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The Challenge of Remote Learning with the Elderly during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT – The Challenge of Remote Learning with the Elderly during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This article aimed to discuss the challenges faced by teachers of Youth and Adult Education (YAE) in the municipality of João Pessoa/PB, to teach the elderly during the covid-19 pandemic. The qualitative method was adopted and information was collected with 10 teachers through a questionnaire in Google Forms virtual format. They were examined with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The results revealed the difficulties that teachers face in dealing with remote teaching, especially with the elderly, since this portion of the population has its own technological deficiencies and is not used to this teaching format.

Keywords: Youth and Adult Education. Covid-19. Teacher Training. Elderly.

RESUMO – O Desafio do Ensino Remoto com Idosos durante a Pandemia de Covid-19. Este artigo objetivou discutir os desafios enfrentados pelos docentes da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA), do município de João Pessoa/PB, para ensinar idosos durante a pandemia de covid-19. Adotou-se o método qualitativo e coletou-se informações, através do uso de questionário no formato virtual do *Google Forms*, de 10 professores. Eles foram examinados a partir da Análise Crítica do Discurso (ACD). Os resultados revelaram as dificuldades que os professores enfrentam em lidar com o ensino remoto, sobretudo com idosos, uma vez que tal parcela populacional possui suas deficiências tecnológicas e não está acostumada com esse formato de ensino.

Palavras-chave: Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Covid-19. Formação Docente. Idosos.

Covid-19 Pandemic and the Transformations in Education

In March 2020, Brazil experienced, as did the rest of the world, the pandemic caused by covid-19, an infectious disease provoked by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which forced the public and private companies and schools to close their doors, and social distancing practices were adopted. It was also necessary to reorganize in-person activities, for situations in which human contact was indispensable; and to take on the remote or home office setup, for those activities that could be developed without direct human contact, such as the didactic and pedagogical ones, which is the case of teachers and students.

These transformations in the population's social and personal life have also brought countless changes to the educational field in terms of the teaching process and remote learning, no longer in the same site as the school and the classroom, but in different and distant spaces, without physical contact between teachers and students. The social and school distance demanded, from both groups, greater efforts such as attention, autonomy, agility and proactivity. These became fundamental so that the teaching and learning movement proposed for education could happen with quality and effectiveness.

In-person teaching, predominant in Basic Education, has made room for the remote education proposal that, according to Garcia et al. (2020, p. 5):

[...] is a format of schooling mediated by technology, while maintaining the conditions of distance between teacher and student. This teaching format is made possible by the use of educational platforms or platforms intended for other purposes, open to school content sharing. Although it is directly related to the use of digital technology, remote teaching is not a synonym of distance teaching, the latter being a modality that has its own theoretical and methodological conception and is developed in a virtual learning environment, with specific didactic and pedagogical material and the support of tutors.

Considering the model of remote activities and concerned with regulating Basic Education and Higher Education in the midst of the pandemic that has rapidly advanced throughout the country, the Federal Government edited Provisional Measure No. 934, of April 1, 2020, which establishes, in Article 1, the following:

The Basic Education teaching establishment is exempted, on an exceptional basis, from the requirement of compliance with the minimum number of days of effective school work, under the terms of the provisions of Law No. 9.394 Article 24 item I and in paragraph 1 and Article 31 item II, of December 20, 1996, provided that the minimum annual workload established in these provisions is met, subject to the rules to be issued by the respective education systems (Brasil, 2020a, s. p.).

The presidential act safeguards minimum guarantees so that the school year can be rethought by each school system, including the complementary activities recommended in the context of remote activities. In this sense, each federated entity has organized itself so as to enable its students to participate in the actions proposed by the schools, with the most appropriate mechanisms being chosen for the moment, although there are still big gaps, given the challenges that many students in public schools tend to overcome in the midst of the global health crisis.

Besides the challenges that the students had to overcome due to the suspension of face-to-face classes, others were listed in the Advisory Opinion CNE/CP No. 5/2020 approved on April 28, 2020, among which we highlight:

Difficulty in the replacement of all in-person suspended classes at the end of the emergency period, compromising the 2021 school calendar and possibly 2022's; setbacks in the educational process and learning for students submitted to a long period without regular educational activities, given the indefinite isolation time; structural and social damages for students and low-income families, such as family stress and increased domestic violence for families in general; and dropout and increased school dropout (Brasil, 2020b, s. p.).

Two important aspects are evidenced in the report above. The first reflects on the increase of inequalities, which is already one of the major bottlenecks in Brazilian education. And the second is directly reflected in the growth of school dropouts due to the difficulties that students have and will have during and after the pandemic. In other words, the document presents a concern with the current moment, but already signals an intense reflection on the effects that education will suffer in the post-pandemic period. This becomes quite worrying when we think that

The new articulation presupposes an epistemological, cultural, and ideological turn that supports political, economic, and social solutions that guarantee the continuity of dignified human life on the planet. This shift has multiple implications. The first is to create a new common sense, the simple and evident idea that especially in the last forty years we have lived in a quarantine, the political, cultural and ideological quarantine of a capitalism closed in on itself and which cannot subsist without racial and sexual discriminations. The quarantine caused by the pandemic is, after all, a quarantine within a quarantine. We will overcome the quarantine of capitalism when we are able to imagine the planet as our common home and Nature as our original mother to whom we owe love and respect. She does not belong to us. We belong to her. When we overcome this quarantine, we will be freer from the quarantines caused by pandemics (Santos, 2020, p. 31).

In other words, we have not overcome the quarantines imposed by economic and social models that brought weaknesses and ruptures to education, especially in the field of teacher training, because the effects of this scenario became more strongly evident in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, in which teachers had to reinvent themselves, leaving in-person teaching to work with remote activities, using digital technologies.

In line with the regulations proposed by the Ministry of Education for the organization of the teaching offered in Basic Education during the pandemic period, the João Pessoa's Municipal Council of Education issued the Advisory Opinion No. 001, of 2020, published in the Official Gazette, on April 29, 2020, which sought to adjust the activities developed in the municipality's teaching units. This document defines not in-person school activities as "[...] those used by the teacher for interaction with the student through printed guidelines, directed studies, virtual platforms, chats, forums, video classes, among others" (João Pessoa, 2020, s. p.). The document emerges as a guide for the municipal schools of João Pessoa/PB to organize their intervention actions with the students during the suspension of face-to-face teaching.

The above-mentioned documents do not directly discuss two important aspects in this process of remote teaching: teacher training to use technologies and conduct remote activities, and Youth and Adult Education and its specificities. In a slight reflection, the Advisory Opinion CNE/CP No. 5, of 2020 – which deals with the “Reorganization of the School Calendar and the possibility of counting not in-person activities for purposes of compliance with the minimum annual workload, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic” (Brasil, 2020b, p. 1) – brings a vague mention to YAE, without consistent guidance on remote work during the pandemic period:

While the health emergency situation persists, making in-person school activities impossible, the measures recommended for primary and secondary education, in the YAE modality, should consider their singularities in the development of methodologies and pedagogical practices, according to Advisory Opinion CNE/CEB No. 11, of May 10, 2000 and the Resolution CNE/CEB No. 1, of July 5, 2000 that established the Nacional Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education (YAE), and the Resolution CNE/CEB No. 3, of June 15, 2010, that established the Operational Guidelines for YAE (Brasil, 2020b, p. 14).

At this juncture, we enable a debate about the challenges and possible perspectives that teachers must overcome and face to reach students, especially the elderly, who no longer use technologies as often – or do not use them at all. The studies of Diniz et al. (2020) revealed that this contingent has limitations in their digital skills, especially due to the low level of education, although this fact is not an impediment to access, as stated by the authors of this study.

In this sense, teacher training emerges as one of the major movements that are essential for teachers to incorporate the necessary changes into their teaching practice. Within this movement, YAE teachers are concerned about dealing with digital technological tools in the teaching and learning process of elderly students enrolled in the modality.

In this sense, the present article aims to analyze the challenges faced by YAE teachers in the municipality of João Pessoa/PB, to teach the elderly through remote learning, during the period of social isolation caused by covid-19. This is a qualitative study, whose data were collected through the application of a questionnaire, using Google Forms, in the period from July to September, 2020.

Due to the social distance, a digital invitation was sent to the respondents participating in the research, through messaging groups – WhatsApp – of the schools that offer this modality, and we requested these teachers who develop their activities in YAE to replicate individually in their contact networks. Altogether, 10 teachers agreed to participate in the research, being 9 female and 1 male. The criteria for participation were: to accept voluntarily, without causing ethical, moral or financial damage; to work in the YAE modality; and to assist elderly students during the pandemic period.

The average age of the participants was 40 years, being the youngest teacher 26 years old and the oldest 54 years old. As for their initial formation, 7 have a degree in Pedagogy, 1 in History, 1 in Geography, and 1 in Biological Sciences. Among the sample, 2 teachers have more than one degree, 1 in Nursing (Bachelor's degree) and 1 in Geography – Bachelor's degree. The average time in the teaching profession is 17.9 years, and 6.6 years specifically in YAE. Among the participants, there is 1 teacher who has just started teaching – Teacher Cien, 26 years old – 2 years in the teaching profession and 1 in the modality in question. And, having between 2 and 5 years teaching in the YAE modality, 3 teachers participated. As for continuing education, 5 teachers responded that they had post-graduate degrees, 3 of them in specializations, 2 with master's degrees, being one with a master's degree in Ecology and the other with a master's degree in Education.

Those who work in the early years of Basic Education, the Pedagogy undergraduates, have only one YAE class and accommodate, on average, 23 students in Cycles I and II of the modality. On the other hand, the teachers of specific curricular components work in the final years and assist an average of 141 students in Cycles III and IV. It is worth mentioning that the teachers of the final years of Basic Education have more than one class, in order to cover their workload.

The data were analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) tool recommended by Fairclough (2016), who understands discourse as a social practice. From what the author shows, all discourse is rooted in a social practice, which is dialectical and, thus, is transformative and reproductive of a reality. It is up to the subjects facing these

discourses, which are also ideological, to reconfigure or even resignify the investigated reality.

According to Fairclough (2012), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to the analysis of dialectical relations, which occur through semiosis and other elements arising from social practices. Therefore, this tool – a theory rather than a method – turns especially to the changes that occur in social life in the contemporary context, seeking to understand what is the role of semiosis in these processes of change.

Thus, for CDA the production of meanings in social practices will be situated from the analysis. That is, meanings may be more apparent and important from a given social practice, and may vary over time. Furthermore, there are three ways in which meaning production (semiosis) acts:

- 1) when it acts as part of social activity, which is embedded in a certain practice;
- 2) when it acts in the representations, since the actors do not only produce representations of the practices, but have the ability to recontextualize them and incorporate them into their own practices;
- 3) when it acts for the performance of particular positions, that is, depending on the individual conditions of people (race, class, gender, age), there is the production of different performances, which are partially determined by the practice (Fairclough, 2012).

When considering the CDA, five analytical categories were elected:

- a) difficulties of teaching the elderly in YAE;
- b) difficulties in working with teaching activities in pandemic;
- c) training to work with remote teaching;
- d) activities performed with the elderly in YAE in the pandemic period;
- e) evaluation of remote learning and activities feedback to the elderly students.

The Challenges of Continuous Teacher Training

The studies by Silva (2011), Giovanetti (2011), Soares (2011), Pereira (2011) and others reinforce the need for continuous teacher training for YAE teachers, based on statements that indicate the heterogeneous profile of these professionals, with varied performance and formative trajectories and mainly involved with popular social movements experiences. The profile of YAE educators in the country is quite diverse in terms of training, action, and formative itineraries. Continuous teacher training and in-service training guide us to take into consideration the multiple dimensions of this professional and their historical concreteness – life stories, identities, corporeality, initial training, working hours, social and wage devaluation, etc.

The continuous teacher training aims to lead the teacher to reflect on their educational practice with a view to change, and these reflec-

tions make it possible to improve the quality of teaching and to bring the teacher closer to the reality of the YAE student and to the specificities of this modality. Therefore, we understand that the continuous teacher training is based on the concrete reality of the pedagogical practice developed by the teachers.

Silva (2011), Giovanetti (2011), Soares (2011) and Pereira (2011) state that this training requires the articulation/dialogue between theory and practice of the teacher's daily work, constituting the focus for universities and state and municipal education departments to offer training for this contingent. Therefore, both in academic and governmental discourse there is the understanding that theory and practice are not inseparable. It is essential to think how to better address this issue, because reality – practice and everyday life – is dynamic, and the knowledge produced and discussed in teacher training courses cannot keep up with such dynamism. Therefore, thinking and practicing teacher training for YAE would take into consideration the knowledge and experiences of/in reality, acquired throughout the professional trajectory of these professionals (Silva, 2011). And, as to the content of continuous training, “[...] one must prioritize those [contents] that reinforce the unique identity of YAE, especially its history rooted in Popular Education and link with social movements” (Di Pierro et al., 2006, p. 287). This understanding denounces that the YAE teacher training would be grounded in their history, in their struggles and achievements, fought for the right to education for all, against the economic forces that think of education as a restricted good for the privileged few.

The issue of continuous training is the responsibility of the government, which supports the modality, and the universities, which are responsible for carrying out researches and extension activities in this area, and both are committed to provide answers to the problems that plague society, aiming to contribute to the society's development in all possible aspects; among them, education, as far as teacher training is concerned. In turn, Arroyo (2006, p. 18), when reflecting on the teacher training for YAE in undergraduate courses, asserts that such formation

[...] fits the same mold. This universalistic, generalist character of the models for educator training and this disfigured historical character of Youth and Adult Education explains why we do not have a tradition of youth and adult educators' profile and their training.

This is because there is not a specific public policy for initial and continuing education of YAE teachers in the country, which contemplates the specificity inherent to this modality of Basic Education, except for some Pedagogy courses – less than 2% of the existing ones in the country – which effectively contemplate the teacher's education directed to the reality of YAE, their students and other didactic-pedagogical knowledge. According to Scortegagna and Souza (2020), YAE teachers training has not yet acquired well-defined spaces in universities; thus, it becomes necessary to resize the curricular matrices, in order to adapt

them to Brazilian educational policies and guarantee a teaching formation consistent with the students' needs.

YAE teachers continuous training happens in a disjointed, loose way, being the responsibility of each state and municipality, which, for its part, execute it in the way that suits them, not always paying attention to the real needs of these teachers who are in the daily routine of the classroom. YAE needs to get rid of the "cursed heritage" (Silva, 2011) that anyone can be a teacher in this educational modality and that to take part in Popular Education is to teach the poor, the underprivileged people, etc.

Regarding the issue that anyone can be a teacher in this country – regardless of the modality, level and grade – the history of teacher training in Brazil denounces the discourse of "nonprofessionalization" of the teaching exercise. As Bastos (2004) presents us, the "nonprofessionalization" had its officialization/authorization in the *Leôncio de Carvalho* reform, still in the Empire of Brazil, in 1879, and, from then on, any person could teach, as long as they were considered qualified for the job, "[...] without depending on official proof of capacity or previous authorization [...]" (Brzezinski, 1996¹, p. 20 apud Bastos, 2004, p. 56).

This historical fact reinforces the legacy of the "nonprofessionalization" of the teaching exercise, cultivated until today, contrary to the Law No. 9.394/96, Article 62 (Brasil, 1996). These facts reveal us the following statements: "YAE as synonymous of literacy, schooling of the poor and underprivileged people" and of "nonprofessional teachers". Some undergraduate courses still see YAE as a not very important object for teacher training.

In the context of the pandemic caused by covid-19, teacher training became more urgent and necessary, since the teaching and learning format, from one moment to the next, required teachers to know how to deal with digital technologies in order to be able to teach remote classes. However, what we saw with the pandemic was the need to promote public policies for better qualification and training of these professionals, because with the change in the routine of didactic-pedagogical in-person work for remote teaching, according to the Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE, 2020, p. 9),

[...] has imposed new work routines for teachers. The offer of remote teaching, using unusual technological tools for in-person work, has been a novelty and a great challenge for most teachers. The experience of these professionals with conducting remote classes increases as the Basic Education stages advance. However, the level of difficulty in dealing with digital technologies is similar among the stages. Only 28.9% of the respondents said they found it easy to use them. The difficulties are even greater when teachers have not received any training in the use of technological tools necessary for the development of remote activities.

Given the fact presented above, the concern with education lies once again in the training process, because although this is a sudden and atypical situation, a good part of the teachers are unable to properly use the necessary technological artifacts for the remote activities development, and the students, on its part, do not have adequate instruments for this same purpose, due to their high financial investment, as attested by data from the Continuous Sampling National Survey of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, which surveyed access to Information and Communication Technology in the fourth quarter of 2019, as observed:

Among the students who did not use the internet, the financial reasons weighed the most: 26.1% thought the service was expensive and 19.3% thought the equipment needed for access was expensive. The lack of interest (18.5%) and not knowing how to use it (16.0%) had a much lower weight for the population 10 years old and older, while the lack of availability of the service in the places they used to go had a higher weight (11.2%). A large portion of the students who did not use the internet was in the public education system (95.9%) and the reasons for not using it follow the trend of the total students, with greater weight to financial issues (45.9%) and unavailability of the service in the places they used to attend (11.4%) (IBGE, 2019, s. p.).

In this article, we make the cut for the elderly students because in agreement with Capuzzo (2012, p. 43) “[...] there are few references to teacher training to work with elderly people in Brazil”; however, the presence of this social contingent is increasing every day in our schools. This statement is confirmed within the municipality of João Pessoa/PB, when it was recorded, between the years 2015 and 2019, according to the historical series of the School Census, the enrollment of 2,119 elderly in YAE classrooms (INEP, 2019). And, still as Capuzzo (2012, p. 45) asserts,

The educators training to work with elderly people needs to consider the specificities of these people as well as the technical, scientific and political training of educators. Educators of elderly people should, like all other educators, be politically engaged, scientifically prepared in relation to the content, in addition to technical, methodological and specific training of this population.

Given the data presented, it becomes even more fundamental the need for a training that pays attention to the presence of this age group in the school scenario and, therefore, meets their specificities. In this sense, “[...] it would be important to develop new materials and methodologies that address the teaching demands of the elderly population, so that they can achieve their learning process and awareness” (Scortegagna, 2016, p. 242).

The Difficulties of Teaching the Elderly in YAE

Teaching requires a great deal of effort from teachers, especially with regard to the process of involvement between students and the content to be taught. In the context of the covid-19 pandemic, this relationship is marked by the search for methodologies that meet the needs of students, thus enabling the set goals to be achieved. When we refer to the YAE modality, we have an even greater challenge, since, in these spaces, we find a very diverse group from the age point of view, which requires a greater involvement from teachers.

About the process of teaching the elderly, the teachers who participated in the research exposed their difficulties in working with the age group in the modality. Among the answers, pedagogical practices were observed in the teachers' speeches, denouncing the following complexities when teaching the elderly remotely in YAE: development of reading and writing skills; coexistence with younger people, due to the generational conflict; use of technologies and methodologies; and school attendance. These were some of the most frequent aspects. It can be seen in the following statements:

The cell phone screen due to vision; the challenge with using digital tools (Teacher Ciclo, 39 years old).

The difficulty with reading and writing (Teacher Geo, 43 years old).

The main difficulties are related to the understanding of the commands to be followed, since the students even understand and dominate some contents, but present difficulty in the execution of the activities (Teacher Poli, 37 years old).

The motivation to remain in a youthful class, and the contents, as proposed by the secretariat (Teacher Cien, 26 years old).

The teachers' speeches are imbricated with social practices, which allow us to go deeper into the presence of the elderly in the classroom. Therefore, the concern, pointed out by the participating teachers about the learning movement, includes the work with the contents and the students' written and reading production, highlighting the demands of a teaching structure that seeks to reinforce the capitalist ideals, focused on competitiveness. Thus, distancing itself from the school rhythm of the elderly, who present difficulties in this process.

In this direction, Torquato, Massi, and Santana (2011) reinforce that stimulating the use of these practices in everyday actions increases the possibility of acquiring this writing system and the reading skills of these individuals in the school context. The point is not to transmit the proposed contents without associating them to the reality of life of elderly individuals.

Cachioni and Todaro (2016, p. 176) contribute to this discussion by stating that "YAE elderly students are subjects of experience and their lives are punctuated by borderline situations in which they knew how to stop, think, feel, ponder, and act. When going/returning to school, they

want to live this school experience as the others already lived throughout their existences”.

Another difficulty in working with the elderly is juvenilization, highlighted in the speech of teacher Cien (26 years old), as one of the bottlenecks encountered in the development of the teaching practice. In this direction, Alencar (2002) points out that in the same geographical space – the classroom – there are two groups, two different expectations. On one side, young people who seek a learning path that culminates in the certification process to access the labor market. On the other, the elderly, who seek complementarity, interaction, emancipation, and school for pleasure and for social interaction. These are two moments that require different actions, in addition to a teaching attitude capable of mitigating generational conflicts, in the first place. This movement, when not solved, can even compromise the teacher's work and the students' learning.

In the midst of this process shrouded in generational relations, we can also see the pressure that teachers are under in institutions that value capitalist education: results and numbers. This fact is explicit in Teacher Cien's speech, which shows a lack of concern for the subject in detriment of the path traced by the system. The difficulties that teachers face in order to meet the different age groups and the requirements set by the State are perceptible.

Another aspect observed in the speeches of those surveyed has to do with the relationship between the elderly and technology as elements that hinder the teaching process aimed at the age profile under analysis. Although they are in a society where such mechanisms rule, and that their use is indispensable for a better social coexistence with their peers, the use of these tools by the elderly at school is still signaled as a major bottleneck in education.

In addition, teachers highlight the need for the use of new methodologies suitable for this audience, as reinforced by the Statute of the Elderly itself, Article 21, as observed: “The government will create opportunities for education access for the elderly, adapting curricula, methodologies and teaching materials to educational programs for them” (Brasil, 2003, s. p., our emphasis). However, according to the reflections of Scortegagna (2016, p. 222), the limitation in teacher training “[...] may reveal difficulties in the methodological organization, as well as in the preparation of materials aimed at meeting the specificities of the elderly public”.

The use of technologies in the classroom to work with the elderly, according to the reflections presented by the teachers, has been a reason for resistance. This movement presents, between the lines, a great educational and, more than that, social concern. The elderly are inserted in a technological society. To associate technologies, especially digital ones, to the teaching and learning process of this age group also requires a greater approach from teachers. This process is directly linked to the educators training.

In theory, this process of incorporating technologies into the elderly classrooms requires breaking away from an outdated education model that has been present throughout most of these individuals' lives. Alencar (2002) points out that the school that is familiar to many elderly people is one in which the main objective was memorization, an education whose practices were centered in the categories of authoritarianism and reproduction, elements that do not constitute the current school model, whose focus is on the use of technologies, especially those used in people's daily lives.

The lack of mastery and/or absence of the use of technological tools associated with the adequacy of methodologies generates major problems for students and teachers, especially for elderly students. The reflection of this was seen throughout the year 2020, when schools had to change their in-person teaching practices for remote education, requiring the incorporation of the use of digital platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, among others.

Finally, we recognize the teachers' difficulty with the low attendance of elderly students, which increased at this time of pandemic. School attendance in the context of YAE has historically been an instrument of concern, even causing the closure of many schools. Such is the case of the municipality of João Pessoa/PB, which had, in recent years, the closure of more than 20 schools that offered YAE, according to information from the School Census (INEP, 2019). In sum, the evasion has been used as a justification for closing the units, disrespecting the Federal Constitution, which advocates, in its Article 205, the right to education (Brasil, 1988). Thus, infrequency, which generates evasion in YAE, is only an attempt to justify the subtraction of a constitutional right.

The Difficulties of Teaching during the Pandemic

Although they are in a computerized society, the use of these tools is still something very distant from reality for many elderly people. The sudden movement of remote classes in schools without infrastructure and teacher and students training has caused a scenario of frustrations, uncertainties and setbacks.

In most of the participating teachers speeches (9 out of 10), they pointed out that access to the internet, the absence of equipment – cell phones – and/or the non-use and lack of planning for this teaching format reverberate as particular aspects of this pandemic process in which the remote teaching practice happened suddenly, taking teachers by surprise and unprepared to act in this new context, having to learn through the process. Let's look at some of the speeches of the participants.

Students' access to technologies, lack of planning and pedagogical monitoring, low interaction of students in the issue of activities, the lack of credibility of students in the issue of remote classes (Teacher Inter, 54 years).

During this isolation process, working remotely has been a great challenge, since many students do not have internet available, which makes the activities with this target audience unfeasible (Teacher Poli I, 37 years old).

Most of them do not have technological gadgets such as cell phones, computers, and internet access, which would allow them to access the classes. Those who do have these technologies have difficulties using platforms and social networks. This makes the access to remote classes difficult, impairing the teaching and learning process. Many times, the school prints the activities, they get them, but they can't do them without a personalized and closer guidance that meets their specificities (Teacher Mestra, 45 years old).

Besides being one more challenge for teachers, this remote process served to point out the weaknesses and inequalities that education in Brazil still presents, especially in the use of technologies associated with school activities. The respondents' statements reinforce that there are distinct worlds: the school and its actions, and society and its way of life, aspects that highlight the lack of relationship between what is taught in school and what is used in the social context. Many times when used at school, the technologies serve only as a mere tool for the transposition of content. There is a lack of a more specific training aimed at meeting the reality in which our schools are inserted, in addition to a public policy of digital inclusion that brings in its proposal elements that contemplate the different generational groups that populate our teaching units, especially the YAE, for assisting mainly the elderly. Thus, as Campos and Alencar (2005) state, the more technological a society is, the more excluding it will be, especially with those outside the productive circuit, such as the elderly.

Therefore, the accentuation of social and technological differences with which the elderly live in their daily lives is demonstrated. Expressed between the lines, the economic aspect becomes evident in the respondents' statements. In their majority, the elderly survive on meager resources, being the sole provider of household expenses in many cases (Capuzzo, 2012). Thus, the acquisition of tools that enable them to have an intense relationship with the technologies present in society becomes even more distant. In view of the above, there is also a need to provide teachers with training that incorporates tools and methodologies capable of supporting changes in the teaching and learning process, such as those required due to the pandemic.

Another aspect evidenced by the teachers was the absence of school planning. Such concern leads us to think about a perspective of socialization, since planning is a necessary tool for the development of teaching practice. In essence, this process translates into a moment of organization, adequacy, programming and research for teachers (Libâneo, 2001). In this scenario, the act of planning has an intense relationship with the educator's training, especially with regard to the movement of remote teaching practiced in schools in the current context.

Teacher Training for Remote Education Practice

Whether initial or continuous, teacher training is essential for executing the teaching profession. With some exceptions, during the pandemic, teacher training for national Basic Education educators has never been so important and has brought remote education as a challenge, mediated by a digital platform and the use of specific equipment for this purpose. Similarly, it brought the return of some modalities, such as hybrid teaching in High School in certain Brazilian states, this is the format in which the teacher is giving classes to a group of students in-person and remotely to others, mediated by a digital platform.

However, the reality has been even more challenging for tens of thousands of teachers who are working in YAE in the public sector, due to factors already reported in this article, especially the lack of continuing education to deal with technologies in this modality. Therefore, when we asked the teachers who participated in this research if the training opportunities they took part during their professional experience contributed to their work in remote teaching, 9 out of 10 said no. Nevertheless, these professionals have not failed to face the challenge imposed by the covid-19 pandemic and have tried to reinvent themselves, as we can see in the speeches below:

I don't feel able to work remotely. Day after day I have been reinventing myself to find strategies to get my students to continue their studies. The use of certain technologies has been challenging for me and for my students (Teacher Poli I, 37 years old).

No. The trainings I took part were not related to the use of remote learning technologies. Considering that, I always counted on the support of technicians with IT knowledge, when necessary. All my training process was linked to in-person learning methodologies. I am learning in the process, during the pandemic (Teacher Mestra, 45 years old).

Among those who were negative in their answers, Teacher Geo, 43 years old, stated that the training carried out in the private schools where she teaches helped her in this pandemic period with remote activities. On the other hand, teacher Cien, 26 years old, answered that the training contributed partially. Thus, the pandemic caused by covid-19, in its positivity, reinforces the indispensability of fostering continuous training policies for teachers in the public education system. In agreement with Silva (2011), the teacher, as a professional and a worker, must perform their duty with responsibility and competence, and for this a continuing education policy that enables the teacher to perform their professional exercise cannot be denied or demeaned. More than being concerned with the teacher, we are concerned with a quality public education for the more than 3 million young people and adults who access public-school benches in the country (INEP, 2019).

School Activities Performed

Considering that the teachers are part of the same municipal school system, the answers given in regard to the activities developed in the context of remote education are quite diverse. This characteristic demonstrates the respect for the differences and particularities that each teaching unit has. Let's look at some of the speeches made through the instrument used for data collection, in the following excerpts:

The activities are being posted on the WhatsApp group, with audios and videos referring to the thematic units presented; they are also being inserted in the virtual platform available on the school website and printed and delivered to students without internet access. There are no dynamics directed exclusively to elderly students (Teacher Poli, 45 years old).

Activities on Google Forms, sending photos of written activities, audios, video lessons, YouTube videos, educational games on cell phones (Teacher Ped, 36 years old).

Lessons through videos, printed activities, audios (Teacher Inter, 54 years old).

I record short, objective lessons and send them via WhatsApp, along with the activities to be transcribed into the notebook. I use Google Docs forms. I set up biweekly meetings via Google Meet. For those who don't have technological apparatus, they pick up the printed activities at school (Teacher Mestra, 45 years old).

The elderly are mentioned only in the answer of teacher Poli, 45 years old, in a perspective of lack of methodological adaptation and of the activity itself, distancing itself from what the National Policy for the Elderly (Brasil, 1994) and the Statute of the Elderly (Brasil, 2003) recommend regarding the process of approximation of educational actions to the needs of this age group.

As Cachioni and Todaro (2016, p. 180-181) situate,

As for the way of teaching, it is essential that the teacher is clear about what, why, how and to whom they are teaching, so that from then on, they can use a methodology that meets the educational needs of the student. Therefore, the methodology needs to consider aspects inherent to the learner, such as: learning pace, extracurricular experiences, age group, and potential. These issues are challenging in YAE, so that the basic educational formation of the elderly student occurs in a minimally satisfactory manner.

It is about enabling the elderly to access the content through a methodology that considers their peculiarities and needs, whether concerning infrastructure and/or even in the pedagogical aspect, thus ensuring them a better learning. "Education through the acquisition of and reflection on knowledge allows the elderly not only to observe themselves as a social subject, but also offers them subsidies to face the contradictions in their lives" (Scortegagna, 2016, p. 217).

Observing the reflections of the respondents, the intense dialogue is noticeable. Sometimes in a traditional posture, sometimes in a more technological relationship, being the WhatsApp the most used tool. It is increasingly evident that the educational system was built for the youngest, therefore maintaining the exclusion and social marginality (Alencar, 2002). Thus, the greatest challenge for teachers is to receive and adapt the system's proposal to the public that is so growing in the context of our society, the elderly. This process, with intense ruptures and discontinuities, asserts even more the differences among students, leaving gaps in the elderly learning process, given the lack of adequacy of the material to meet their needs, in addition to compromising the pedagogical process and, consequently, the evaluation of learning.

The Learning Assessment and the Activity Feedback

We agree that the evaluation of learning is a continuous process, rather than a quantitative/summative conception, as guided by the educational legislation itself, Law No. 9.394/96, Article 24, Section V, letter A (Brasil, 1996). This evaluation process must consider the pedagogical, historical, social, economic and even political dimensions in which the students are immersed (Batista; Gurgel; Soares, 2006). In this direction, the continuous teacher training cannot dismiss the importance of bringing the learning evaluation as a crucial aspect of the teacher's training process, among its contents. And, as Silva (2011, p. 242) points out, learning assessment aims to "[...] value the process and the young adult student in its dimensions, both in terms of the development of reading and writing skills, and in the development of interpersonal skills". Therefore, we understand that this practice of valuing is a challenging situation for teachers, and it became even more pronounced when the teaching and learning process left the classroom and entered the universe of the remote context, as evidenced here.

Thus, most of the teachers surveyed – 9 out of 10 – reported that it is not easy to evaluate in remote teaching, due to issues such as the lack of student interaction/participation in remote classes, which results, among other things, from the digital infrastructure conditions – lack of laptops, internet, etc. They also mention the teacher's detachment in observing the performance of these activities. Let's look at the speeches below:

Evaluation and pedagogical follow-up have been extremely impaired. Few students are able to receive guidance through videos or audios due to the lack of internet available or the difficulty in using these tools (Teacher Poli I, 37 years old).

Very difficult. I have doubts whether they are the ones doing the activities or if it is someone else. In sum, the activities are done, but I don't participate in the process of doing them. They come ready to me. It makes it impossible to perceive the processes they develop for learning the contents (Teacher Mestra, 45 years old).

On the other hand, one of the respondents, despite finding assessment complex in remote education, states that “Depending on the student there is the possibility. For others, there isn’t” (Professor Poli, 41 years old). In our view, the difficulty teachers have in evaluating during remote teaching may have the following answers: the lack of continuing education for training on this issue; conception of learning evaluation based on the summative issue, because, as the teacher reports: “[...] I don’t participate in the process of making them. They come ready to me”; add to that the fact that these professionals training focused on dealing with the in-person evaluation process, and the difficulty for elderly students to handle technology, therefore depending on others to help them with their tasks.

Certainly, one of the bottlenecks that teachers face, in the sense of promoting an evaluation process that measures the accumulated learning of students, is due to the fact that their initial training approached the in-person dimension, in which both student and teacher share the classroom space in real time. This transitional change was not brought up in this process, an aspect that contributes to the difficulties accentuated in the speeches brought, showing how relevant is the place of learning evaluation in teacher training (Villas Boas; Soares, 2016).

As for the feedback of the activities to the elderly students, the questioned teachers strive to ensure the minimum quality in their didactic and pedagogical activities for this audience. In the midst of the current challenges imposed on their teaching practice because of the pandemic, the research participants use the means and resources available to give feedback on the evaluations, among them, they use WhatsApp and Google Forms, for instance, to send written messages, audios, and/or photos of the activities performed, thus following up on the printed activities.

About the relationship between formative assessment and the use of feedbacks, Conceição (2018, p. 78-79), states that:

In a concept of formative assessment, if the results of the feedback indicate the main points that the student needs to improve, the teacher should monitor the student individually and, if necessary, guide them, and seek new learning strategies to solve the main difficulties presented by the student. However, when faced with reality, there are obstacles that prevent the teacher from doing individual monitoring in the classroom.

On the other hand, there are those teachers who fail to provide feedback on the activities, citing the following reasons:

Through activities visualizations, monitoring the printed activities (quantitative) performance (Teacher Inter, 54 years old).

Activities feedback occurs through analysis of student responses, through written messages or audios and photos of the activities performed, but elderly students interact little (Teacher Poli, 45 years old).

As many students do not have internet available, activities feedback has been hampered. Most of them just look for the activities at school and do them with the help of family members. The evaluation is almost impossible (Teacher Polí I, 37 years old).

I make corrections through the resources available in the technological tools and forward them to those who access the platforms and social networks. There is no way to give feedback to those who do the printed activities (Teacher Mestra, 45 years old).

As the YAE teachers in the municipality of João Pessoa/PB also offer printed activities in consideration with those students who do not have access to the internet, the devolution of these activities has made it difficult for the teacher to give feedback on the teaching and learning process. What we see, therefore, is the lack of infrastructure so that both teachers and students can better adapt to the new reality of remote education.

Given this context, the gap between the activities performed and the absence of a feedback on what was done compromises the evaluation and the learning process of the students. Conceição (2018, p. 36) explains that

[...] the teacher (re)orientates themselves in their educational planning on the feedback given by the student. The feedback given by the teacher, in turn, serves (or should serve, according to the proposal) so that the student can better understand their own learning during the process of assimilation of knowledge and acquisition of skills.

That is, the incipency in the feedbacks of the evaluative activities is seen as a serious situation (Villas Boas; Soares, 2016) because it breaks the logic of a learning built in this process of elaboration, correction and understanding of what was done in the activities and the acquired learning.

Therefore, it is not part of our school culture didactic-pedagogical actions apart from the in-person learning format, as well as the teacher training, especially for YAE, to be in this same model. The culture of in-person education is something naturalized in the country. Remote education is a readjustment to a time that is considered provisional, due to the pandemic, but that in the near future will return to the traditional, face to face approach. Furthermore, remote education requires, without exception, that students and teachers master knowledge and techniques and that they have compatible technological equipment to use digital technologies as tools in the teaching and learning process, with which this process is made possible.

The social and digital reality of many students and teachers in public schools, with the pandemic, has exposed the social “naked truth” of economic limitations, of cultural capital that does not favor remote teaching in YAE, especially with the elderly learners.

(Not) Final Words

In the final considerations, this paper aimed to discuss the challenges faced by YAE teachers in the municipality of João Pessoa/PB to teach the elderly remotely during the covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the readings and reflections on the excerpts of the teachers' speeches, which substantiated the debate presented, we noticed several aspects that endorse the existing weaknesses in the modality in face of the work developed with the elderly students and that became even more evident during the pandemic period through remote teaching.

One of the greatest challenges posed by the teachers refers to the teacher training process, since such training courses do not address the needs of those who work with young people and adults and, especially, do not prepare them to work with the elderly. This process points to an intense dialogue with two important aspects: first, regarding the use of different technologies, especially those that are present in the school site; second, in the construction of methodologies that meet the needs of the elderly, considering what is still foreseen both in the National Policy for the Elderly and in the Statute of the Elderly, which advocate methodological changes that meet the needs of this age group.

It has become even more evident with the remote education the technological inequalities among students, as the difficulties that elderly students have compared to young ones are noticeable, thus imposing on teachers the task of providing the elderly an environment to overcome these differences. The inequalities highlighted are not only reduced to the use of the equipment, but to the acquisition and even access to the internet, crucial elements for teaching during social and educational isolation, caused by the growth of covid-19.

The teachers' reflections further reinforce the presence of traditional methodologies, focused on reproduction, and little or no incorporation of digital technologies, including the printing of activities for students, especially the elderly.

The transition movement between classroom teaching and the performance of remote activities pointed out the new challenges that teachers working in YAE will have from now on, with emphasis on training for what is envisioned as hybrid teaching.

When practicing the remote teaching process, the teachers showed a noticeable difficulty, as expressed in their speeches, about the adequacy of the activities to the elderly public.

Besides the gaps that the accelerated process of remote teaching brought about, when we associate this with the absence of a public policy aimed at the modality, we can accurately see the precariousness and marginalization with which YAE is treated. For example, when we observe the guidelines for Youth and Adult Education during the pandemic, in the Advisory Opinion CNE/CEP No. 05/2020 (Brasil, 2020b), which do not meet the current moment.

In the speeches of the participantes, it can be seen that the work developed in the context of YAE has more concerned in getting closer to the school, in keeping the relationship between the teacher and the student alive, than a content-based approach.

Even greater difficulties were observed regarding keeping the student active during the pandemic in the teachers' statements, because the YAE public presented more sumptuous losses, since most of them are subjects immersed in the productive labor process, which became unfeasible or very compromised during the period of social isolation generated by the pandemic.

Aligned to this, the absence of indicative guidelines for the modality clearly demonstrates the lack of concern that the Brazilian State addresses regarding the specific teaching process with adults and the elderly. This movement is apart from the guidelines offered to the other modalities, whose robustness is visible in the documents brought throughout the text.

Therefore, it is important that teachers are aware that the YAE in the current context has become more than a modality, a space of struggle and resistance to ensure its survival. In light of the above, it is necessary to consolidate a State proposal for this modality, so that we may have, in this scenario, a methodological proposal that contemplates all of its subjects, especially the elderly.

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Note

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