

ALPHABETIZATION AND (POST-) PANDEMIC: INTERCURRENCES IN THE  
PROCESS OF CONSTITUTING READERS AND WRITERS

*ALFABETIZAÇÃO E (PÓS-)PANDEMIA: INTERCORRÊNCIAS NO PROCESSO DE  
CONSTITUIÇÃO DE LEITORES E ESCRITORES*

*ALFABETIZACIÓN Y (POST)PANDEMIA: COMPLICACIONES EN EL PROCESO DE  
CONSTITUCIÓN DE LECTORES Y ESCRITORES*



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**ABSTRACT:** The present article is the result of a research with the following problem: to what extent the learning of students in the process of alphabetization and literacy was compromised by the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the formation of writers and readers? The research aimed to analyze this process, during 2020, 2021 and 2022, in public schools in two municipalities in Minas Gerais, Brazil, and the implications for the children's formation process. To achieve the proposed objective, an investigation was carried out in six public schools using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments. The analyzes showed that literacy was compromised with the Remote Emergency Education, by impairing reading and writing skills and the constitution of readers and writers, with regard to the absence of face-to-face interaction and pedagogical mediations that consider the learning contexts and subjectivity of child.

**KEYWORDS:** Alphabetization. Literacy. Pandemic. Reading. Writing.

**RESUMO:** *O presente artigo resulta de uma pesquisa com a seguinte problemática: em que medida a aprendizagem dos estudantes em processo de alfabetização e letramento foi comprometida pela pandemia da Coronavirus Disease (Doença do Novo Coronavírus – COVID-19) na formação de escritores e leitores? A pesquisa objetivou analisar o referido processo, durante 2020, 2021 e 2022, em escolas públicas de dois municípios mineiros, e as implicações para o processo formativo das crianças. Para a consecução do objetivo proposto foi realizada uma investigação em seis escolas públicas por meio de questionários e entrevistas semiestruturadas como instrumentos de coleta de dados. As análises evidenciaram que a alfabetização ficou comprometida com o Ensino Remoto Emergencial, ao prejudicar as habilidades de leitura e escrita e a constituição de leitores e escritores, no que diz respeito à ausência da interação presencial e das mediações pedagógicas que consideram os contextos de aprendizagem e a subjetividade da criança.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Alfabetização. Letramento. Pandemia. Leitura. Escrita.

**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo es el resultado de una investigación con la siguiente problemática: ¿hasta qué punto el aprendizaje de los estudiantes en el proceso de alfabetización y literacidad fue comprometido por la pandemia, por la enfermedad del Coronavirus Disease (Nueva enfermedad por coronavirus – COVID-19) en la formación de escritores y lectores? La investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar este proceso, durante 2020, 2021 y 2022, en las escuelas públicas de dos municipios de Minas Gerais, Brasil, y las implicaciones para el proceso formativo de los niños. Para lograr el objetivo propuesto, se realizó una investigación en seis escuelas públicas por medio de cuestionarios y entrevistas semiestructuradas como instrumentos de recolección de datos. Los análisis mostraron que la alfabetización se vio comprometida con la Enseñanza Remota de Emergencia, al perjudicar las habilidades de lectura y escritura y la constitución de lectores y escritores, con respecto a la ausencia de la interacción presencial y de las mediaciones pedagógicas que consideren los contextos de aprendizaje y la subjetividad del niño.*

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Alfabetización. Literacidad. Pandemia. Lectura. Escritura.

## Introduction

The last three years (2020, 2021 and 2022) were marked by the *Coronavirus Disease* (COVID-19) pandemic, which triggered numerous challenges in all social spheres. This scenario was introduced in March 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) began to issue guidelines to contain the spread of the disease, including social isolation, considering that crowding was the main factor in the spread of the disease.

In order to follow these guidelines and adopt preventive actions, activities were suspended in institutions whose work is carried out in person and collectively, including schools. In this context, social isolation measures imposed the closure of educational establishments, which brought new reconfigurations to the teaching and learning process of students, which began to be organized with non-face-to-face pedagogical activities and through Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE)<sup>5</sup>.

The ERE presented itself as the initial “solution” adopted in all entities of the federation for the continuity of studies and due to the closure of schools, by assuming different denominations and being characterized by the use of online, television and printed devices *and* resources. In that context, school professionals faced a process of reconfiguration of school activities and pedagogical practice, in order to adapt to the ERE.

Studies on the ERE indicated that the teachers' homes were converted into classrooms, with the fusion between the work environment and the home environment, which led to an extension of the teaching workday, when we consider the requirement for greater availability of time, that extrapolated working hours and permeated the weekends (GESTRADO, 2020; COSTA, 2020). In addition, from the student's perspective, the ERE imposed obstacles such as the diagnosis and planning of activities, as well as the impossibility of pedagogical mediations and affectivity, a fundamental aspect in the teaching-learning process. This teaching modality demonstrated that the “transfer of teaching-learning processes to the home sphere brought many challenges to the children's families”, especially in relation to the interconnected processes in languages and literacies that demand specific knowledge and mediation proposals (DIAS; SMOLKA, 2021).

Regarding remote teaching and literacy, the focus of this article, the Brazilian Association of Literacy (ABALF, 2020) published a position note to emphasize that literacy

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<sup>5</sup> With the pandemic, schools were forced to migrate to other educational forms, with an emphasis on internet-mediated teaching called *Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE)*.

consists of a step that requires specific pedagogical guidelines, to guarantee a meaningful learning of reading and writing beyond the simple technical action of (de)coding of letters. In this sense, the constitution of readers and writers through a literacy and literacy process became committed to the implementation of the ERE.

Therefore, this article is justified by the importance of critical studies about the losses arising from the ERE, in relation to the literacy and literacy process in the context after the pandemic. It results from research with the following problem: to what extent was student learning in the literacy and literacy process compromised by the Coronavirus Disease pandemic (Disease of the New Coronavirus - COVID-19), in the constitution of writers and readers?

As a general objective, the research aimed to analyze the literacy and literacy process during the pandemic in public schools in Ituiutaba and Uberlândia, municipalities located in Triângulo Mineiro, in Minas Gerais, and the implications for the formation of writers and readers in the early years of Teaching Fundamental, as it is part of the actions developed in the Pedagogy/Literacy Subproject of the Pedagogical Residency Program (PRP), of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).

The PRP is part of the set of actions of the National Teacher Training Policy that aims to contribute to initial training in teaching degrees by immersing the student in the Basic Education school, starting in the second half of the course. Specifically at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), the PRP is made up of subprojects that correspond to centers organized by areas of knowledge, in particular the Pedagogy Subproject, Literacy core, in which we accompany classes in the 1st and 2nd years (initial years) of Teaching Fundamental from 2020 to 2022, research *locus*.

It should be noted that the Pedagogy/Literacy Subproject took place jointly between Ituiutaba/MG and Uberlândia/MG. This initiative came to fruition as a result of UFU's activities in these municipalities, with undergraduate courses in Pedagogy at both campuses (Pontal and Santa Mônica), in face-to-face mode, with classes offered in the periods.

## Methodological procedures

In order to achieve the proposed objective, we carried out a survey in six public schools – three in Ituiutaba/MG and three in Uberlândia/MG –, participants of the Pedagogy/Literacy Subproject of the PRP. The paths followed in the study were of an explanatory nature and with a qualitative and quantitative approach, with the purpose of analyzing the perception of teachers and family members about the ERE offer in the early years of Elementary Education, in the case of six public schools that are part of Subproject Pedagogy/Literacy at UFU – *Campi do Pontal and Santa Mônica* –, from 2020 to 2022. The study involved the participation of six teachers with the following profile:

**Table 1 - Research participants**

	Participants	Time In Office	Training	Workday
Ituiutaba-MG	Teacher A	8 Years	Higher Education With A Degree And A <i>Lato Sensu Postgraduate Degree</i>	2 Professional positions
	Teacher B	17 Years	Higher Education With A Degree And A <i>Lato Sensu Postgraduate Degree</i>	1 Professional position
	Teacher C	7 Years	Higher Education With A Degree And A <i>Lato Sensu Postgraduate Degree</i>	1 Professional position
Uberlândia-MG	Teacher D	20 Years	Higher Education With A Degree	2 Professional positions
	Teacher E	15 Years	Higher Education With <i>Stricto Sensu Postgraduate Degree - Master's Degree</i>	2 Professional positions
	Teacher F	12 Years	Higher Education With A Degree And A <i>Lato Sensu Postgraduate Degree</i>	2 Professional positions

Source: Research documents (2020/2022)

The data come from research carried out by the UFU teaching team and teachers from Basic Education schools, together with PRP academics, carried out from 2020 to 2022 in the project called “Remote teaching and vulnerability in public schools: evidenced impacts of the pandemic”, approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the aforementioned federal institution.

The research was carried out using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from the *Google Meet* application, which correspond to the data collection instruments. The clipping made for the publication of this article analyzes the perception of teachers about the constitution of readers and writers in 2020, 2021 and 2022, as well as social inequalities in remote teaching,

in line with the axes of adherence to the ERE and the complications caused by the pandemic in the constitution of readers and writers, with the respective challenges after the pandemic.

### **The constitution of readers and writers and (post-)pandemic: social inequalities in remote teaching**

The analyzes carried out in this article are based on the assumption that literacy and literacy involve a complex process, in which face-to-face pedagogical mediation is essential. This conception is supported by Soares (2004, p. 16), for whom there is “the importance of literacy development in a literacy context”, that is, through the “development of reading and writing skills in social practices”. In this sense, we understand that “both literacy and literacy have different dimensions, or facets, [and] the nature of each of them demands a different methodology”, which corroborates the fact that “the initial learning of the written language requires multiple methodologies, some characterized by direct, explicit and systematic teaching” (*idem*).

In fact, it is necessary to insert different types of texts in children's educational practices, for them to appropriate the reading of the world. In this context, the work carried out by the pedagogical teams must be based on the proposal to teach literacy through literacy in the teaching-learning process, with a code associated with the social practices of using writing: “Literacy and literacy are two distinct actions, but not inseparable, on the contrary : the ideal would be to teach literacy, that is, to teach reading and writing in the context of the social practices of reading and writing” (SOARES, 2017, p. 47, our translation). In line with this conception, it becomes relevant to rethink pedagogical activities, in order to “teach children written language, and not just the writing of letters” (VYGOTSKY, 1998, p. 157, our translation), since knowledge originates in social relations, marked by the historicity and culture experienced by individuals.

However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching-learning process, in particular with regard to literacy and literacy, underwent new challenges with the ERE and the suspension of face-to-face activities in Basic Education. In this scenario, the National Council of Education (CNE) issued a note with the purpose of guiding education systems in the reorganization of their pedagogical activities.

Although Law no. 9.394 (BRASIL, 1996) determines that this teaching modality occurs in specific periods in the stages of Basic Education, the Opinion of the CNE/Conselho Pleno

(CP) n. 5, of April 28, 2020, established the reorganization of the school calendar and the possibility of calculating non-contact activities in order to comply with the minimum annual workload due to the pandemic context (BRASIL, 2020).

With the urgency of adapting educational networks to educational services in the pandemic context, there was, in the public sphere of education, the abrupt implementation of the restructuring of pedagogical work, which encompassed significant implications for teaching work and pedagogical practice, as well as affecting, among several pedagogical aspects, the literacy stage and the constitution of student readers and writers in the early years of Elementary School. In view of this, Costa (2020) emphasizes that remote teaching was implemented in locations where there were no conditions for access to the necessary technologies by teachers and students, as several families did not have the financial conditions to provide what was necessary for access to the ERE.

Furthermore, the lack of preparation of teachers, students and families made this period even more challenging, and what seemed to be something temporary and an improvisation *a priori* stretched out indefinitely. In this light, schools needed to formulate alternative solutions, such as the delivery of printed material and face-to-face assistance to families at alternate times, to guarantee the continuity of teaching.

Studies elucidate that the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on education are undeniable, with unpredictability of the losses in the schooling of Basic Education (GESTRADO, 2020; MAINARDES, 2021; QUEIROZ; SOUSA; PAULA, 2021; KOSLINSKI; BARTHOLO, 2021; MACEDO, 2022). According to these investigations, students in the early years of Basic Education have difficulties with relationships, reading, writing, among others. In this sense, the acquisition of oral and written language, the focus of this article, suffered a significant impact that compromised children's learning and demanded the planning of strategies to reverse the losses after the pandemic.

A survey published in 2022<sup>6</sup> confirmed the challenges faced by the school and families in the literacy process of children in the early years of Elementary School. The interaction between literacy teachers and students was marked by the lack of face-to-face contact, in which the teachers stopped interacting directly with the students and began to interact indirectly with the families, centered mainly on the figure of the mother, who assumes more effectively

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<sup>6</sup> The investigation carried out by the collective “Alfabetização em rede”, made up of 29 universities and 117 researchers, had the participation of 14,735 teachers from 18 Brazilian states, with the objective of investigating literacy in the Covid-19 pandemic, understanding teaching practices in the ERE and verify the conditions in which such practices were developed (MACEDO, 2022).

responsibility for the child's learning. With the loss of direct contact, the teachers carry out a completely asynchronous interaction with the students, that is, secondary, and mediated by the family, since children from six to eight years old do not have the autonomy to operate digital tools. Correia *et al.* (2022, p. 322, our translation) point out that teaching relationships in the ERE, more specifically “in the literacy process through WhatsApp groups, are very impaired, since the child's interaction with the teacher needs to be mediated by another adult [...] who assumes the role of one who teaches”.

In the meantime, the letter from ABAlf, entitled “ Welcoming and challenges facing the return to face-to-face classes”, released on March 4, 2022, brings the following considerations on the impacts of the pandemic on literacy:

With the reality of the last two years and the weaknesses of remote teaching, it was predicted that there would be incalculable losses for Brazilian education. In view of this, although we are aware of the limitations of large-scale assessments, by leaving aside important aspects of the portrayed reality, it must be considered that UNESCO predicted, in April 2021, that “Brazil would run the risk of regressing two decades in education” (UNESCO, 2021), “in the face of the ineffectiveness of remote teaching, increasing Learning poverty” (UNESCO, 2022) and the IBGE confirmed this, pointing out that it grew, by 66.3% from 2019 to 2021, the percentage of children aged 6 and 7 who cannot read or write (ABALF, 2022, p. 1, our translation).

We note, therefore, the educational abyss caused by the health crisis, in which children, at the end of the second year, should have mastered reading and writing, which did not actually happen. In view of this, we highlight the need to think about the return of face-to-face teaching after the pandemic, in the sense of proposing short, medium and long-term policies and actions, based on a diagnosis of this reality and proposals for intervention in literacy.

The data and analyzes presented below, originating from the research carried out within the scope of the Pedagogy/Literacy Subproject, cover elements that can contribute to the diagnosis of the reality of public schools in the municipalities of Ituiutaba/MG and Uberlândia/MG.



## Adherence to the ERE by students, from the teaching perspective

The State Secretariat for Education of Minas Gerais (SEE/MG) institutionalized the Special Regime for Non-Present Activities (REANP/MG) for Basic Education on April 17, 2020, through Resolution n. 4,310. The REANP presented guidelines for school activities to be carried out essentially by digital means, with emphasis on the fact of maintaining the teacher's interaction with students and between students through Digital Information and Communication Technologies (TDICs) and through printed materials. According to the aforementioned resolution, the REANP proposed specific procedures for complying with legally established teaching hours, in order to ensure the continuity of studies and student learning at all levels and teaching modalities offered by state schools (MINAS GERAIS, 2020).

Under the same bias of the resolution, the SEE/MG made available online work tools, such as the platform Study at Home/Se Liga na Educação, aimed at servers and students of the network with the following pedagogical support materials: Tutored Study Plan (PET), a learning resource that allows the student access to school activities programmed in a *self-instructional* way; Se Liga na Educação, with video lessons available on YouTube and on the Rede Minas page; Conexão Escola, a free platform for access to the transmission channels of the tele students and the PETs for download. In addition to these provisions, SEE/MG has published a set of guidelines, such as the REANP Guiding Document (Minas Gerais, 2021), the Practical Guide for the Beginning of the 2021 School Year and the Guiding Documents Full-Time Education and Professional Education/Normal Course of Middle Level, which address forms and procedures of organization of school activities during the suspension of face-to-face classes.

According to the research data, the participating schools sought to organize themselves to serve the students and, for that, they used the *WhatsApp application* as a communication channel to contact the family members and approach the development of the ERE's pedagogical activities. The research pointed out that the activities were proposed and delivered to the children mostly in groups on *WhatsApp*, in which the teachers were limited to sending audios and posting the tasks, which generated an intense overload of teaching work, because, in addition to the activities in the groups, they served families on private *WhatsApp*.

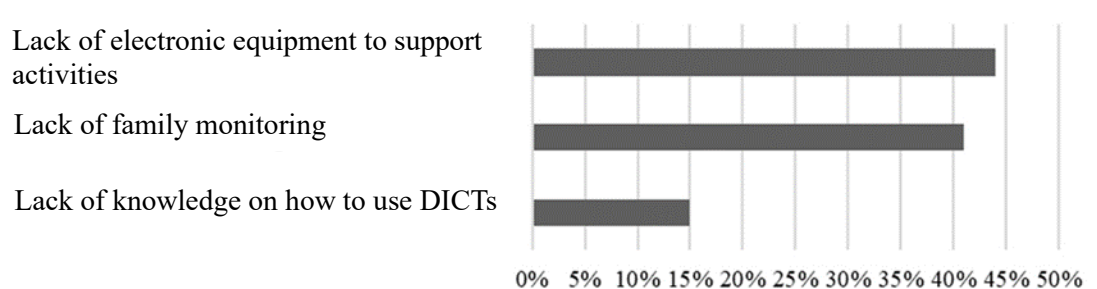
Regarding students' adherence to remote activities, according to teacher A's report, it was possible to notice in schools that students' access via *WhatsApp*, to perform tasks and attend asynchronous classes, was scarce - around 50% of students enrolled from 1st to 5th years in schools –; however, these numbers varied from week to week, which did not allow for the

accuracy of the number of students to be calculated. This instability demonstrates the resistance of families to adhere to remote teaching, due to the lack of security in the interaction between them, the teachers and the students in virtual environments. It is important to consider that those who did not adhere to remote learning received the printed activities made available to family members in educational institutions.

Although the school and the teachers made an effort to make the non-face-to-face classes meaningful to the students, by helping them in the literacy process, this type of teaching unfortunately failed to achieve its objective, due to the large number of difficulties faced in the pandemic. Such aspects reveal that literacy, in the pandemic period, distanced itself from literacy and the formation of subjects capable of dealing with different genres, formats and languages.

Regarding the difficulties in adhering to the ERE, the research data pointed to the following factors, according to the teachers' perception (Table 1):

**Graph 1** – Factors that hinder adherence to ERE



Source: Elaboration of the authors (2020/2022)

Faced with the replacement of face-to-face teaching by remote teaching, difficulties compromised learning, in which three factors stood out, according to the perceptions of the teachers participating in the research: lack of equipment such as computers and *smartphones* to follow the activities (44%), lack of monitoring of families (41%) and lack of knowledge for the use of DICTs (15%). The absence of electronic devices and internet access are striking in the analyses, which corroborates the lack of continuity of studies for several students.

When considering the social aspect, the obstacles to joining the ERE – which compromised the literacy and literacy process, the focus of this article – impacted, above all, students from the poorest population. The losses that can lead to discontinuity in children's literacy are undoubted, which leads us to a movement of exclusion and denial of the right to education, guaranteed in article 206 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil

(CRFB) (BRASIL, 1988), which provides for teaching throughout the country based on equal conditions for access and permanence in school.

Despite this constitutional right, studies have found the reality of an education system marked by inequalities and regional Brazilian differences that were exacerbated with the ERE established during the pandemic, as Macedo asserts (2021, p. 267, our translation):

[...] between March and July 2020, more than 8 million children aged 6 to 14 did not do any school activities at home. In the month of July, while only 4% of the richest children were left without any school activity, this number jumped to 30% among the poorest children. [...] the failure of the State to monitor the poorest families, the difference in activities carried out at home, between rich and poor, can reach 224 hours, the equivalent of 50 school days [...]. In the state of São Paulo, close to the end of the year, around 500,000 students did not turn in any activity. Once again, the lack of connectivity was one of the main causes of this loss of connection with the school, further penalizing lower-income students.

It is notorious that, during the pandemic period, Brazilian socioeconomic inequality came to the fore and exposed the precarious conditions of access to remote activities, as well as the difficulties of access to TDICs by students. Research data reveal that the obstacles related to adherence to the ERE (Table 1) limited the pedagogical actions and the mediation of the teachers, which caused damage to teaching, learning, literacy and literacy. Regarding the problems of teaching literacy through the ERE, the teachers were unanimous in stating that the most complicated factor was maintaining contact with the students, which made literacy training unfeasible in that period.

Difficulties related to adherence to the ERE, according to the research data, outline the reality arising from the pandemic, in which families did not have devices, nor did they have equipment to monitor and carry out activities. In addition, the lack of monitoring by family members in the children's schooling is due to the fact that parents need to split between household chores and formal or informal work inside or outside the home to accompany and help their children with tasks.

The following statements contextualize this data:

Countless difficulties such as the lack of knowledge with technology so that students could have access to activities [...]. Many times, I had to teach families how to access the tools, because, as it was a second year, seven-year-olds, eight-year-olds don't have as much autonomy to access the tools by themselves. So, it was necessary to teach the families the whole process of how to use it, how to access it, how to carry out activities, how to post (TEACHER D, our translation).

We face many difficulties regarding student participation, because we have little participation. In addition, we have many cases of parents who are unable to accompany their children, as they work outside the home, and cases of children who are accompanied by grandparents who do not know how to use devices. So, this is one of the difficulties that even contributed to the dropout of students (TEACHER E, our translation).

Today I have 30, about 20 students are delivering and 10 are not delivering, their deliveries are late. Many parents claim that they cannot “teach” their children, as they are not trained to teach literacy (TEACHER F, our translation).

In the excerpts, we found that families were unable to effectively participate in their children's school life, due to the fact that most parents work during school hours. Teacher F emphasized that family members do not have didactic-pedagogical training in the field of literacy to perform the necessary mediation during tasks, and, before the pandemic, a large portion of the studied sample had not had contact with synchronous class platforms. This meant that professors, students and guardians learned to use technology immediately, without training courses or time for experimentation, in simultaneous learning with the ERE, which brought discomfort, insecurity and frustration in most cases.

When asked about their experience with the ERE and the use of DICTs, the professors indicated the following scenario (Table 2):

**Table 2** - Perceptions about the experience with ERE and the use of DICTs in literacy

Prepared to work with ERE and the use of TDICs in the area of literacy	1
Little prepared for the experience with ERE and the use of DICTs in the area of literacy	3
Totally unprepared to deal with ERE and the use of DICTs in the area of literacy	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

Source : Elaboration of the authors (2020/2022)

With the ERE, the use of TDICs was essential for the continuity of the teaching-learning process. However, the survey data reiterate that inequality also manifested itself in terms of children's schooling, since, according to statements made by the participating teachers, while some students continued with their studies using electronic devices and internet access, several did not have the resources to access the activities.

In this regard, Miranda and Ferreira (2021, p. 4, our translation) emphasize that:

Many families, with three or more children, experience difficulties because they only have one cell phone that must be rotated to complete school tasks. Devices with insufficient memory, and low speed internet make it difficult for many to be included. Another challenge concerns the age group: they are students with little autonomy, which requires participation from those responsible, who are not always available for this or, sometimes, do not even know how to read and write well.

From the data collection carried out through an *online questionnaire* applied to the families of the participating schools, we found that several family members were unable to purchase quality equipment and pay for internet plans (Table 3):

**Table 3** – Internet access by the families of the schools surveyed

Type Of Access	Sample Percentage
Mobile	43%
Fixed	54.7%
Does Not Have	2.3%

Source: Elaboration of the authors (2020/2022)

These data express that the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic increased the problems and delays in Brazilian education, which ratifies the inequalities that compromise the democratization of face-to-face and remote teaching.

Another problem detected indicates that families could not receive guidance from teachers to help their children with activities due to lack of financial conditions to insert credits in cell phones. On this issue, Teacher B mentions the speech of a mother when asked about the

delay in delivering homework: “I put food on the table or I put credit (on my cell phone)” (RESPONSIBLE D). The difficulty of family members in times of crisis is evident, also characterized by the economic order and substantial losses, whether of employment, which guaranteed their day-to-day livelihood, or of the lives of the household providers, victims of Covid-19. As postulated by Veloso *et al.* (2022, p. 52, our translation), “with the pandemic, this condition of poverty was amplified by unemployment [...] a factor that enhances exclusion and marginalization, above all, of groups that are already traditionally vulnerable”.

As for children's access to activities passed on by literacy teachers via *WhatsApp*, the following problems were recorded: low speed of the data package, as most did not have access to a network of quality internet; limitation of applications to *download* files; restriction on the number of cell phones per family in relation to the number of school-aged children, which led to the need to share; and the existence of only one device, which was only available to perform tasks at night and on weekends, as parents or guardians worked during the day. Finally, there were families with no connection that received the printed activities at home, as previously mentioned.

According to the survey data, several challenges were faced by schools and families during the literacy of children in the pandemic: unemployment, poverty, hunger, lack of access to the internet and electronic devices by students, lack of social interaction and interaction between students and teachers, lack of ability to handle programs, platforms and applications, lack of parental support in helping with school activities (many are even illiterate), among others. As in a chain reaction, there was low performance and even school dropout, as the following statement exposes:

Social distancing added to social inequality and the lack of technological resources at home for remote teaching greatly increased the difficulties that children from peripheral public schools have in relation to the literacy process and the development of oral and written language. With emergency remote teaching, children were deprived of the teacher's mediation during the literacy process, which left much to be desired. Even in the case of families who accompanied their children, there was no literacy environment in the classroom, and the moments for reflection on how written language works were very limited and insufficient (TEACHER E, our translation).

This certifies the disconnection between literacy teachers and children, which made the continuity of literacy training in the ERE unfeasible, according to the teacher's perception above. Even with the efforts of teachers in that context, there are still pedagogical and social challenges for literacy after the pandemic, as will be discussed in the next topic.

## **Challenges after the pandemic: complications in literacy and in the process of constituting readers and writers**

The year 2021 was marked by uncertainties regarding the control of the pandemic and insecurity about the return of face-to-face teaching, which brought numerous challenges, such as the intensification of educational inequalities in public schools. About the new reality imposed in this scenario, Schwan, Uhmman and Schwan (2022, p. 8, our translation) consider that the “pandemic is always discriminatory, more difficult for some social groups than for others [...] and brought to light a set of social problems that we insisted on not wanting to see, but that have now become so evident that it is impossible to pretend that they do not exist”.

About this conjuncture and the impacts on education, Camini and Freitas (2022, p. 251, our translation) present data from research on the effects of the pandemic on education to corroborate the concern with the effects of that period, “by estimating that the loss of proficiency in Portuguese can reach the equivalent of the index obtained 4 years ago for the Final Years of Elementary School”.

In view of this, the new reality imposed after the pandemic on educational systems demands the restructuring of pedagogical activities, in order to resume the gaps that remained in children's literacy, considering that the constitution of readers and writers requires a dynamic of interaction between subjects, something committed to the ERE. The health crisis imposed a new reality with the return of face-to-face teaching, accompanied by new demands and challenges for teaching work.

In the pandemic, the work of teachers was an aggravating indicator that contributed to the impairment of children's literacy and literacy in the early years of Elementary School, as teachers were not trained in remote teaching and its specificities, with regard to interaction with students, the mediation of knowledge and the assessment of learning. Educational inequalities and the challenges of remote learning highlighted that women, by accumulating professional responsibilities and housework, were the people most affected by the overload of work activity, with a growing dissatisfaction among them, mainly due to the conditions for carrying out remote activities (OLIVEIRA, 2020).

This fact was observed throughout this research, because, during the period in which the PRP was carried out, the researchers were able to accompany the preceptors in the virtual classrooms open for carrying out the teaching activities. This led us to experience the educational work, the class schedules and the sending of tasks by the parents, which, in this case, did not show regularity.

Even the teachers received activities during the night, which compromised the private life of these professionals. Bezerra Neto and Nascimento (2021, p. 11, our translation) state that:

[...] we had as a consequence the increase of the workday, a situation that can also be observed with the use of T[D]ICs. This is because, with the increase in technology, as it stands, we have more people working and for much longer, given that now the worker can work any day and at any time, since much of the work can be done remotely.

Given the above, the precariousness of pedagogical work and the intensification of teaching work, the relevance of this professional for human training becomes evident, although it is devalued over the years. When asked about the return to hybrid teaching in 2021 and face-to-face teaching in 2022, as well as about the challenges in literacy, the teachers presented the following reports (Table 4):

**Table 4 - Challenges after the pandemic in literacy**

Teacher A	I look at the children at school, it makes me despair. These boys are in so much trouble, I don't know where to start. And the government charging the PET, when the child can't even read (Teacher A).
Teacher B	I have five 4th grade students who don't even know how to syllable. They hired support teachers to help with the face-to-face work. What happens: they don't do anything and even the plans want us to do it for them... they want me to plan for her and for me.
Teacher C	I'm getting students who don't know how to write their name. Most don't read. With the return to face-to-face classes, in my 4th year class, of the 24 students, 13 are at the 1st year level and cannot read or write.
Teacher D	The biggest challenge in this post-pandemic context will be to recover, teach literacy to students who are studying the advanced years (4th and 5th years), since the student who is entering the 1st or 2nd years will have time to adapt, even with the losses in relation to Early Childhood Education, learning and literacy. But, [for] the student who was in those years during the pandemic period, the literacy process was compromised, he did not have the opportunity to experience activities that contributed to an effective acquisition process of oral and written language. He did not have access and it may be difficult for [the oral and written languages] to be recovered.
Teacher E	The school will have to rethink all the work with literacy and literacy at school to welcome the children in the face-to-face return, because today we have students who are in the 4th or 5th year and have many difficulties in the production of texts, in orality, in writing and in reading. Children still don't know how to read and write, and this is a huge frustration for the family and the school.
Teacher F	Our biggest challenge will be to support the post-pandemic literacy demands in schools and understand that our pedagogical practice needs to be revised. I like to think that we will have to reflect on inclusion and limitations strongly after this pandemic process [...], students need a detailed look on a case-by-case basis. A lot of work ahead, a lot of struggle for a democratic, quality education that can recover the



	damage caused by remote teaching that has deprived many children of access to reading and writing.
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Source: Prepared by the authors, based on research data (2020/2022)

The learning of students in the literacy phase in public schools was impaired due to the difficulties encountered in the ERE, as pointed out in the testimonies. In addition, there are aspects concerning the absence of school interaction with the distance between people, substantially in the acquisition of reading and writing, since learning also needs to be understood as a social activity.

Vygotsky (1998, p. 117, our translation) maintains that one of the primordial aspects of learning is the “fact that it creates the zone of proximal development, that is, learning awakens various internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child interacts with others in their environment and when in cooperation with their peers”. It cannot be disregarded that, during the ERE and even with experiences that provided opportunities for learning through screens and PETs, the absence of social interaction with other children limited “the possibilities of relating thought and reality, of experiencing the relationship between action and meaning. The confinement to the home environment reduced the timely interactions to imagination, interpretation, that is, to act from thinking” (ANDRADE *et al.*, 2022, p. 16, our translation).

The ERE also deprived the professor of the action of guiding and instigating, for being the one “who 'deals the cards of the game', but knows that the game can only be partially controlled; it is necessary to be together to perceive the moment to intervene, to provide information, to propose tasks, to provoke conflicts and to point out solutions” (GOULART, 2020, p. 66, our translation). The children did not experience the liveliness of the classroom, a privileged *locus* of interaction and interlocution, with an environment conducive to reflections on the functioning of oral and written language, where they apprehend different discursive universes.

Although the work with literacy and literacy has found significant limitations and losses in the ERE, the teachers agreed that the pandemic period was not entirely “lost” and that something was relevant, since remote teaching involved efforts on the part of the school and these professionals, in which other forms of learning were present in the students' lives. As much as they recognize a substantial contingent of deficiencies in literacy after the pandemic, there was learning for them and the children: “Something remained! The challenge is to recover the students and return to the school routine” (TEACHER A, our translation).

The results obtained in this research show that the ERE in the schools surveyed brought limitations to children in the phase of appropriation of written and oral language. This stage needs conditions and requires languages for mastering the technique (literacy) of knowing the orientation of writing, spelling and recognizing the letters to use them competently in different literacy situations presented in (and by) reality. After all, “learning to read and write means acquiring a technology, that of coding in written language and decoding written language; to appropriate writing is to make writing 'own', that is, to assume it as your 'property'” (SOARES, 2017, p. 39, our translation).

### **Final remarks**

The analyzes carried out in this article showed that literacy was compromised with the ERE, with damage to the development of reading and writing skills, in addition to the formation of readers and writers. There is an absence of face-to-face interaction and pedagogical mediations that consider the learning contexts and subjectivity of the child who, in this case, assumes an active role in the learning process.

We verified that learning to read and write, as well as the constitution of children who are readers and writers, demand social and pedagogical mediation committed to the ERE. The experience of this modality contributed to reaffirm the importance of the school, face-to-face teaching and teaching work in the literacy phase, which requires intentional and systematic mediation, so that the learning subject understands the construction of the system that makes up the language constituted by orality and writing.

With the new reality arising from the pandemic caused by COVID-19, educational systems, by organizing school activities remotely in 2020 and 2021, carried out a direct migration from the face-to-face to the virtual environment, but without prior planning and/or technical support necessary, when limited to the fulfillment of school tasks. With ERE, the perspective of teaching children written language in the context of social practices was seriously compromised with social isolation.

Evidently, the consequences of the pandemic will still be observed for several years to come. Therefore, it becomes imperative to do something to help children overcome the gaps created by the literacy process, which triggered the increase in illiteracy, age/grade distortion and school dropout. We hope that the analyzes developed in this work contribute with new perspectives for facing problems related to the constitution of student readers and writers, according to the reality of public schools and the adverse and unequal conditions of

participation and insertion in different social spheres of language, intensified by the legacy left by the pandemic period.

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