. The issue of the slowness and obstacles caused by the current laws concerning school meals that could have alleviated the impact of social isolation on students' nutrition was raised.

The participants emphasized the need to link food kits with education, as they were delivered along with the educational materials to be used by the students. They also pointed out that only after this linkage did pedagogical activities begin to reach the students more regularly during this period. One of the participants highlighted the partnership of the municipality's social assistance and the public prosecutor's office in this process. According to Vasconcelos (2020, p. 4, our translation),

The pandemic brought uncertain effects regarding the distribution of school meals and the applicability of the National School Feeding Program (PNAE). In this emergency, Law No. 13.987 was published on April 7, 2020, authorizing the distribution of food products purchased in accordance with the

law that regulates the PNAE to the parents or guardians of students in public schools during the entire period of suspension of in-person classes. However, there were still doubts on the part of the administrators regarding the use of this resource.

Taking into account the author's history, the partnership between the education department and the public prosecutor's office brought legitimacy to the process of distributing meal kits to families.

The closing segment of the event presented the participants' considerations on the actions to address the challenges posed by new strategies for public school management, teacher training, the teaching and learning process, and infrastructure and technology. For these education secretaries, what drove and propelled the work carried out during the two years of social isolation imposed by the coronavirus were belief and persistence.

The pandemic brought numerous challenges but also positive legacies, such as parents who returned to education to understand the importance of upgrading their skills to help their children, teachers better equipped in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), a reconfiguration of pedagogical practices; a strengthening of partnerships between municipal education departments; more significant emphasis on the exchange of ideas and the value of listening; a more collective approach in school actions; an appreciation of growth based on different perspectives; greater integration of education stakeholders; and, finally, an openness to new viewpoints and horizons. This led to the recognition that democratic management is the way forward and generated hope that students have understood the importance of studying, going beyond mere school attendance.

After the conclusion of the live event, the participants unanimously emphasized the importance of addressing the question of how to proceed with improvements. They acknowledge various possible answers but emphasize the crucial importance of implementing new public policies based on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic so as not to forget the experiences lived during this period.

Final considerations

Upon concluding this experiential account, it becomes evident that the pandemic destabilized normalcy, exposing and exacerbating deep-seated inequalities of opportunity. It burdened education professionals without providing robust support in return. Additionally, it highlighted the vulnerabilities of the education systems in Brazil concerning teaching work, compounded by socio-economic limitations that restrict access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by the population. The account underscores the challenges that public primary education faces both in situations of "normalcy" and in unplanned contexts, requiring agile responses from the state. What occurred represented a crisis within the crisis itself.

There is an even more urgent need for implementing pedagogical practices that demonstrate effective methodological strategies to ensure the construction of students' knowledge. However, any effort to conceive alternatives to schooling during the quarantine must consider and question the situation of national education as a whole.

To achieve quality education, it is essential to address actions at both the level of educational public policies and internally, reflecting on those directed toward teacher training. It is imperative to break away from academic elitism, reduce social inequalities, and overcome the notion that only the most capable and robust can thrive. An approach focused on totality is required, considering students' reality, the social context in which they live, and the conditions that genuinely facilitate learning, focusing on the needs of 21st-century students and the construction of a desired society.

Another point of extreme importance is related to adequate access to the rights of housing, food, health, education, work, security, and well-being. This approach aims to promote a practice that is open to the possibility of questioning the actions taken, truly incorporating students' interests, and stimulating the ability to think, act creatively, and take ownership of their thoughts.

In this context, the objectives outlined in this work were fully achieved. It was understood how the pandemic affected school administrators in performing their duties and how they dealt with this "new normal." It was also possible to analyze the use of technology in promoting student learning and to assess how students were assisted in the face of school limitations.

Finally, it is imperative to emphasize that one cannot envision the future without reflecting on the present and examining the past and actions taken previously. Speaking of

significant changes in education requires this analysis of the history, focusing on specific actions in the present and recognizing that, while the goodwill and commitment of teachers are essential, this transformation demands a commitment from the entire society.

REFERENCES

ALMEIDA, M.E.B.; VALENTE, J.A. **Tecnologias e currículo: trajetórias convergentes ou divergentes?** São Paulo: Editora Paulus, 2011.

BOURDIEU, P; PASSERON, J. **A reprodução: elementos para uma teoria do sistema de ensino.** Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2008.

BRASIL. Conselho Nacional de Educação. **Parecer CNE/CP n. 5/2020, aprovado em 28 de abril de 2020.** Reorganização do Calendário Escolar e da possibilidade de cômputo de atividades não presenciais para fins de cumprimento da carga horária mínima anual, em razão da Pandemia da COVID-19. Brasília, DF: MEC, 2020.

DOMINGOS, P. A. S.; PINHEIRO, A. S.; SOUSA JUNIOR; F. A. C. **Os desafios da pandemia impostos à educação e as novas estratégias para a gestão das escolas públicas [Live].** Barra Mansa, RJ: Centro Universitário de Barra Mansa, 2021. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ubmbarramansa/videos/4432536410133554>. Accessed in: 20 Nov. 2022.

DUARTE, A. W. B; HYPOLITO, A. M. Docência em tempos de Covid-19: uma análise das condições de trabalho em meio a pandemia. **Revista Retratos da Escola**, Brasília, v. 14, n. 30, p. 736-753, 2020. DOI: 10.22420/rde.v14i30.1207. Available at: <https://retratosdaescola.emnuvens.com.br/rde/article/view/1207>. Accessed in: 20 Nov. 2022.

FREIRE, P. **Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa.** São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.

VASCONCELOS, M. S. C. Merenda escolar: o direito à alimentação em tempos de pandemia pela COVID-19. *In: CONGRESSO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO, 7., 2020. Anais [...].* Campina Grande: Realize Eventos Científicos, 2020. Available at: http://editorarealize.com.br/editora/anais/conedu/2020/TRABALHO_EV140_MD1_SA21_ID_5346_01102020235037.pdf. Accessed in: 15 Oct. 2022.

CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: We would like to express our gratitude to the education authorities who readily agreed to participate in our study.

Funding: There was no funding for this research.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: The research was submitted to the Ethics and Research Committee of Barra Mansa University Center and approved under opinion number 4426858. Throughout the research process, ethical parameters were respected.

Data and material availability: The data and materials used in the work are available for access upon request via the authors' email.

Authors' contributions: The author is solely responsible for elaborating this work.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

