

THE USE OF WHATSAPP AS A COMMUNICATION SOURCE IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILY INTERACTION IN CHILD EDUCATION AT THE TIME OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A COMUNICAÇÃO VIA WHATSAPP NA INTERAÇÃO ESCOLA E FAMÍLIA NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL DURANTE A PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

LA COMUNICACIÓN VÍA WHATSAPP EN LA INTERACCIÓN ESCUELA Y FAMILIA EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DEL COVID-19



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ABSTRACT: The context of the pandemic has modified communicative processes in early childhood education. Starting from the experiences lived by the authors, this study aims to reflect on the adoption of WhatsApp as communication support between schools and families during the suspension of face-to-face classes and the resulting changes in practices. It is a qualitative analysis based on a documental investigation of state and municipal legislation followed by participant observation in two public schools in São Paulo and Diadema. The analysis of the results has as theoretical support the school culture, based on authors such as Dominique Julia and Faria Filho. Imprecision and disagreement between state and municipal legislation related to regulating communication between schools and families were recognized. Incorporating the WhatsApp application as a communication support from the suspension to the resumption of face-to-face classes led to greater agility and efficiency in exchanging messages and in the interaction between the cultures of the family and the school. In this immediate insertion of WhatsApp, there is a narrowing in the subjective processes of these social groups around the pedagogical practices carried out in promoting childhood culture.

KEYWORDS: Pandemic. Communication. Child education. WhatsApp. School culture.

RESUMO: A pandemia modificou os processos comunicativos na educação infantil. Partindo das experiências das autoras, este estudo objetiva refletir sobre a adoção do WhatsApp como suporte de comunicação entre escola e famílias durante a suspensão das aulas presenciais e as mudanças das práticas decorrentes. Trata-se de uma análise qualitativa com base em investigação documental da legislação estadual e municipal seguida da observação participante em duas escolas públicas. A análise dos resultados tem como aporte teórico a cultura escolar, fundamentada em autores como Dominique Julia e Faria Filho. A incorporação do aplicativo WhatsApp como suporte de comunicação desde a suspensão até o restabelecimento presencial das aulas ocasionou maior eficiência na troca de mensagens e na interação entre as culturas da família e da escola. Nesta imediata inserção do WhatsApp, destaca-se um estreitamento nos processos subjetivos desses grupos sociais em torno das práticas pedagógicas realizadas a serviço da promoção da cultura da infância.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pandemia. Comunicação. Educação infantil. WhatsApp. Cultura escolar.

RESUMEN: El contexto de la pandemia ha modificado los procesos comunicativos en la educación infantil. A partir de las experiencias vividas por las autoras, este estudio tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre la adopción de WhatsApp como soporte de comunicación entre la escuela y las familias durante la suspensión de las clases presenciales y los cambios de prácticas resultantes. Se trata de un análisis cualitativo basado en la investigación documental de la legislación estatal y municipal seguida de observación participante en dos escuelas públicas ubicadas en São Paulo y Diadema. El análisis de los resultados tiene como soporte teórico la cultura escolar, a partir de autores como Dominique Julia y Faria Filho. Se reconoció la imprecisión y discrepancia entre la legislación estatal y municipal relacionada con la regulación de la comunicación entre escuelas y familias. La incorporación de la aplicación WhatsApp como soporte de comunicación desde la suspensión hasta la reanudación de las clases presenciales propició una mayor agilidad y eficiencia en el intercambio de mensajes y en la interacción entre las culturas de la familia y la escuela. En esta inserción inmediata de WhatsApp, se produce un estrechamiento en los procesos subjetivos de estos grupos sociales en torno a las prácticas pedagógicas realizadas al servicio de la promoción de la cultura infantil.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pandemia. Comunicación. Educación infantil. WhatsApp. Cultura escolar.

Introduction

In early childhood education, notes via the school diary, phone calls, parent meetings and festivities constitute routine forms of interaction between the school and the families. Namely, the school diary plays a prominent role in this interaction. One of the factors that stabilizes its adoption is the specificity of the service aimed at young children, from zero to five years old, as well as because it is an expanded means within the reach of the family and the community.

However, in the emergency context of the Covid-19 pandemic, education systems needed to reorganize themselves in the legal provisions that regulate communication between the school and families. Due to the changes resulting from the pandemic, the school diary gave way to new communication tools, including the WhatsApp application, in the interaction between school and families to meet the demands related to student learning and development. In the case of the state of São Paulo, its Regional Boards of Education, on an emergency basis, began to elaborate decrees and normative acts subsidized from the general norms arising from the state system of the government for early childhood education.

Based on the experiences lived and practiced by the authors during the period of suspension of face-to-face classes due to the pandemic, this article aims to reflect on the adoption of WhatsApp as a support for communication between school and families in early childhood education, replacing the school diary and changes in school practices in the context of the health emergency.

The present study has as qualitative methods the documental investigation of the municipal and state legislation and the participant observation in two public schools of infantile education belonging respectively to the cities of São Paulo and Diadema. The description and analysis of the results has as a theoretical-methodological contribution the school culture, based on authors such as Julia (2001) and Faria Filho *et al.* (2004).

The articulation of the content of the legislation (decrees and guidelines issued by both the São Paulo State Department of Education and the Regional Directorates during the suspension of face-to-face activities) and the experiences lived by the authors in the adoption of WhatsApp in the presented discussion is justified by the existing relationship between norms and practices, as advocated by Julia (2001).

The first part of the article explains the theoretical-methodological approach, detailing the sources and procedures for collecting and organizing data, as well as the relevance of the notion of school culture in the analysis. Next, a brief survey of studies that discuss the impact

of the pandemic on education and the adoption of new technologies is presented. The mapping of educational legislation and the main guidelines that enabled the insertion of new technological tools during the pandemic are addressed in the third part. Finally, changes in practices observed with the insertion of WhatsApp are discussed. The conclusion brings some general considerations apprehended from this study, raising questions that remain open, related to the resumption of face-to-face classes.

Theoretical-methodological approach

The discussion expressed in this article arose from the authors' observation of the changes that occurred in the school routine, during the Covid-19 pandemic, in two public early childhood education schools, located in the state of São Paulo in which they operate, one in the city of São Paulo and the other in the municipality of Diadema.

The empirical experience to be reported from the descriptive approach of the procedures of each of the two institutions in facing the pandemic subsidizes the reflection and analysis of changes in school-family interaction practices portrayed in this article. Next, we present a brief description of actions taken within the scope of the observed early childhood education institutions, from which we will explain the theoretical-methodological approach.

The pedagogical schedule for the year 2020 started normally in schools. The necessary structure for the progress of the school year was already established. The months of February and March are characterized by being periods for children to adapt to the school routine in kindergarten, even for those who attended the same institution in the previous year.

With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in March, school management in the state of São Paulo saw itself as the only segment to work in person at school, interacting with families, through remote relationship channels (email, telephone, etc.) and at the back of the Regional Boards of Education and the Secretary of State for Education, aiming at updating students' records (SÃO PAULO, 2020a).

To meet the new demands, the communicative process underwent an inexorable reorganization. Only the administrative management remained working on the school premises for the restricted service linked to the pertinence of bureaucratic resolution of issues that necessarily should be face-to-face.

At the school in São Paulo, a teacher was assigned to help exchange pedagogical and bureaucratic information with families, exclusively through the WhatsApp application.

However, it is known that there were schools in the network where teachers maintained WhatsApp groups with the families of students in their classes and others who restricted communication solely through the digital study platform. In addition to the partnership with a TV channel to increase the opportunity to access classes, the establishment of communication with teachers and complementary digital content was made available to families through the free educational platform. General access instructions for teachers and students' families were made available on the website of the Department of Education portal. Teachers uploaded digital content to the virtual environment of the platform periodically, which could be accessed from computers or smartphones.

At the Diadema school in 2020, the model for organizing pedagogical interactions focused on the scope between school management and the teaching team through WhatsApp groups, which detailed guidelines on the training processes of teachers. In the following semester, with the implementation of regular online activities for families, instructions for carrying out these proposals were posted fortnightly by teachers on the education network website, while management was responsible for interacting with families through WhatsApp groups by segment or age group of children, to address both student registration updates and pedagogical issues. In 2021, the Municipal Secretariat institutionalized a more expanded communicative process between schools and the community. Each teacher, after taking over the class, formed WhatsApp groups with the children's families to carry out the proposals, accompanied by the school management team in order to validate the institutionalization of teaching procedures.

As the mandatory return in person in early childhood education (BRASIL, 2020) was at the discretion of the city halls, the year 2021 began with a gradual return in April in São Paulo, with a third of the students in each classroom. In the month of July, the return was characterized by the weekly rotation between two groups of one third of students per room. The partial return of 50% of students occurred in October 2021. Attendance of 100% on-site and full-time took place at the beginning of the 2022 school year.

In Diadema, early childhood education started 2021 with a face-to-face and gradual return in August 2021, under an intercalation regime of one third of the children remaining in the two-hour period on non-sequenced days throughout the week. In September, 50% of students in each class attended in the morning and 50% in the afternoon. The total frequency and face-to-face period in the municipality occurred in the 2nd school month of classes - March 2022.

It is observed that even with the end of remote activities, the use of WhatsApp groups remained together with the use of school diaries to support communication between schools and families.

The time frame on which the discussion in this article focuses covers the beginning of the suspension of classes, that is, March 2020, the year 2021, which configured a portion of hybrid teaching, until March 2022, with the return of face-to-face all the students.

At first, a review of the literature related to the challenges and developments during these two years of the pandemic was carried out on communication procedures between schools and families, specifically in early childhood education and elementary school. With the documentary survey of the legislation that regulated the communication between the school and the family and with the observations of the authors during the period of remote teaching, we analyzed the developments from the school culture (JULIA, 2001; FARIA *et al.*, 2004).

For Faria Filho *et al.* (2004), something that greatly instigates the study of school cultures is the fact that it is articulated with other categories of recognized analytical potential, including the adoption of discursive tools for a better intelligibility of the studies. These categories that establish the school's culture, whether of gender, class, race, ethnicity, among others, methodologically operationalize the investigation of actions of school subjects that produce this culture.

According to the same authors, the notion of school culture in Brazil is the category that seeks to question the schooling of society at a given time, as well as the various intervening factors:

[...] the limits and possibilities and, finally, the social, cultural, political and economic constraints set in motion, or imposed, above all on subordinate groups, by the generalization of a school culture and, therefore, of writing in Brazilian society (FARIA FILHO *et al.*, 2004, p. 153, our translation).

In the investigative context of school practices that envisage interdisciplinarity in methodological directions, anthropology (JULIA, 2001; FARIA FILHO *et al.*, 2004) is one of the areas that instrumentalizes the approximation with evidence of human culture in the school field.

At each period in the history of education, it is up to the precise analysis of the conflicting or peaceful relations of the cultures that are contemporary to it (JULIA, 2001); in

this sense, the thematic approach to school culture in the pandemic period is inseparable from the digital cultural approach.

Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and the use of new digital technologies

It was found that with the growing number of publications on the impacts of the pandemic on education, new technologies were one of the most discussed topics. Therefore, it is worth highlighting discussions that refer to the implications of the diversity that makes up the Brazilian school public. The inequalities deepened by the pandemic show that even rich countries like the United States and France had students out of reach of school (FRANCO *et al.*, 2020).

One of the concerns arising from these impacts is that the 'virtual school' will eliminate the physical school and that technologies will replace pedagogy (NÓVOA; ALVIM, 2021). According to the same authors, there are sectors that defend distance education through homeschooling and others that believe that teaching at home does not replace the function of the school, but complements it. Western Europe, long before the shutdown, already had experience using the internet.

In Brazil, specifically in the state of São Paulo, families and schools needed to deal with the lack of socioeconomic resources. In the first three months approximately, the schools were guided by the Municipal Departments of Education in the procedure for distributing basic food baskets and later the families received value cards that would subsidize the basic food of the most vulnerable students in this regard (BRASIL, 2020).

The lack of media resources and internet access in schools and in family environments is also one of the main obstacles in Basic Education (FRANCO *et al.*, 2020; BORGES *et al.*, 2021; ANJOS; FRANCISCO, 2021).

The public communication system has insufficient conditions to serve the entire population. In the year 2020, Franco *et al.* (2020) published the execution of a strategy that aimed to multiply the interventions developed for Media Literacy of teachers in three schools in the Federal District, through debates and training on the use of information and communication technologies and the mobilization of contents. The researchers found that these training workshops contributed to the conceptual understanding of the professors and point to the need to maintain activities continuously between managers, professors and students, not only in conceptual notions but also in the field of ethics related to these uses.

However, the most latent problems of the crisis are still quality internet access and the lack of electronic equipment (FRANCO *et al.*, 2020; BORGES *et al.*, 2021), given that teaching and learning in the crisis depended exclusively on the use of these digital resources, both by families and schools.

With regard to the digital ecosystem, the influence of algorithms requires attention due to research in the school environment, given that students are exposed to all types of content, requiring, for this, the construction and strengthening of digital school communication strategies (FRANCO *et al.*, 2020).

The modality of distance education provided for in emergency cases by the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) (PEREIRA; NARDUCHI; MIRANDA, 2020; BORGES *et al.*, 2021) came up against the lack of guidelines and directives in the political-administrative sphere in the country.

In the analysis of how the implementation of remote teaching for students targeting special education (APAEE) (44% of the total number of students in the schools surveyed) and interaction with parents, the use of the WhatsApp application represented 93% in communication between families and schools during social isolation. Regardless of the approach to reasons given by teachers and families, both suggest a more refined dialogue directed to pedagogical guidelines in order to consolidate communication (BORGES *et al.*, 2021).

The research by Franco *et al.* (2020) describes initiatives designed and implemented by public school teachers and managers to maintain communication with their school community. One of them was the adoption of holistic content, such as mental and physical health in the challenge of strengthening the student's sense of belonging in the school community.

Lectures, conversation circles, short courses in the face of these gaps, as well as partnerships in claim processes with government authorities are cited as alternatives in interacting with families, given that the lack of digital tools is one of the factors that most influence the communicative failure between the institution and families (BORGES *et al.*, 2021).

In Mexico City, research with an anthropological approach to teaching work and the concept of citizenship (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021) investigated the formation of WhatsApp groups between school management and teachers in two institutions (one of which

is privately operated and the other public). We tried to find out if there was any movement to replace old school hierarchies.

The authors highlight from these new conditions of participation a process of horizontalization of discourses and mobilization of positions in the coexistence of hierarchies:

Greater autonomy, but also greater risk of fragmentation and endogamy, greater risk of homogenization or standardization due to the growing presence of very powerful cultural industries, more possibilities for citizen control 'from below', with the possibility of horizontally producing and disseminating messages and decentralized; more informality and carnival participation, with weaker messages and less capacity for political articulation (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021, p. 4, our translation).

The effects of digitization on civic habits and their tensions and contradictions demonstrate that although these new leaders emerged, there was no effective political-pedagogical debate or articulation, revealing a citizenship with limited or insufficient characteristics (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021).

For Franco *et al.* (2020, p. 53, our translation), even broadcasting programs “do not dispense with interpersonal communication between student and teacher, the basic principle of education and communication: speech and writing.”

Currently, with the WhatsApp application widespread among the population, it, which had already been gradually being propagated within the scope of the school, in the pandemic tended to become established. The school diary represented an essential tool and becomes secondary or even in disuse in supporting communication between management and families in early childhood education. Being, therefore, the most used communication instrument in early childhood education, it marks the starting point of this reflection.

The object represents (or represented) a carrier of information typical of the daily life of early childhood education, exclusively because the stage requires a specific communicative process that is divided between caring and educating, a symbiosis inherent in the education of young children. It mobilized punctualities about the student, various information pertinent to the child's school and home life, thus meeting the individual contact between the school and the families. However, another communication support should be instituted on an emergency basis with the arrival of the health crisis.

WhatsApp started to perform the current mediating function of communication between the school and the families. The application is inserted as a multiplier resource of communicative segmentations between the different cultural groups of the school.

From the new communicative process of the school resulting from Covid-19, the phenomenon of historical segregation between school and family is evident (NÓVOA; ALVIM, 2021).

The legislative basis in the communication between school management and families

During the emergency situation, the Regional Boards of Education approved various decrees to adjust the adoption of health protocols in schools (SÃO PAULO, 2022b). In this way, an attempt was made to describe the trajectory of these regulations, following the constant changes and amendments resulting from the monitoring of the greatest moment of the health crisis, which corresponds to the period between March 2020 and March 2022, when the 100% attendance return in early childhood education occurs in the observed schools.

In the state of São Paulo, with the advance of the pandemic in early 2020, the suspension of face-to-face activities gradually occurred in March, so that there was time for families to organize themselves as to where their children would stay during the adult workday. One of the only confirmed information about the virus was its high degree of contamination and mortality.

The government followed guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) and, together with the State Department of Health, prepared guidelines adjusted to public policies to combat the virus, which provided for the adoption of temporary and emergency measures to prevent contagion by COVID-19 and adoption gradual suspension of Basic Education and Higher Education classes in the period between March 16 and 23 (Decree No. 64.862, of March 13, 2020) (SÃO PAULO, 2020c).

In order to guide decision-making, the State Council of Education of São Paulo published Deliberation CEE 177/2020 in the official state gazette (DOSP), dealing with the rules for the reorganization of school calendars in São Paulo. In this document, actions were foreseen for early childhood education, having as one of the premises “to use, for the programming of mandatory school activities, all available resources, from printed guidelines with texts, directed study and evaluations sent to students/family, as well as other means different remotes” (SÃO PAULO, 2020d).

Faced with the specificities of the development of babies and children in kindergarten, the document emphasizes the use of a possible period of activities and meetings between professionals and families/guardians, emphasizing the care for babies and children, with

experiences that guarantee the rights to learning and development provided for in the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (SÃO PAULO, 2020d).

The City Hall of São Paulo, through Normative Instruction/SME nº. 13, of 03/19/2020, established the anticipation of the July school recess to March 23 to April 9 of that year (SÃO PAULO, 2020e). In the city, a few units or service centers were established for children from 0 to 3 years old, whose parents were summoned to act in the fight against Covid-19, especially in the areas of health, safety, social assistance and funeral service, in five addresses located in different regions of São Paulo.

Following state guidelines, on 03/20/2022, the same city hall also published Decree no. 59.283/20 (SÃO PAULO, 2022a). Article 16 establishes to the Municipal Secretary of Education that:

- I - Train teachers to act as students' advisors regarding the precautions to be taken in order to prevent the disease;
- II - Carry out an orientation task force for guardians and students;
- III - Seek alternatives for providing food to students;
- IV - Promote the gradual interruption of classes in the public education network, with guidance from parents and students about COVID-19 and preventive measures;
- V - Advise schools in the private education network to adopt the same procedure established in the previous item;
- VI - Adopt measures aimed at implementing distance learning (SÃO PAULO, 2020b, our translation).

In Diadema, through Ordinance no. 3, of April 6, 2020, the Municipal Secretary of Education, together with its school units, determined the recess for the fortnight corresponding to the period from April 8 to 23, 2020. Sanitary protocols and subjective conditions of families were prioritized, and the strategy adopted by the municipality of Diadema, through the Normative Act of 06/22/2021, was to try to establish “permanent dialogue between schools and students’ families and an active search for those whose dialogue was not possible by telephone”, in order to “to provide moments of listening, strengthen ties and encourage activities that go beyond technologies” (NERI, 2021).

For the document, the use of digital communication channels becomes an official resource for interaction between school team members, provided that it is institutionalized, through the mediation of managers, for guidance, organization, planning and execution of related tasks to the needs and purposes of Education (DIADEMA, 2020).

Communication via the WhatsApp application had its institutional validity established through the participation of school management in interaction groups between teachers and families:

In the WhatsApp groups of each School Unit, the proposals will be made available to families. It is up to the teacher to maintain contact/actively participate in this group to detail and support the experience of the proposals (NERI, 2021, our translation).

At the same time, it was directed to the management teams of each institution that maintained during the hybrid return “the scale of students per class in a visible place in the external area of the school and in the WhatsApp parent groups” (DIADEMA, 2012, our translation).

The premise adopted in the state of São Paulo for normative regulation took place in a generic way regarding the type of communicative resource to be adopted by schools. The proposition is also indeterminate and maintains the same cessation inherent to the State Law in the Decree of the city of São Paulo by the Boards of Education, when referring to the adoption of measures for the “operationalization of distance learning” (Paragraph VI, article 16 of the Decree No. 59.283).

The communicative process between school management and families via WhatsApp

In the two institutions surveyed, the use of WhatsApp was mediated by different school actors. In the capital, a teacher was assigned to conduct both bureaucratic and pedagogical interaction between schools and families. In the municipality of Diadema, the management trio (principal, vice-principal and pedagogical coordinator) mediated communication between groups of families to deal with all matters pertaining to the children's school life.

The analysis is contextualized in the initial period of remote activities, when one of the procedures was the distribution of food baskets to schools for the most vulnerable families in March 2020. It continues in 2021 with the implementation of the hybrid learning model and the observation ends with the full face-to-face return at the beginning of 2022.

The aspects that occurred most frequently in the communicative management with families were: dissent regarding conventional times for sending messages by families; expansion in obtaining a participatory voice by families; agility of access to the

communication by the interlocutor; the school diary did not fall into disuse with the resumption of face-to-face classes.

At the beginning of the separation, one of the first resolutions to be discussed between the family and the school was the organization of the provision of food products at the institution:

Dear Families,
Please fill out this form and send it by 05/18/2020 so that we can inform you of the number of food kits that the school must request from the Department of Education.
Note: Each student will be entitled to 1 kit, so if the family has 2 children in the day care center, they will receive 2 kits.
[access link omitted]
(Transcribed message from the diary)

The “horizontalization” (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021, p. 3) of information shared between groups presents problems such as time extrapolation and the search for resolution of doubts separately from the group's collectivity. Parents and/or guardians of the children often look for answers as soon as their demands appear, at the same time that the school is an institution that has necessarily disciplined timetables. For Borges *et al.* (2021), it is also necessary to consider the high number of messages that teachers receive from family members, which may impair the management of periods set aside to interact with families or the quality of information exchange. According to Franco *et al.* (2021), the use of the WhatsApp application still causes controversy among teachers due to factors such as the type of content that students could post, as well as the wide availability of their personal contact.

According to Julia (2001, p. 11, our translation):

By school culture, it is also convenient to understand, when this is possible, children's cultures (in the anthropological sense of the term), which develop in playgrounds and the distance they present in relation to family cultures.

The incorporation of WhatsApp in place of the diary suggests an instrument for reflection as an increase in the scope of children's culture, not in the distance, but in the daily life of their family experiences. The resources for video calls, filming, and audio transmission allow the expansion of different original perspectives even in the intimate family environment.

The issues of social inequality (FRANCO *et al.*, 2020; BORGES *et al.*, 2021; ANJOS; FRANCISCO, 2021) are ideologically evident in the aforementioned note, demonstrating that

the school, when sending the electronic form, started from the assumption that at least one family member has a basic command of digital culture.

The exercise of citizenship (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021, p. 1) and ethics are punctual elements among the discussions inherent to the use of online groups in school contexts. The agility and range with which information is exchanged via the application are incomparable to the use of the diary. However, if, on the one hand, state legislation has standardized communication between the school and families, on the other hand, the incorporation of the application is directed only in the guideline of the municipality of Diadema. However, in both schools it appears that the management goes through vulnerable moments regarding the organization and establishment of communication through the application to serve families and teachers through remote activities, both in Diadema due to the prevalence of lack of resources and the lack of specificity of guideline regulating the use of the application in the capital São Paulo.

Obtaining a voice now by families is equal from the hierarchical point of view in the groups, which starts to demand greater handling of the functioning of school management, given that, given the abrupt change in the communicative process, no one was instructed or educated for the new situation.

With the adoption of WhatsApp to replace the diary, information is shared more efficiently in the daily life of the groups, such as a scheduled school day when there is no online service by teachers to families.

With the use of the school diary, there was a need for relatively early planning by the school, anticipating situations in which information could be lost until it reached the families, such as cases where the diary is not checked by the person in charge on that particular school day.

The following message illustrates a situation in which the family members knew in advance that on the following day they would not be able to count on communication for various pertinent clarifications:

Announcement

Pedagogical stop

Tomorrow, 10/01/2020, there will be no remote assistance, as teachers will be in training.

(Transcribed Message from the diary)

In contrast to the effect of the school diary, which made up a vertical form of communication, bureaucratic matters are now resolved in a broad and collective way, as

shown by the fragment of interaction carried out on 08/16/2021, in the WhatsApp group, contextualizing information about the hybrid return to school:

Group - Maternal Families 2021

Family 1(10:33 am): “Good morning, I would like to know the day and time that Gustavo from Maternal B is going to study”

Principal (10:45h): “Good morning, Eliene! Call me privately, please”

Principal (10:46h): “Let's put here in the group, the table with the day and time of each child”

Family 2 (11:27h): “I would like to know Gabriel to go to daycare”

Family 3 (11:58 am): “This is Angela, Luana's mother, I can go to school tomorrow because I don't have my cell phone and the declaration file to print and send by email as the director asked me, I don't know if I'll be able to do it yet today”

Principal (13:04h): “Good afternoon, Angela, you can go, tomorrow the school will be open until 16h”.

The audiovisual resource in the use of the WhatsApp application diversifies the groups socially: there were cases of illiterate members in the students' families. Hierarchies begin to coexist (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021) due to the presence of interlocutors with greater leadership characteristics in the family institution of/in the groups in relation to matters related to children's schooling.

With regard to the year 2022, characterized by 100% on-site attendance by students:

Announcement

Good morning, Families!

The trip with our students to the “food fair” had to be transferred to the next week, on Thursday, May 12th, due to the forecast of rain and cold weather.

(Transcribed Message from the diary)

The school diary did not fall into disuse and the communication inherent to this proposed activity for children outside the school environment was organized both by the diary and by the application. The printed note remained on the diary for the family responsible to authorize (or not) via physical signature and send it back to the school.

As the date was changed just one day before the event, due to the weather forecast, the option for a new date was made by the management via the WhatsApp application, which demonstrates greater agility in the aspects of organizing differentiated pedagogical proposals in the school. The printed note signed by the families was in the possession of the school management, with no need to resend it for new authorization via the diary.

With the “horizontalization” (DUSSEL; CARDONA, 2021) of the process, the communicated content circulates between the Municipal Secretariat, school management and

families. The communicative flow is no longer fractioned and demands reconfigurations ordered in an objective and generic way so that it is supposedly adjusted to each of the realities and exactly dialogical to any of them.

In the abrupt transition between the abandonment (or secondary use) of the school diary and the incorporation of WhatsApp, the implications previously defined in the communicative relationship of school management with each cultural reality – families, teachers and the Municipal Secretariat – suffer mutations, since the communication becomes part of the totalizing space of the school, which, although not being physical, becomes collective at the same time.

At this point, we perceive proximity with the culture circle (FREIRE, 2020), which conceives the same anthropological property of this totalizing space: the unilateral can be discussed again, the commitment endorsed and the level of interaction deepened.

Freirean method is determined by a policy, given that participants gain distance to see their immediately present experience. These lived situations are dialogically objectified in the rethinking of the historical process of culture and, also, of literate culture (FREIRE, 2020). Both in WhatsApp groups and in culture circles, there cannot be copying of words, but expression of judgments. In this movement, there is the intersubjectivation of consciences – more subjective density gains the subject in these simultaneously collective cultural realities, which have literate culture as an epiphenomenon, which “updating its virtual reflection, finds in the written word a firmer and more defined way of saying if, that is, to exist in historical praxis”. In this sense, “literate culture makes culture aware” (FREIRE, 2020, p. 25-27, our translation).

Dussel and Cardona (2021) observe the coexistence of hierarchies inherent to the horizontalization of discourses. For Freire (2020), there is a horizontality between these narratives, where hierarchies dissolve. The same etymological radical refers to a democratic sense corresponding to the hierarchical destabilization in the statement.

From the perspective of school culture, the investigation of the communicative processes in the use of WhatsApp in the pandemic context shows that the “discursive tools” (FARIA FILHO *et al.*, 2004, p. 152) evoke the factors that sustain the continuity of officially unacceptable situations for ethical and political representation.

Final remarks

Imprecision and disagreement between state and municipal legislation related to the regulation of communication between schools and families was recognized. However, it was possible to observe that the incorporation of the WhatsApp application as a communication support from the suspension to the resumption of face-to-face classes led to greater agility and efficiency in the exchange of messages and in the interaction between the cultures of the family and the school, contrary to what happened just using the school diary. With the insertion of WhatsApp, there is a narrowing of the subjective processes of these social groups around the pedagogical practices carried out in the service of promoting childhood culture.

It is important to highlight that both the guidelines contained in the analyzed legislation and the uses given to WhatsApp in the context of early childhood education reinforce the school culture as a set of norms and practices, as defended by Julia (2001), and that practices can translate in different ways or even ignore/subvert the norms.

With the resumption of face-to-face classes and the apparent permanence/coexistence of WhatsApp with the school diary, new questions arise. For example: How will communication practices between schools and families be designed after the pandemic? Is there a hybridization process to accommodate in early childhood education? What will the school education of young children be like when the birth rate forecast is the lowest in contemporary times? Behind these and many other questions, “contacts via WhatsApp were essential for listening, which is so necessary for emotional acceptance, restoring self-esteem, encouraging the desire to learn and strengthening hope” (NERI, 2021, p. 164, our translation).

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