

**TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS IN
TIMES OF PANDEMICS: A CRITICAL-DIALECTIC ANALYSIS**

***FORMAÇÃO E ATUAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES DA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL EM
TEMPOS DE PANDEMIA: UMA ANÁLISE CRÍTICO-DIALÉTICA***

***FORMACIÓN Y ACTUACIÓN DEL PROFESOR DE LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL EN
TIEMPOS DE PANDEMIA: UN ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO-DIALÉCTICO***

Sueli Rosa NAKAMURA¹
Viviane Aparecida Bernardes de ARRUDA²
Marta Silene Ferreira BARROS³
Camila Crude dos SANTOS⁴

ABSTRACT: The discussions on teacher training and work have been expanded through the emergence of the Sars-Cov 2 virus, generator of the pandemic state of COVID-19, with the following questions: How is the training of Early Childhood Education teachers taking place in this pandemic context and how is it impacting the teaching performance? Thus, the general objective is to analyze the continuing education of teachers and its implications in Early Childhood Education. The present study was based on discussions and analyses that took place in the Discipline "Education, human formation and praxis: implications of Marxism, Historical-Cultural Theory and Historical-Critical Pedagogy for School Education" linked to the Post-Graduate Program in Education at the Londrina State University. The research is bibliographic with research and critical-dialectical analysis, with authors who deal with this perspective, which involves the Historical-Cultural Theory and the Historical-Critical Pedagogy, whose aim is to contribute in the new thinking the formation and action of the teacher of Early Childhood Education.

KEYWORDS: Education. Early childhood education. Training and performance of teachers. COVID-19.

¹ University of Londrina (UEL), Londrina – PR – Brazil. Master's student in the Graduate Program in Education at the University of Londrina (UEL). Participates in the Research Group FOCO - Formation, Praxis and Emancipation in School Education: implications of the Cultural-Historical Theory in teaching, learning and human development (UEL). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8238-1729>. E-mail: sueli.nakamura@uel.br

² University of Londrina UEL), Londrina – PR – Brazil. Doctoral student in the Graduate Program in Education at the University of Londrina (UEL). Teacher of Early Childhood Education in the Municipal Education Network of Londrina. Participates in the Research Group FOCO- Formation, Praxis and Emancipation in School Education: implications of the Cultural-Historical Theory in teaching, learning and human development (UEL). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4348-9160>. E-mail: vivianebernardesarrruda@gmail.com

³ University of Londrina (UEL), Londrina – PR – Brazil. Associate TIDE Professor at the Education, Communication and Arts Center (CECA) of the Education Department (UEL), Area of Early Childhood Education and Professor of the Graduate Program in Education. Post-Doctorate in Education (UNESP) - Marília. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1924-8490>. E-mail: mbarros@uel.br

⁴ University of Londrina (UEL), Londrina – PR – Brazil. Master's student in the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Londrina (UEL). She is a participant in the study group FOCO - Formation, Praxis and Emancipation in School Education: Implications of the Cultural Historical Theory and in human development. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8730-037X>. E-mail: camila.crude.santos@uel.br

RESUMO: *As discussões sobre a formação e atuação docente tem se ampliado mediante o surgimento do vírus Sars-Cov 2, gerador do estado pandêmico de COVID-19, cabendo questionar: de que forma está ocorrendo a formação de professores da Educação Infantil nesse contexto pandêmico e como a mesma está impactando na atuação docente? Assim, o objetivo geral é analisar a formação continuada de professores e suas implicações na Educação Infantil. O presente estudo partiu de discussões e análises que aconteceram na Disciplina "Educação, formação humana e práxis: implicações do marxismo, da Teoria Histórico-Cultural e da Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica para a Educação Escolar", vinculada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Estadual de Londrina. A pesquisa é de cunho bibliográfico com investigação e análise crítico-dialética, com autores que versam acerca dessa perspectiva, a qual envolve a Teoria Histórico-Cultural e a Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica, cujo intuito é contribuir no novo pensar a formação e ação do professor da Educação Infantil.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação. Educação infantil. Formação e atuação de professores. COVID-19.*

RESUMEN: *Las discusiones sobre la formación y actuación docente se han ampliado mediante el surgimiento del virus Sars-Cov 2, generador del estado pandémico de COVID-19, cabiendo preguntarse: ¿De qué forma está ocurriendo la formación de profesores de Educación Infantil en ese contexto pandémico y cómo la misma está impactando en la actuación docente? Así, el objetivo general es analizar la formación continua de profesores y sus implicaciones en la Educación Infantil. El presente estudio partió de discusiones y análisis que ocurrieron en la Disciplina "Educación, formación humana y praxis: implicaciones del marxismo, de la Teoría Histórico-Cultural y de la Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica para la Educación Escolar" vinculada al Programa de Posgrado en Educación en la Universidad Estatal de Londrina. La investigación es de cuño bibliográfico con investigación y análisis crítico-dialéctico, con autores que versan acerca de esa perspectiva, la cual involucra la Teoría Histórico-Cultural y la Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica, cuyo objetivo es contribuir en el nuevo pensar la formación y acción del profesor de la Educación Infantil.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación. Educación infantil. Formación y actuación de los profesores. COVID-19.*

Introduction

In the ontological dimension, Marxian theory defines the human being as an active being before the real and concrete objective matter, having labor as the human activity that unifies the link between subject and object. In the teleological dimension, human work is not only an action that transforms the object, it also symbolizes a whole social-historical process of creation of the foundations that build one's own subjectivity.

Moving from the apparent immediate reality to its essence, the critical-dialectical approach considers thought as a reflection of the materiality of the historical relations developed by humanity, whose vital activity is manifested through work. Being essentially a human vital

activity, work cannot be translated into a mere alienated occupation devoid of a conscious planning by the worker; it should be an action that transforms the organization of reality and the daily social relations immanent in it.

In order for the organization of this social reality to guide man toward a process of humanization and emancipation, it is necessary that the modes of production of the capitalist project be overcome, in the sense that the material and immaterial goods available to mankind become possibilities and guidelines that, penetrating the objectives and purposes of the educational work, promote the transmission and assimilation of scientific, historical, and systematized knowledge, and reachable to all.

In light of the authors who deal with the theoretical contributions of Cultural-Historical Theory and Critical Historical Pedagogy, as well as the discussions and analyses that took place during the course "Education, Human Formation and Praxis: implications of Marxism, Cultural-Historical Theory and Critical-Historical Pedagogy for School Education, linked to the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Londrina, this research, of bibliographic nature and critical-dialectical approach, aims to understand and analyze how the continuing education of teachers implies in their performance in the stage of Early Childhood Education, notably, in times of pandemic.

Facing the current global health crisis disseminated by the emergence of the Sars-Cov 2 virus, which has generated the pandemic state of COVID-19, the study on this theme, already so necessary, becomes even more relevant, since the closing of schools and the suspension of classes have brought direct impacts on the development of the child psychism, which is why the first item, For this reason, the first item, entitled "The ontology of social being and work", will deal with work as a vital activity of the human being, while the second item, entitled "Training and performance of Early Childhood Education teachers in pandemic times", will examine the quality of teacher training and actions with families aiming at a joint path in the process of teaching and learning.

The ontology of social being and labor

The ontological orientation of Marxian thought centers its interest in knowing a concrete and determined object, in the objective analysis of a given situation that is also real and concrete. Marxian theory does not dissociate theory and practice, on the contrary, it understands that they are intertwined relations. In this sense, the origin of the social reality of being is not restricted to the field of ideas, but to the concrete action of real life, since material existence

precedes thought. In this regard, Marx states that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being; on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness" (MARX, 2008, p. 47).

Reversing the Hegelian dialectic, Marx does not dissociate social being from nature, attributing to it an ontological character for being the vital basis in which social being is naturalized, at the same time that, in the historical process of objectification, it is humanized by it. In this dialectical relationship, the subject's capacity for production and intervention in the world is conditioned to the existence of the natural environment, implying that it is in the materiality of things existing in nature and not in the field of ideas that the being first objectifies itself, so that later, in the establishment of a metabolic relationship, mediated and effected by labor, it acts upon nature, transforming it and being transformed by it. Understanding that concrete thought is a contradictory totality, the result of a synthesis of multiple determinations, Lukács (2004, p. 36-37, emphasis added) proposes that

In Marx, the starting point is not the atom, as in the old materialists, nor the abstract being, as in Hegel. Everything that exists must always have an objective character, must always be the most driving and moving part of a concrete complex. This has two fundamental consequences. First, all being is a historical process; second, categories are neither statements about something existing or developing, nor principles of formation (ideals) of matter, but motor and mobile forms of matter itself: "forms of being, determinations of existence.

In this sense, Lukács predicates that Marx conceived consciousness as a late product of material ontological evolution, with consciousness being considered a product of reality. Thus, based on ontology, Marx breaks with the way of doing science and seeks in reality the foundation of the existence of things that are in thought, he sees in the object the subject's guide in the process, without failing to consider the active relationship of this subject with the object, on the contrary, he enables an inseparable relationship between idea and reality, between theory and practice, in short, a concreteness linked to thought.

It can be said, therefore, that the ontological character, as the main characteristic of the dialectical method, separates the real and concrete (object) from what is of thought. Therefore, by analyzing the object through thought, one arrives at abstractions and concepts about the simplest determinations and, from these, surrounded by historical, political, economic and social determinants that permeate reality, the opposite path is taken.

We cannot forget that man's feelings and passions are subject to ontological determinations linked to the particularities of history.

From a dialectical perspective, Marx sees labor as the category that will found, dignify, produce man and form humanity. From an ontological perspective, he conceives that being a being that does not have nature far from him, the subject develops and constitutes himself as a social being based on the labor relations established in society, whether these relations are relations of estrangement or expropriation.

Thus, for Marx, categories "[...] express [...] forms of being, determinations of existence, often isolated aspects of [a] determined society" (NETTO, 2011, p. 46) that, belonging to the order of existence, are real and concrete, however, through the mediation of thought, they are also reflective categories.

From this perspective, labor represents one of the simplest categories inserted in all societies. The simplicity of the labor category, as a representation of the universality of a whole, reveals itself to be as complex and abstract as its most concrete manifestations, such as the monetary system, wealth and money.

A reflection of labor, the capital as a category, in turn, finds its subsistence in the existence of exchange, division of labor (wage labor), prices and money, among others. Thus, it can be inferred that economic categories are abstractions arising from the social relations of production, mediated by historical and transitory issues of society.

By the above method, whose political, sociological, and economic theory discusses the social division of labor based on the exploitation of working class labor by the bourgeois class, Marx explains the foundation that supports the economic foundations. Diverging from the Hegelian dialectic, whose method of thinking the real understands that the immobility of social classes is externalization of the manifestation of the subject's thought process (idea), Marx conceives that the historical movement of class struggle in society has always existed, so thinking the real must serve to transform reality as it is interpreted. In this view, Marx clarifies:

My dialectical method, by its foundation, differs from the Hegelian method, being entirely opposed to it." And he explains that for "Hegel, the thought process - which [it] transforms into an autonomous subject under the name of idea - is the creator of the real, and the real is only its external manifestation.", while for him "[...] on the contrary, the ideal is nothing but the material transposed into the human head and interpreted by it" (MARX, 1985, p.16).

According to the above thought, while Hegelian dialectics starts from the field of ideas to reach reality, Marxian dialectics starts from the material field to reach reality. Indeed, in Marxian dialectics there is nothing definitive, fixed and absolute, that is, there are no immutable ideas, principles and categories, because everything is in constant movement in the flux of history.

Transposing this thought to the critical-dialectical method, the starting point, represented by the analysis of the social-historical reality, rises from the simplest category to the most complex one, considering that the internal contradictions of this path form the whole of a dialectical unit composed by essence and appearance, by subjectivity and objectivity of the object analyzed in the concrete reality.

Thus, the Marxian method starts from the apparent immediate reality towards its essence, going, therefore, from the abstract to the concrete, from the simplest to the most complex, from the part towards the whole and from the singular to the universal. The search for the essence, as well as the phenomena through dialectical logic, requires that the movement of thought, embodied in the materiality of the historical relations produced by humanity, be understood through man's vital activity, labor. However, the essence of work in Marx is not that work that is objectified and generates mere occupation:

The essence of work consists precisely in the capacity to go beyond the fixation of the living being in the biological relationship with its environment. The essentially distinctive moment is not given by the perfection of the products, but by the role of consciousness, which precisely here ceases to be a mere epiphenomenon of biological reproduction (LUKÁCS, 2004, p. 38-39, our translation).

In other words, what Lukács evidences in the above thought is that the result produced by work is something that was already idealized in the worker's conscious planning, therefore it is not a mere mechanistic operation, but a transforming action of reality and human relations experienced. By this logic,

Labor is the central category of analysis of the historical materiality of men because it is the simplest, most objective form that they have developed to organize themselves in society. The basis of social relations are the social relations of production, the organizational forms of labor (PIRES, 1997, p. 89).

The author points out that in the form of organization of capitalist society, the vital activity of work becomes a source of exploitation of the worker, losing its substantial purpose, since while "[...] work, as an essential and vital activity brings the possibility of full realization

of man as such (humanization), the exploitation of work determines an inverse process, of alienation" (PIRES, 1997).

In order to reverse the capitalist logic of labor exploitation aimed at a project of subservience and alienation of the human being, and direct it towards the process of humanization and emancipation, it is necessary to understand how the bases of social relations of the modes of economic production are formed, that is, the logic and theory of knowledge from a critical and dialectical perspective. In this path, a new historical project as a teleology is the consistent theoretical foundation to substantiate the educational and pedagogical theory in the transition to overcome the capital's way of organizing the production of material and immaterial goods.

The approach to Marxist theory allows thinking about the possibilities of an education towards human emancipation and requires the understanding of its ultimate purpose which, in turn, needs the ontological understanding of the human being. For Saviani:

The task of building a pedagogy inspired by Marxism implies the apprehension of the background conception (ontological, epistemological, and methodological) that characterizes historical materialism. Imbued with this conception, the task is to penetrate inside the pedagogical processes, reconstructing their objective characteristics and formulating the pedagogical guidelines that will enable the reorganization of the educational work under the aspects of the purposes and objectives of education, the educational institutions, the educational agents, the curricular contents and the pedagogical-didactic procedures that will move a new educational ethos aimed at the construction of a new society, a new culture, a new man, in short (SAVIANI, 2007, p. 10).

To materialize such intent, SAVIANI (2007) admonishes that the Pedagogy should be guided by a dialectical conception of science in a movement that starts from the syncreis (chaotic representation of the whole) until reaching the synthesis (result of the totality of the multiple determinations), mediated by the analysis of the simpler determinations and abstractions. According to the author, this pedagogical conception constitutes a reliable compass both to guide the process of discovery of new knowledge, consolidated in the scientific method, and for the process of transmission and assimilation of this knowledge, materialized in the teaching method, culminating, finally, with the "catharsis", whose manifestation represents the rise of the most elaborate form of understanding of the social consciousness of being.

In relation to the consciousness of social being, Duarte (2014, p. 45) explains that everyone starts their life as individuals in themselves, but that in the overcoming of spontaneous functions they reach "[...] the condition of free, rational, and universal being," that is, in their conscious individuality, through activity and daily social relations, is that man builds himself

into a being for himself. The intentional and educative process is indispensable to help in this task, since it marks the instruments that mediate the relationships with the other, transforming him into a conscious and non-alienated being.

The teaching praxis anchors the foundations that minimize negative educational impacts when faced with unexpected social changes caused by force majeure, as has been witnessed with the pandemic resulting from the Sars-Cov 2 virus, which closed the doors of all educational institutions in Brazil and has compelled the teacher's training and action to seek new ways and resources so that the historically systematized scientific knowledge can be transmitted, especially in Early Childhood Education, as will be demonstrated below.

Training and performance of Early Childhood Education teachers in pandemic times

Debates about teacher training, as well as about teaching, have been going on for a long time in the educational field. In fact, it can be observed that in the midst of so many changes within this field, in the current pandemic scenario, discussions related to education become more and more constant, especially those involving the teaching and learning process of the students. Thus, understanding such a point as relevant to be discussed, others also become pertinent to be analyzed in this view, which, in a certain way, may bring consequences to the human formation process of those involved in this process, such as children, teachers, and families.

What can be analyzed regarding the continuing education of teachers concerns the precariousness of the teaching work in times of pandemic, especially with regard to the Sars-Cov 2 virus, generator of the pandemic state of COVID-19. It is worth pointing out that teachers had, in this context, to reinvent themselves, to learn to work through remote teaching, and in some cases to attend through the hybrid mode of teaching, to use technological tools to minimize the distance between teachers and students.

It is essential to state that, in many cases, the teacher has not even had a minimum preparation for remote teaching, seeking by himself to improve his knowledge for the benefit of his performance. Gradually, the states, the Municipal Education Departments, and the Universities (according to the reality of each region, and on a national level) have mobilized to offer training courses in order to contribute to the teacher's work, which, in this study, is the Early Childhood Education professional.

It is worth mentioning the CNE/CP Opinion No. 5/2020, which provided guidelines on the reorganization of the school calendar for the first stage of Basic Education since the

beginning of the pandemic. Among them, one can highlight the development of pedagogical activities, aiming at conducting educational practices to be taught by parents and/or guardians of the child in the family environment, due to the social distance.

To carry out these activities, although informal, but also educational in nature, by families, it is suggested that early childhood education institutions can prepare guidelines/suggestions to parents or guardians on systematic activities that can be performed with their children at home, during the period of social isolation (BRAZIL, 2020, p. 10).

Gradually, the Early Childhood Education Institutions adhered to such proposals, initiating the remote teaching format. Initially, guidelines and suggestions were sent to parents and/or family members to develop pedagogical proposals to be carried out with their children. As the pandemic continued, the guidelines and teaching plans were improved, aiming to minimize the weaknesses in child development.

It is worth clarifying two points here. The first one refers to the precariousness and increase in the teacher's workload, who, by means of remote and in some cases hybrid teaching, has spent more time working, sometimes outside his or her working hours, to meet the demands of this new class format. The second concerns the family's attributions within this pandemic scenario, in relation to the teaching of systematized contents, which started to take place in their homes due to the social distance.

Regarding the continuing education aimed at these education professionals, themes related to the management of technological tools, so common in the teacher's work, have gradually been inserted, emphasizing possible predictions, since the return of the classes in person is still uncertain due to several factors consistent with the current context.

However, in this study, the teaching activity is defended as a primordial action of the teacher's work; in this assertion, this professional acts in order to contribute to the full humanization of the students, through the socialization of systematized contents that are part of the historical and cultural path of humanity, being the act of teaching essential to the learning process and development of the subjects.

Martins (2015, [s.p.]) cites that: "[...] Human vital activity is conscious and objective material action, that is: it is praxis. [...]". The praxis is represented by the objective activity of man, who acts over nature, transforming it and also building his own subjectivity. It is through praxis that the human being modifies the objective reality, transforming himself. Martins (2015) adds that it is through praxis that human beings have the possibility to psychically reflect on

their actions, considering that the meaning of the act goes beyond mere immediate actions, because it involves comprehensive social conditions.

According to Martins (2015), in this view of discussion, according to the critical-dialectical perspective, the individual needs to be part of history in order to objectify himself as a human being, and this insertion occurs through the appropriation of objectifications, which are the result of the activities of previous generations, which corroborates the statement that the objectifications are significant and social in nature.

In the midst of this discussion, it is worth noting that it is through work, a vital human activity, that man builds his genericity, so that individual life and generic life meet, both being interconnected. By operating in nature, man builds himself. But what about families in this pandemic context? This is the second point of discussion. It was left to them to teach the systematized contents in their homes, under the guidance of the teacher. Thus, reports from parents and family members began to intensify in schools, who, sometimes with the same question about the lack of interest of children in participating in activities at home, did not feel prepared to teach their children, and the children, in turn, cried and argued that they wanted to be at school with their friends and teachers. These are some of the common anxieties that are present in school institutions, specifically in the Early Childhood Education stage.

It is reiterated, through the defense of the theoretical and methodological contribution of the Cultural-Historical Theory and Critical Historical Pedagogy, that the role of the teacher since the Early Childhood Education stage is teaching, even if by emergency measures the families have become responsible for this function. As stated by Mello (2009), the relationship with culture does not happen only at school, however, it is the school institution that has as its primary function the intentional mediation focused on teaching, learning and development of man. Therefore, the role of the teacher is to plan what will be taught to their students, with intentionality, so that they appropriate the culture historically developed by the set of men, in a way that favors human emancipation.

Another aggravating factor is the lack of social interaction in the school environment with other children, teachers and other professionals in this place, because as already emphasized in this study, we need social relationships, contact with others to develop ourselves, to appropriate the cultural repertoire that is part of human history, through the systematized teaching that takes place in school and with the figure of the teacher.

At school, as announced by Mello (2009), it is the teacher who will intentionally mediate the appropriation of culture by the student, focused on teaching, learning and development, because, as the author assures, culture is "[...] a source of qualities created and developed

throughout history by men and women who preceded us and holds [...] the words, skills, [...] formed and developed in the process of creating the objects of culture" (MELLO, 2009, p. 365).

Thus, by appropriating the material heritage of humanity, an indispensable condition for its development and transformation process, man humanizes himself. This will consequently modify the quality of his psychism, considered in this context as a product that is historically and socially constituted (MARTINS, 2016).

Martins (2016) clarifies about the transformation of the human psyche, according to his studies on the works of Vygotsky, the role of the elementary psychic functions (EPF) and the higher psychic functions (HPF). The EPF refer to "[...] immediate responses to stimuli and express a fusional relation between subject and object. From them result the immediate reflex acts that, [...] do not differentiate [...] the human conduct from other animals" (MARTINS, 2016, p. 15). The HPF, on the other hand, do not result from biological and hereditary mechanisms, but from transformations that occur through human activity, by means of relations engendered in the physical and social environment.

Critical Historical Pedagogy asserts the relevance of promoting the formation of concepts in school education. Vygotsky called them true concepts and Saviani called them classical concepts (MARTINS, 2016). At school, this appropriation of the elaborated culture happens through the systematized teaching of scientific content, in the relationship between child/adult and child/children. For this to occur, it is extremely important that the selection of content and the organization of teaching occur in favor of learning and development of individuals.

It is worth highlighting, as Martins (2015) adds, that it is through culture that emotional attitudes, the affections, gain the character of feeling. He also emphasizes that feelings are specific to human beings and can be circumstantial or constant and prolonged, unlike emotions or affections. Thus, it is worth pointing out that within this context of discussion, thoughts, affections, and feelings are categories that must be analyzed as a whole, and not in a fragmented way. For, according to the author, based on Leontiev, it is this interconnection that brings out the "personal meaning" for man.

However, amidst so many changes, demands, decisions, agreements and disagreements, mistakes and successes, the school has been and still is walking together with the family, now with closer ties for the learning and development of the little ones, in search of minimizing the impacts that this pandemic state may cause in the schoolchildren, thus considering the essential integrality with regard to the physical, emotional, social aspects, which are essential for the humanization of these subjects.

Final considerations

Work is the fundamental category through which the social being is constituted, develops and humanizes himself, because in the essence of the category work there is the awakening of the social being's consciousness to plan, organize and produce results that have already been idealized in his thought. In the organization of capitalist society, however, the vital activity of work becomes a source of exploitation of the social being who, subservient to the imposed order, becomes an alienated being.

In the educational process we find the bases to think of ways to break with the capitalist logic of alienation of the human being, directing him to a perspective of humanization and emancipation. The teaching praxis presents itself as a safe and reliable compass to guide the social being on this path, especially in desolate times in history, such as the current global health crisis, whose immanent peculiarity is to disorient humanity in the face of a scenario of future uncertainties, a fact that has been seen so much in the daily life of families.

Indeed, the impacts caused by the pandemic due to the Sars-Cov 2 virus, generating the pandemic state of COVID-19, are evident and may be even greater until they are contained. From this point of view, the continuing education of teachers, as mentioned in this study, started gradually, taking into consideration the reality of each Brazilian region, state and municipality. In this way, each one acted based on the experiences during the pandemic period, in which sudden changes about the virus were present in Brazil and in the world.

We reiterate that in relation to the training of teachers of Early Childhood Education, courses and lectures and pedagogical practices are directed to the management of technological tools and the welcoming of children and families in this chaotic period. The use of technologies was and is one of the ways found to minimize the barriers that hinder communication between teachers and children, to have a certain "interaction", and are the target of discussions in the current educational scenario.

However, as it was possible to analyze through the anguishes and constant questions from parents and family members, despite the use of these resources and developments by teachers, management and pedagogical teams, with plans elaborated in a way that families have the condition to perform activities at home with their children (video classes, links, online classes, among other resources), remote teaching is not enough to solve the need for physical and social interaction that takes place inside the schools, which have a trained professional to teach the classes and contribute effectively to the teaching and learning process of the little ones.

We can see, therefore, the effects of the pandemic state in terms of child development and the role played by families in school activities. Such analyses demonstrate the importance of the joint work between school and family during this period of social distance, with classes taught by teachers remotely and activities performed by parents or adults responsible for the children at home.

For the integral and psychic development of the children in this and any context, pandemic or not, it is imperative that the teaching actions have the support of the State, society, and families, not only to include the invisible ones, but to emancipate and humanize, indistinctly, all those who are in the schooling process.

In the core of this issue, to minimize the cognitive, affective, psychological, and social damages brought about by the absence of the classroom, the junction of the educational work, via content selection and teaching organization, the quality of the teacher's training and action, and the strengthening of the bonds between the school and the family are consolidated as fundamental pillars for the teaching and learning of the little ones in their humanization process.

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