

Being a teacher in the pandemic: experience, overload and challenges of teachers in basic, technical and technological education

Ser-docente na pandemia: vivência, sobrecarga e desafios de professores do ensino básico, técnico e tecnológico

Ser docente en la pandemia: experiencia, sobrecarga y desafíos de los docentes de educación básica, técnica y tecnológica

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a percepção de docentes do Ensino Básico, Técnico e Tecnológico do Instituto Federal do Maranhão em relação ao Ensino Remoto no contexto da pandemia causada pelo vírus SARS-CoV-2. Método: Trata-se de uma pesquisa exploratório-descritiva de natureza qualitativa, cujos 23 participantes responderam a um questionário composto por questões abertas e fechadas no período de março e abril de 2022. Resultado: As respostas obtidas foram analisadas em dois eixos temáticos da experiência Ser-docente, quais sejam: Rotina Diária; Saúde e Estratégias Defensivas. Estresse, medo, ansiedade, angústia, sentimento de inadequação e incapacidade, entre outras sensações, foram frequentes nas respostas, além disso, o isolamento social afetou significativamente os eixos citados. Conclusão: Os resultados apontam que os docentes vivenciaram vários desafios, bem como encontraram barreiras durante o Ensino Remoto no contexto pandêmico em diferentes esferas, a capilaridade do home office conseguiu romper a já escassa separação que havia entre tempo livre e trabalho.

DESCRITORES: Trabalho Remoto; Pandemia COVID-19; Docência.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the perception of teachers of Basic, Technical and Technological Education at the Federal Institute of Maranhão in relation to Remote Teaching in the context of the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Method: This is exploratory-descriptive research of a qualitative nature, whose 23 participants answered a questionnaire composed of open and closed questions between March and April 2022. Result: The answers obtained were analyzed in two thematic axes of the Being-teacher experience, namely: Daily routine; Health and Defensive Strategies. Stress, fear, anxiety, anguish, feelings of inadequacy and incapacity, among other sensations, were frequent in the responses, in addition, social isolation significantly affected the aforementioned axes. Conclusion: The results indicate that teachers experienced several challenges, as well as encountered barriers during Remote Teaching in the pandemic context in different spheres, the capillarity of the home office managed to break the already scarce separation between free time and work.

DESCRIPTORS: Remote Work; COVID-19 pandemic; Teaching

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la percepción de los profesores de Educación Básica, Técnica y Tecnológica del Instituto Federal de Maranhão en relación a la Enseñanza a Distancia en el contexto de la pandemia causada por el virus SARS-CoV-2. Método: Se trata de una investigación exploratoria-descriptiva de carácter cualitativo, cuyos 23 participantes respondieron a un cuestionario compuesto por preguntas abiertas y cerradas entre marzo y abril de 2022. Resultados: Las respuestas obtenidas fueron analizadas en dos ejes temáticos de la experiencia Ser-Maestro, a saber: Rutina diaria; Salud y Estrategias defensivas. Estrés, miedo, ansiedad, angustia, sentimientos de inadecuación e incapacidad, entre otras sensaciones, fueron frecuentes en las respuestas, además, el aislamiento social afectó significativamente los ejes mencionados. Conclusiones: Los resultados indican que los profesores experimentaron varios desafíos, así como encontraron barreras durante la Enseñanza a Distancia en el contexto pandémico en diferentes esferas, la capilaridad del home office consiguió romper la ya escasa separación entre tiempo libre y trabajo.

DESCRIPTORES: Trabajo a Distancia; Pandemia COVID-19; Enseñanza

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INTRODUCTION

Several studies indicate an epidemiological profile that is not so favorable to education professionals when compared to the general population. Teachers, in particular, are the professionals who most seek care at health services, reporting symptoms linked to Work-Related Voice Disorders (Dysphonia)⁽¹⁾. In addition, the category also stands out in the list of diseases of the Musculoskeletal System and is mainly associated with Mental and Behavioral Disorders, particularly Mood Disorders (affective), followed by Neurotic Disorders, related to Stress and Somatoform Disorders^(2,3,4).

Added to this, in March 2020, we were surprised by the statement, by the then Director of the World Health Organization, that the high degree of con-

tainment by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the new coronavirus, resulted in a worldwide pandemic⁽⁵⁾. Faced with this context, a series of challenges were raised to the Education policy and, as expected, the teachers were responsible for both the pressing need for continuity of classes, as well as a 'super-adaptation' to the Remote Teaching modality and its various technological resources.

In this way, there was a sudden transition from a face-to-face teaching space, whose variables and educational resources were, until then, relatively dominated by teachers, to an unknown space, full of unknowns, whoever can adapt! How to teach, how to evaluate, what is work and what is free time, and my health, where is my well-being, reinvent itself, after all, what is my place in this crisis?

In view of the above, this work is

an excerpt from the umbrella research entitled "Being a teacher in the pandemic: from perceptions to teaching narratives", which sought to analyze the perception of teachers in the face of the challenges imposed by Remote Teaching in two axes of the experience Being teacher, which are: Daily routine; Health and Defensive Strategies. We start, therefore, with the following question: what are the perceptions of teachers in the face of the challenges imposed by Remote Learning?

METHOD

The present investigation aimed to analyze perceptions, thus,, there was, necessarily, a need for immersion in the symbolic universe of subjects. In this sense,, we used exploratory-descriptive research with a qualitative approach,

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Being a teacher in the pandemic: experience, overload and challenges of teachers in basic, technical and technological education

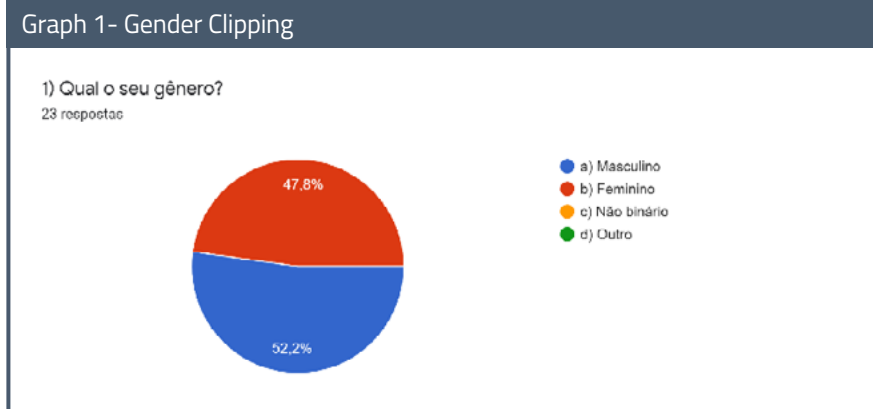
as we dealt with subjective, cultural, evaluative and human issues⁽⁶⁾. We emphasize that the investigation period took place in the months of March and April 2022.

The research was carried out through collaboration between two campuses of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Maranhão, namely, Santa Inês-MA and São José de Ribamar-MA. In relation to the participants, the the research had as subjects career teachers of Basic, Technical and Technological Education (EBTT) working in Integrated Secondary Education, Subsequent Technical and Higher Education of the aforementioned Campuses, we emphasize that the participants were from different areas of knowledge.

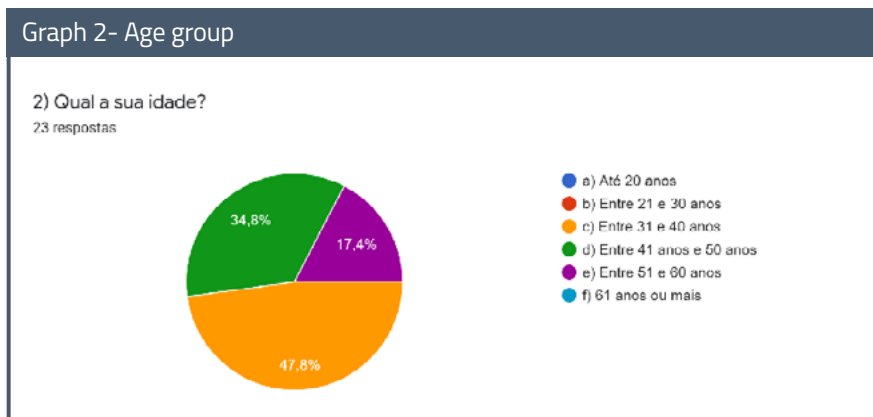
Campus Santa Inês had, at the time of the research, a total of 59 teaching staff and São José de Ribamar 57⁽⁷⁾. Thus, we used accessibility and convenience sampling, which is widely used in qualitative and exploratory research⁽⁸⁾. Consequently, we included professors who showed interest in the investigation, totaling a sample of 23 participants.

As for data collection, as it is an exploratory-descriptive investigation of a qualitative nature, we adopted a mixed questionnaire consisting of 35 open and closed questions as an instrument. Due to the pandemic we were experiencing, in addition to the expansion of the management and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), we used the Google Forms tool, an online survey management application. Thus, we sent the questionnaire to the professors' e-mails, the answers obtained were read, tabulated and analyzed from the Thematic Analysis⁽⁹⁾.

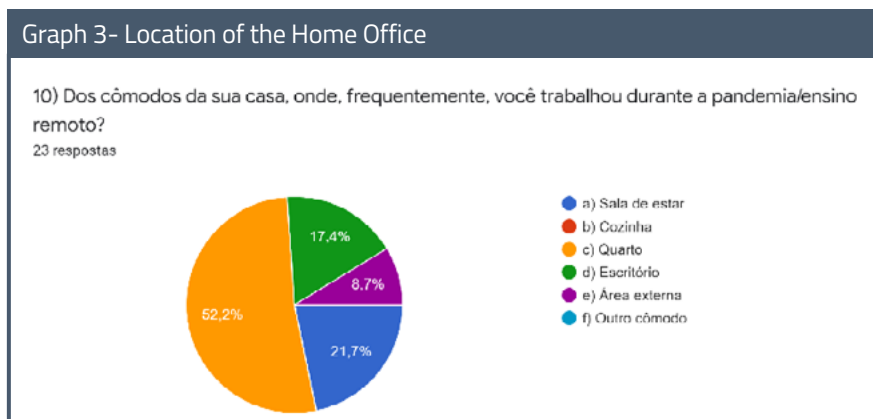
As for the ethical aspects, the study complied with the Resolution of the National Health Council n° 466/2012, which launches regulatory norms and guidelines for research involving human beings, in addition, of course, to the ethical and confidentiality aspects⁽¹⁰⁾. The investigation was appro-



Source: Researchers (2022).



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Source: Researchers (2022).

ved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Centro Universitário do Maranhão, CAEE-52099321.7.0000.5084, under Opinion n. 5.079.789.

RESULTS

We obtained the participation of 23 educators, who answered the Google Form. Of the respondents, 12 were from the Campus of São José de Ribamar-MA and 11 from Santa

Inês-MA, in addition, there was a greater participation of the male public, 52.2%, followed by the female public with 47.8%. As for the age group, 47.8% of the professors were between 31 and 40 years old, then, 34.8% between 41 and 50 years old and, finally, 17.4% between 51 and 60 years old.

As for marital status, 69.6% of respondents were married and 21.7% were single. As for the family profile, it was evident that 78.3% of the professors had children and 21.7% did not. Among those who had children, 66.7% had 1 child and 33.3% had 2 to 3 children. When asked about the number of people living in the same household, 73.9% said they had one to three people, followed by 17.4% four to seven people, and only 8.7% lived alone.

Regarding the number of rooms in the home, 34.8% reported having up to 7 rooms, followed by 26.1% with up to 3 rooms, 21.7% up to 5 and, finally, 17.4% more than 7 rooms. When asked about the part of the house where they worked during the pandemic/Remote Learning, it was noticed that the most mentioned room was the bedroom in 52.2% of the responses, followed by the living room and office.

As for the level of education, 65.2% of the professors were masters, 17.4% specialists and 13% doctors. Regarding family income, most respondents earn between 8 and 10 minimum wages, 30.4%, followed by 21.7% with more than 12 minimum wages.

DISCUSSION

4.1 Axis I - Daily Routine

In this part, daily practice and the effects of this new work configuration on the experience of these professionals were investigated. Thus, we question whether, during Remote Learning, teachers used to plan their daily work routines. The survey showed that 56.5% of professors planned their routines throughout the semester, 39.1% highlighted it sometimes and

4.3% indicated that it was rarely.

During the pandemic context, the Remote Teaching modality became a reality in most Brazilian schools, in which online classes emerged as an alternative for the development of pedagogical practices. Thus, as suggested by some authors⁽¹⁰⁾, for the teaching-learning process to occur in a concrete way, it is essential to plan actions, mediate and articulate the teacher with regard to scientific concepts and prior knowledge of students. Therefore, the pedagogical activities need to be aligned to lead the student to acquire scientific knowledge, to develop as a subject, while allowing the student to relate them to the reality that surrounds him⁽¹¹⁾.

In this way, the planning of pedagogical activities is one of the fundamental stages of the teaching-learning process, as it has the function of explaining principles, guidelines, systematizing and organizing all the actions that will be developed by the teacher. Thus, in view of this new scenario, with remote classes, planning has become a “[...] an instrument for the teacher and the student, we would say, mainly, for the students.”⁽¹²⁾

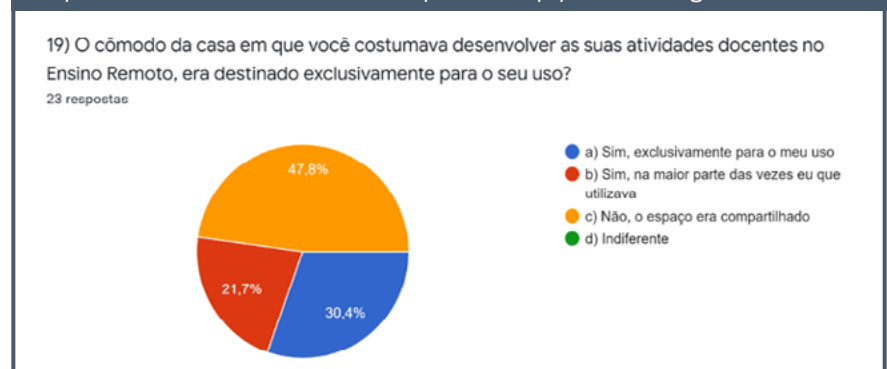
Faced with an unprecedented teaching reality for the school community, teaching practice began to be experienced in the home environment. Thus, during the period of social distancing, several families had to share

their time and space between the daily tasks of home, work and school. For the researched subjects, this reality was not different.

In the applied questionnaire, we asked if the room in the house where they used to develop their teaching activities in Remote Learning was intended exclusively for their use. Thus, we obtained the following data: for 47.8% of the teachers, this room in the house was not exclusive, therefore, being shared with other residents of the house; 30.4% indicated that the room was exclusive, while 21.7% managed, most of the time, to use it only for professional practice.

This new educational reality, according to Santana and Sales⁽¹³⁾, “[...] has been called upon to recognize new representations of teaching-learning contexts today and, even if still timidly, instituting new educational processes.” In this sense, still referring to the conditions of this room in the house, for carrying out remote work, we questioned the teachers if this place had good conditions for carrying out this activity. It was pointed out that for 65.2% of the participants, sometimes the space in the house was adequate for professional tasks, however, it depended on the time of day. For 26.1%, most of the time this location remained viable for work and 4.3% highlighted that at no time this space was in adequate conditions and, finally, 4.3% stated that the

Graph 4 - Room of the house where you develop your teaching activities



Source: Researchers (2022).

conditions they were indifferent.

Therefore, we can infer that the relationship established with issues of time and space at work, in addition to the home environment, mixed up, confusing the moments outside and inside the work environment, as observed in the words of the authors:

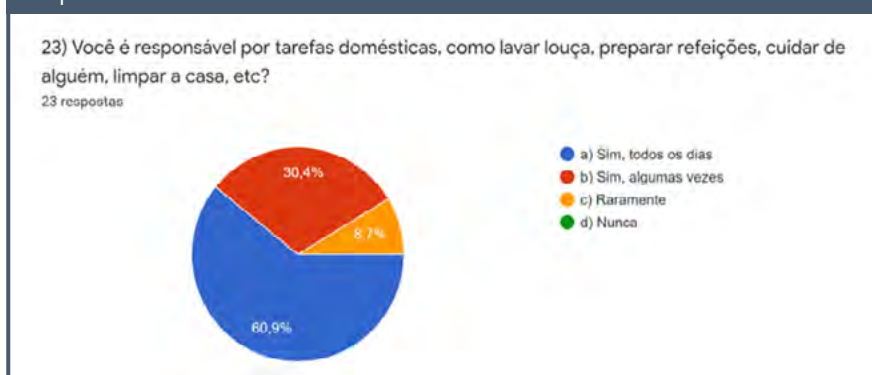
[...] you physically go home, but the workday does not end, because the “tasks” are many, in addition to technological innovations that make it possible to break down the barriers between the personal world and the professional world (cell phones and especially and emails).⁽¹⁴⁾

With regard to the development of activities, more specifically, compliance between working hours and breaks during work activities, it was pointed out by the participants that, for 43.5%, sometimes there were these breaks. For 39.1%, they always interspersed work with breaks. For 13%, this rarely happened, and for 4.3%, breaks were never given during remote work.

In this sense, we observed, through reports in the open questions, that the professor's workday expanded, that is, we verified that the excessive work routine interfered with free time, weekends and even on vacation, at work. In order to enable the fulfillment of the activities requested by the educational institution. Thus, as Dejours points out⁽¹⁵⁾, “[...] work is not, as is often believed, limited to the physical time effectively spent in the workshop or office. The work goes beyond any limits given to working time; it mobilizes the personality completely”. Thus, we consider that the workload developed by the professor during the period of remote classes exceeded limits, further blurring the dividing line between work and free time.

In accordance with what was presented in the previous question, it was questioned about the difficulties in separating free time from work time, we observed that: 56.5% of the professors

Graph 5 - Housework



Source: Researchers (2022).

highlighted that they often felt difficulties in promoting the relationship between these schedules. For 17.4%, this difficulty sometimes appeared. The same amount (17.4%) highlighted that they rarely experienced this difficulty, while for 8.7% of the professors, this difficulty never happened.

From this perspective, we consider that the work overload developed by the professor during this period was, in a way, hidden. Since most of the work demands started to be carried out during their free time, interfering in the administration of their daily hours. This can be pointed out in the research question regarding the administration of the professor's time to carry out remote work and domestic tasks, in which we obtained the following result: for 60.9%, the responsibility for domestic service occurred every day. For 30.4%, they sometimes had to divide their time between domestic services and remote work, and for 8.7%, this rarely happened.

As a complement to the previous question, teachers were asked about the interference of domestic service in remote work. We highlight that for 43.5%, the interference was intense; for 34.8%, this interference happened sometimes; for 8.7%, rarely, as well as for 8.7%, this interference did not happen and, finally, for 4.3%, they did not notice any interference. It is clear that the teacher's daily routine was

affected by Remote Teaching, since it was no longer possible to distinguish between the time spent on academic work and household chores or personal tasks, and it was no longer possible to disconnect from the work environment⁽¹⁶⁾.

In this way, we verified that there was an invasion of the work routine in the time that should be destined to rest or leisure, and it is possible to verify the real commitment of the teaching class in fulfilling its role of educating, even in the most adverse conditions or in situations that required multiple skills from this professional.

4.2 Axis II - Health and Defensive Strategies

Regarding Health, when asked if they had any Comorbidity (Systemic Arterial Hypertension, Diabetes, obesity), 69.6% of respondents said no, followed by 21.7% yes and 8.7% who did not know. Added to this, 39.1% of teachers had Covid-19, 30.4% did not and 30.4% did not know.

As for health care, 47.8% of teachers said they went to medical consultations and performed tests every six months, followed by 43.5% who went to consultations and performed tests when they had symptoms and, finally, 8.7% almost never performed such actions. Regarding the practice of exercises, 52.2% practiced some

physical activity at least three times a week, 34.8% did not usually practice and 13% did it occasionally.

When asked about feeling stressed, depressed or anxious during Remote Learning/Health Crisis, 43.5% answered yes, often, but not every day, followed by 26.1% who felt occasionally, 17.4% who felt yes, every day and, finally, 13% no.

Prior to the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a series of studies highlighted the unfavorable reality of teachers, both from an epidemiological point of view and in terms of subjective suffering. Among the professional categories listed in several studies, professors appear in several rankings of injuries and diseases, revealing how fragile or non-existent public health and professional development policies are aimed at the category^(3,4).

Among public servants in the state of Santa Catarina who were on leave for health treatment in the years 2010 to 2013, 39% of the cases were education professionals. Consequently, the professional category most affected by illnesses that required time off work. In addition, the study pointed out that 40.14% of the cases were of Mental and Behavioral Disorders, with a higher prevalence of Mood Disorders (F30-F39), followed by Neurotic Disorders, Stress-Related Disorders and Somatoform Disorders (F40-F48)⁽⁴⁾.

Among the consequences, pointed out in studies that investigate the occupational health of teachers in public schools, it is evident that absenteeism works as a symptom, whose causes need to be investigated so that more solid public actions and policies are elaborated⁽³⁾. Factors such as precarious working conditions, excessive contractual hours, low wages, among other stressors, interfere. As a result of this dynamic, both absenteeism itself, as well as making the teacher's reality vulnerable to the development of diseases and injuries⁽³⁾.

The authors also point out that, in the

Graph 6 - Feeling of stress, anxiety and depression



Source: Researchers (2022).

period from 2012 to 2016, in a universe composed of 2,181 teachers from public schools in a municipality in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, of the 2,931 licenses for health treatment listed in that period, 246 were for reasons related to health mental⁽³⁾. In addition, from this last number, the aforementioned professional category obtained a prevalence of 52.4% of cases of Neurotic disorders, disorders related to stress and somatoform disorders, followed by 42.7% of Mood disorders⁽³⁾.

In this way, it is inferred, through the study mentioned above, that 11 out of 100 teachers had some type of Mental Disorder and Work-Related Behavior, that is, a prevalence of 11% in relation to the average of education workers in that town. Coinciding, consequently, with other studies carried out in different regions of the country⁽³⁾.

Faced with the sensations previously experienced and detailed (stress-anxiety-depression), the professors stated that they adopted the following measures to improve/ease possible discomforts, 50% performed leisure activities, 20% other measures and 15% practiced physical activities. It is worth emphasizing that 1% reported using herbal medicines, 1% self-medication and 1% sought health professionals.

In view of this finding, we can ask ourselves about the effectiveness of leisure and physical exercise, in relation to the anxieties that arise. Why

did only 1% of teachers seek professional guidance or, for what reasons does leisure occupy a privileged place in this context? In a society in which the subject must be a 'self-entrepreneur' and in which a professional must raise 'inhuman' efforts to adapt, it is not surprising that leisure, disguised as consumption, is the most frequent imaginary 'output'.

Here, we can think about the psychological "social grammar of suffering", as pointed out by Safatle, Júnior and Dunker⁽¹⁷⁾. Neoliberalism, as a political, social and economic project, unveils an outbreak of diagnoses, a logic of possible suffering and a consequent blaming of the subject, because in his body, demands of different orders fall. If the body does not 'perform' as idealized, we will operationalize an immediate response, which takes care of and inserts the subject back into the great gear of the system, in a kind of looping. Leisure here occupies this imaginary place, it will immediately relieve tensions, although it neglects a wide spectrum of factors.

When asked about the feelings and sensations experienced during social isolation, there was the possibility of selecting several options, 73.9% said they felt stress, as well as the same percentage for demotivation. Other highlights were that 69.6% felt discouragement and frustration, 65.2% anxiety and 56.5% impotence.

Aligned with what was presented above, we can ask ourselves both about the possibilities of teachers' response to these problems, and the consequences of this logic in the Being teacher. Pandemic, social isolation, exponential demands and requirements, adaptation and use of technological resources, virtual classroom, physical and mental illness, an ocean of variables, after all, what are the consequences of this dynamic on the health of teachers? Dejours⁽¹⁷⁾, tells us that, in the face of suffering, workers collectively use defense mechanisms called "Defensive Strategies" as a resource to lessen the perception of a reality that causes suffering, that hurts.

In this context, we are directed to think about an amalgam of factors that contribute to the process of precariousness of the working conditions of these professionals. There are macrostructural issues that are neglected, such as neoliberalism, already mentioned, which requires talents, intelligences and multiple skills from teachers under the command "to reinvent oneself". In addition, the health crisis caused by COVID-19 brought with it a series of problems that, added to the aforementioned context, broke out and/or exacerbated already existing suffering.

This imperative of reinvention leads us, consequently, to the field of guilt, the subject attributes to himself the responsibilities of the entire work process, not problematizing the social violence present in the context in which he is inserted. Instead of collectively creating defenses⁽¹⁸⁾, it seems that, more and more, the subject is isolated. This individualization is in line with Safatle, Junior and Dunker when explaining the profile of the contemporary subject, because, today, we must all be entrepreneurs, autonomous subjects who are solely responsible for our destiny. If I fail, it's my problem!⁽¹⁷⁾.

The precariousness, the lack of prestige, added to the numerous demands directed at the teacher in the context

of the pandemic, mainly speaking in terms of use and management of technological tools, meddled and created an extra context of illness⁽²⁾. In view of this, there were several types of fears faced by professionals as a result of the pandemic: fear of the transition from conventional to remote teaching, fear of being judged ("social phobia"), fear of isolation ("isophobia"), fear of fear of the unknown ("xenophobia"), fear of change ("metathesiophobia") and, finally, fear of advanced technology ("technophobia"). Reflecting on the subject, authors⁽¹⁹⁾ encompass all these categories of fear under a single rubric, "covidopedagophobia".

In this scenario, the authors paraphrase the marketing of Brazilian agroindustry to the work of teachers, using a post published on a social network, "Professora é Agro, Professora é Tec, Professora é TUDO"⁽²⁾. We can see that the gender focus is present in this discussion, characterizing that when it comes to teachers, this reality of 'multitasking' is enhanced.

This discussion takes us back to the inevitable pitfall of 'reinventing oneself' which, in addition to romanticizing a reality that is unfavorable to teachers, creates a cycle of blaming the various peers involved in the teaching and learning process⁽²⁰⁾. Is the teacher or the student to blame for not "producing"? Unfortunately, we are conditioned to look for an executioner, a villain, on the one hand, and a victim, a good guy, on the other⁽²⁰⁾.

This Manichaeism, this ease of being seduced by binary discourses, hides deep analysis, making it impossible for us to create 'links' between the various factors that orchestrate the mixture of melody, noise and noise that we are analyzing here.

CONCLUSION

We realized, through this investigation, that the reality of teachers, during the Covid-19 pandemic and the urgen-

cy of Remote Teaching, imposed a series of significant changes in different spheres. With regard to Teaching Experience and Professional Development, we saw that male and female teachers experienced a series of challenges, as well as faced barriers. The pandemic context, the need to adapt to technological resources, particularly ICTs, added to the misalignment of actions by the Ministry of Education, among other factors, thickened the broth of difficulties felt by professionals.

Fear, anxiety and the feeling of not feeling able to use technological tools during Remote Teaching were mentioned significantly in the responses, pointing to a complex reality that, in most cases, falls solely and exclusively on the figure of the educator.

As for the Daily Routine, we noticed that most respondents planned their day to day, however, home, work and children were involved. The so-called home office literally invaded the teachers' room, illustrating that the dividing line between free time and work time, which was already tenuous, has become non-existent in the pandemic context. Regarding Health and Defensive Strategies, we noticed that most of the professors had Covid-19, as well as, there were reports of feelings of stress, anxiety and depression. Faced with these sensations, most professors created some strategies such as prioritizing leisure activities to deal with these affections, however, we know that the absence of a space to rethink Being a professor, as well as the restriction of places to symbolize the anguish that all we experienced during the pandemic, made the scenario conducive to imaginary solutions and strategies.

Along the way, we noticed that an ocean of doubts and questions about Being a Teacher in the pandemic hovered over the heads of the professionals participating in the research. The context of the health crisis, full of unknowns of different orders, paralyzed all nations, without exception, many lost

their jobs, others literally took their work home and, unfortunately, many lost their lives. Educators, they could not stop, they had to adapt, they were demanded from all sides and, they did not have time to reflect on their identities, their roles and continued working,

unfolding in a scenario of precariousness and disrespect for education.

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