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Publicação Contínua

# Basic education in emergency contexts: what does research say about the reality of COVID-19?


Educação básica em contextos emergenciais: o que dizem as pesquisas  
sobre a realidade de COVID-19?

Educación básica en contextos de emergencia: qué dice la investigación  
sobre la realidad del COVID-19?

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**Abstract:** The health seriousness due to the Covid-19 virus pandemic that has been installed worldwide since 2019 has brought news in all areas of social life. In Brazil, the federal government has little to do with public policies aimed at social areas. While science, in addition to numerous assumptions and being the object of government denialist discourses, has sought to contribute to the clarification of the phenomenon of the pandemic and its impacts on society. Therefore, the present study sought to analyze the panorama of research, in the period 2020 and 2021, on basic education in times of a pandemic. For that, from a qualitative approach, a bibliographic research was carried out in which 11 works were selected. The investigations demonstrate that the option for distance teaching has proved to be the main alternative for the educational offer in this scenario, but its implementation accentuates the educational inequalities that exist in the country.

**Keywords:** Basic education, Remote teaching, Covid-19 pandemic, Scientific research.

**Resumo:** A gravidade sanitária devido a pandemia do vírus de Covid-19 que instalou, mundialmente, desde 2019, trouxe desdobramentos em todas as esferas de vida social. No Brasil, o governo federal pouco se fez em relação às políticas públicas voltadas para as áreas sociais. Quanto a ciência, mesmo sofrendo inúmeros esvaziamentos orçamentários e sendo alvo de discursos negacionista do governo, vem buscando contribuir com a elucidação do fenômeno pandêmico e os seus impactos para a sociedade. Sendo assim, o presente estudo buscou analisar o panorama das pesquisas, no período de 2020 e 2021, referente à educação básica em tempos de pandemia. Para tanto, a partir de uma abordagem qualitativa foi realizada uma pesquisa bibliográfica no qual foram selecionados 11 trabalhos. As pesquisas apontam que a opção pelo ensino remoto se mostrou a principal alternativa para a oferta educacional nesse cenário, mas a sua implementação acentuou as desigualdades educativas já existentes no país.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação básica, Ensino remoto, Pandemia de Covid-19, Pesquisas científicas.

**Resumen:** La gravedad sanitaria por la pandemia del virus Covid-19 que se ha instalado a nivel mundial desde 2019 ha traído novedades en todos los ámbitos de la vida social. En Brasil, el gobierno federal ha hecho poco en relación a las políticas públicas dirigidas a las áreas sociales. En cuanto a la ciencia, aun sufriendo numerosos recortes presupuestarios y siendo objeto de discursos negacionistas gubernamentales, ha venido buscando contribuir al esclarecimiento del fenómeno de la pandemia y sus impactos en la sociedad. Por lo tanto, el presente estudio buscó analizar el panorama de la investigación, en el período 2020 y 2021, sobre la educación básica en tiempos de pandemia. Por ello, desde un enfoque cualitativo, se realizó una investigación bibliográfica en la que se seleccionaron 11 obras. Las investigaciones muestran que la opción por la enseñanza a distancia demostró ser la principal alternativa de la oferta educativa en este escenario, pero su implementación acentuó las desigualdades educativas que ya existen en el país.

**Palabras clave:** Educación básica, Enseñanza a distancia, Pandemia de COVID-19, Investigación científica.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2020, as a result of a new virus, the world was ravaged by a public and sanitary emergency never seen before by this generation. On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, People's Republic of China. A few days later, Chinese authorities announced the discovery of a new version of the coronavirus, later named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), which causes Covid-19 disease.

Due to the high transmissibility, the WHO declared, on January 30, 2020, that the outbreak constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and, on March 11, 2020, it was characterized as a pandemic (PAHO/WHO, 2020). These decisions demanded international, coordinated and immediate responses, that is, they pointed to the need for joint actions between countries to face the emergency situation at a global level.

In Brazil, the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed on February 26, 2020. The patient was a man who had been to Italy and recovered from the disease (Unasus, 2020). However, what became evident in the national territory were the ideological and partisan disputes that formed a network of disinformation and contradictions. This tension began with the inauguration of the President of the Republic, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, in 2019, and highlighted the attitudes of a movement that adopts denialist strategies, which intensified in the face of the pandemic. According to Duarte & César (2020), this movement is political-authoritarian, extreme right, contrary to critical thinking and educational policies.

According to Vieira & Glezer (2019, p. 67), since 2013 “loyalty to constitutional rules and values seems to have entered a regression process”. For the authors, the president “articulates not only an agenda of deconstructing the policies adopted by previous governments, which is natural in the process of democratic alternation in power, but also of attacking the very constitutional matrix of 1988” (ibid., p. 68).

Even in the face of this situation, Law No. 13,979, of February 6, 2020, was published, providing collective protection measures to contain and prevent the disease, among them, social isolation, quarantine, the determination of compulsory medical examinations, and laboratory tests, as well as closing and/or limiting certain urban activities (Brasil, 2020a). For Dallari (2021), the emergency situation and the absence of scientific knowledge, in addition to political, personal and ideological issues, result in administrative inefficiency, economic losses and legal uncertainty regarding the powers of federative entities.

The consequences of denialism and successive clashes in government spheres are revealed in statistics released by the Consortium of Press Vehicles, which collects data directly from state health departments. In January 2022, more than 620,000 deaths and

22.7 million cases of contamination were confirmed. There was a decrease in contagion with the advancement of vaccination campaigns, but as a result of the new Ômicron variant, states and municipalities returned to a state of maximum alert (Mortes e Casos, 2022).

Ômicron was detected in South Africa in early November 2021 and reported to the WHO on the 24th and is killing people all over the world, mostly patients who did not get the vaccine or who missed the booster shots (Vidal, 2022). These numbers place the country in second place in the world ranking of deaths, behind only the United States (Our World in Data, 2022).

To contain the spread of the disease, in December 2020, the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) released a study pointing out the immunization of children as a strategy to increase the population's vaccination coverage (Valverde, 2021). Even in disagreements with the presidential office, the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) approved the immunization of children aged 5 to 11 years, with campaigns scheduled for January 2022. With different dosage and composition, the institution says that vaccination will be safe and effective for children (Anvisa, 2021).

Expressions little used before the pandemic began to be repeated daily in conversations, in official documents, in press reports, in addition to the various information channels via the internet. Words like social isolation, quarantine, social distancing and *lockdown*<sup>1</sup> began to be constantly verbalized with their meanings still undefined or even as synonyms and, most of the time, not understood by people. According to Faro et al. (2020, p. 4),

Quarantine seeks to separate and restrict the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease, in order to see if they will get sick. Isolation, on the other hand, concerns the separation of sick people, infected by a communicable disease, such as COVID-19, from those who are not sick.

In this pandemic scenario, attention turned to the challenges imposed on health systems, but, equally, educational systems were directly affected with the closure of educational institutions, therefore, there was a collision of fundamental rights between the right to life (Art. 5) and the right to education (Art. 206, IX; Art. 227) enshrined in the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988). According to Bossak & Peghini (2020), when there is a conflict between fundamental rights, which have the status of an ingrained clause, with the same value, the theory of weighting is applied, always taking into account the principle of proportionality. The authors clarify that “there is no hierarchy between the principles, because there is no incompatibility between the principles, but there is competition between them, so it is not possible to choose which one should prevail, or even exclude one principle over another” (Ibid., p. 25).

Given this scenario, Ordinance no. 343, of March 17, 2020, of the Ministry of Education (MEC) provided for “the replacement of in-person classes with classes in digital media while the pandemic situation of the New Coronavirus – COVID-19 lasts” (Brasil,

2020b). Subsequently, the National Education Council (CNE), through Opinion n. 5/2020, approved on April 28, 2020, came to the public to elucidate teaching systems and networks, at all levels, stages and modalities, considering the need to reorganize academic activities due to preventive actions to the spread of Covid -19. the opinion CNE n. 5/2020

[...]exceptionally relaxed the requirement to comply with the school calendar by exempting educational establishments from the obligation to comply with the minimum number of days of effective school work, provided that the minimum annual workload established in the aforementioned provisions is complied with, observing the rules to be edited by the respective systems of teaching (Brasil, 2020c, p. 5).

From that moment on, the activities were named remote activities, as they associated non-face-to-face actions mediated or not by technological resources. It is conceivable to understand that it was a difficult task to suddenly transpose the face-to-face model to a new model called remote. The method for this objective is “to learn to unlearn, in order to learn again” (Mignolo, 2008, p. 323). It appears that education had to reinvent itself and incorporate practices that were never necessary before, or at least not so necessary.

In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought a series of changes in the reality of the world population on a global scale. Thus, to avoid infection, according to Aquino et al. (2020), many economic, cultural, social and educational activities were suspended and/or new configurations obtained. This situation triggered challenges related to teleworking needs, often called home office and/or remote work.

The directions and regulations in the economic/commercial field initiated by the globalized world, since the end of the 20th century, have left a strong impression on the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which are playing an increasingly important role in the modernization of the labor camp. In this way, as they can increase the mobility of their actions, ICTs tend to impose major changes in the public sector. For Rocha and Amador (2018), it appears in public institutions as a result of technological innovations and can have repercussions on reducing production costs, increasing productivity and personal satisfaction.

On the other hand, the authors highlighted that, in Brazil, the adoption of this work regime in the public sector is still incipient, lacking systematic normative regulations and a unified field of scientific production. Therefore, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the demand for telecommuting in the public and private sectors has increased dramatically. In the context of educational institutions, this situation triggered the direct development of management, planning and work behaviors and established dynamic changes in teaching, research and extension activities.

There is a wide set of sociopolitical factors involved, and, even in the face of the emergency in decision-making in the pandemic context, in the perspective that there is a problem and decision makers seek solutions, as Secchi (2010) explains, a policy The public

sector must deal with the concrete, symbolic content and the process of construction and performance of these decisions, and it is up to the State, as a set of institutions, to enable government action and configure these guidelines.

In view of the above, it is noted that the Covid-19 pandemic triggered a series of changes in life in society, among them, it altered the offer of formal education. As Arruda (2020) has rightly emphasized, there is no possibility of drawing short and medium-term considerations about multiple human relationships, since,

[...]More than an educational problem, the blocking of access to school reconfigured society, as times and movements were deconstructed, families began to combine the responsibilities of work and life of students in extended times and in the context of the need for maintenance of employment and income, sometimes in the context of confinement in reasonably small spaces, so that isolation is daily compared to situations of war (Arruda, 2020, p. 259).

Therefore, this phenomenon demands a scientific look to elucidate the implications for decision-making and public policy making in an exceptional way for this pandemic context. In view of the above, the present work aimed to analyze the panorama of research, in the period 2020 and 2021, regarding basic education in times of pandemic.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

For the development of the theme of this study, from a qualitative approach, a literature review was used with the objective of identifying the Brazilian academic production regarding education in the pandemic context in the period from 2020 to 2021. The bibliographic survey took place through searches in the following digital databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SiELO) Brazil; Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal (Redalyc) and; Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD).

The selection of works, initially, occurred by mapping studies that had the following descriptors in their titles: “education and pandemic”; “Covid-19 pandemic and education”; “coronavirus and education”; “SARS-CoV-2 and education”. Because it is a new theme, linguistic variations were considered despite the synonymy and the search was also composed with the descriptors “coronavirus”, “SARS-CoV-2” and “Covid-19”. Empirical works published in Brazil, in Portuguese, from 2020 to 2021, in digital libraries of theses and dissertations, as well as in journals related to education and social sciences, were adopted as filtering criteria. The result was 415 articles and 26 works between theses and dissertations.

After reading the titles, abstracts and keywords, 30 articles and 4 dissertations were selected. To compose the inventory, only studies with objects of analysis aimed at basic education, from the perspective of public education, were considered. Therefore, the literature review consisted of 11 scientific articles, namely:



**Table 1**

Bibliographic review

| AUTOR                           | ANO  | TÍTULO   |
|---------------------------------|------|--|
| 1. Almeida, L. C. & Dalben, A.  | 2020 | (Re)organizar o trabalho pedagógico em tempos de covid-19: no limiar do (im)possível                     |
| 2. Assis, A.E.S.Q.              | 2021 | Educação e pandemia: outras ou refinadas formas de exclusão?   |
| 3. Cipriani, F.M. et al.        | 2021 | Atuação docente na educação básica em tempo de pandemia  |
| 4. Gatti, B. A.                 | 2020 | Possível reconfiguração dos modelos educacionais pós-pandemia  |
| 5. Guizzo, B. S. et. al.        | 2020 | A reinvenção do cotidiano em tempos de pandemia  |
| 6. Lunardi, N. M. S. Si. et al. | 2021 | Aulas Remotas Durante a Pandemia: dificuldades e estratégias utilizadas por pais                         |
| 7. Macedo, R. M.                | 2021 | Direito ou privilégio? Desigualdades digitais, pandemia e os desafios de uma escola pública              |
| 8. Mendes, G. M. L. et al.      | 2020 | Seção temática: Adiado o fim da escola: perspectivas internacionais sobre Educação em tempos de pandemia |
| 9. Oliveira, J. B. A. et al.    | 2020 | A Covid-19 e a volta às aulas: ouvindo as evidências   |
| 10. Reis, D. dos S.             | 2020 | Coronavírus e desigualdades educacionais: reposicionando o debate  |
| 11. Troitinho, M. C. R. et al.  | 2021 | Ansiedade, afeto negativo e estresse de docentes em atividade remota durante a pandemia da Covid-19      |

Source: Elaborated by the authors.



For a better understanding of the predominant approaches in the selected academic production, it was decided to divide the theme into five axes, namely: (a) Management and (re)organization of pedagogical work; (b) Connectivity and other exclusion factors; (c) Teaching in remote teaching; (d) Remote classes and the difficulties and strategies used by family members; and (e) Possible reconfiguration of post-pandemic educational models and the future of the school.

The workers analyzed in the axis (a) "Management and (re)organization of pedagogical work" highlighted the experiences regarding decision-making to fulfill the teaching hours of the year 2020 of basic education.

Oliveira et al. (2020) examined the situations of interruption of face-to-face classes, the increase in time and the impact of the use of technologies on school performance. They concluded that these strategies are unpromising and that the losses resulting from the interruption of classes tend to be recovered in the long term. The authors first considered carrying out a diagnosis of the students and, based on the data, applying structured interventions with appropriate methods and the strategic use of homework. Better use of time would reduce absenteeism with intensive mentoring programs in small, high-risk groups.

The study by Almeida & Dalben (2020) analyzed the process of recomposition and school management of a school in the state of Paraná during the crisis caused by Covid-19. After a process of unification of two units, this school started to serve more than 1,500 students from elementary to high school, in addition to three professional courses. According to the authors, the implementation of remote teaching proved to be complex and challenging, and the physical distance deepened the already known educational inequalities.

In axis (b) "Connectivity and other exclusion factors", the authors problematize the challenges faced with digital tools and the transfer of classroom classes to emergency remote teaching, and analyzed some recurrent discourses regarding the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Macedo (2021) showed that, in addition to educational and social inequalities, digital inequalities were added, already constituting, since the end of the 20th century, another locus of social stratification in Brazil. For the author, the insufficiency of public policies in the period did not guarantee connectivity and the right to education in the country in the midst of the crisis, further penalizing lower-income students.

In the work of Reis (2020), the discussion of a culture of privileges – of race, class, territory – that prevents structural, collective and democratic transformations that can reverse the logic of dehumanization and (dis)advantages underway in the country, is intensified, covered by the contours of meritocracy. He emphasizes that "not everyone has access to the means and instruments necessary to be digitally integrated" (Ibid., p. 2).

Meanwhile, Assis (2021) discusses the uncompromising generalization of reality in the speeches given by teachers and students within the scope of public educational bodies in the context of the pandemic. The author resorted to conceptual argumentation in order to explore the analytical categories that emerged from the speculative process. Therefore, she highlighted factors of exclusion in the speeches: necessity – “I need to graduate”, “important to do what is possible”; tranquility regarding the use of technologies – “it is intuitive”, “just use”; and ease – “but everyone has a cell phone these days” (Ibid., p. 2). It emphasizes the exclusionary aspects with perspectives of innovation, proactivity and/or success.

In the same direction, axis (c) “Teaching in remote teaching” points out the difficulties in using technological tools and also the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of education professionals.

The study by Cipriani et al. (2021) had the participation of 209 teachers from a city in Minas Gerais, which sought to give a voice to basic education teachers directly involved in the circumstances experienced by school institutions in the pandemic period. The authors adopted the following set of categories: suspension of classes and social distancing; challenges of remote teaching; curriculum development; evaluation of the teaching-learning process; student conduct; and expectations related to the return of face-to-face classes. They used the Content Analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2011) and, as a result, highlighted teachers' concerns with marked inequalities, difficulties in curricular educational practices and the expectations of education professionals with the return to schools. They also highlighted the psychological traits of these teachers, such as the state of anxiety, worry and anguish.

The work by Troitinho et al. (2021) corroborates that emergency remote work produced effects of anxiety, negative affect and perceived stress and adds that women had greater responses than men, an effect mediated mainly by the amount of housework performed by the teacher.

In axis (d) “Remote classes and the strategies and tactics used by family members” reveals the transformation of family daily life in the context of the pandemic, in which homes acquired new notions of space and time.

Guizzo et al. (2020) analyzed three specific dimensions: the relationship of families with technologies; the relationship of families with the school; and the relationship of families with their children. For the authors, social distancing gave rise to a displacement, which is the reorganization of everyday space and time, where the child was out of place, just as the adult was out of place in front of the child (emphasis by the authors). For them, there was a flagrant incompatibility in the strategies of normalization of the educational routine in the midst of a context of exceptionality.

In the same sense, Lunardiet et al. (2021) sought to understand the social representations of family members about the difficulties and strategies implemented in non-face-to-face classes offered to students. The authors used a sociodemographic questionnaire and the Free

Evocation of Words Test, which was applied to 147 participants, with prototypical analysis. It was found that parents/guardians, in order to meet the demands of remote teaching, had to improvise to learn how to teach both in terms of pedagogy and technology. Family members also pointed out difficulties with the internet, time management and concentration and conciliation between study and work. For them, the strategies used at home were: routine restructuring; the organization of the work/study place; and the conversations and follow-ups of student activities.

Axis (e) "Possible reconfiguration of post-pandemic educational models and the future of the school" brings a reflection in the context of basic education, considering the different teaching modalities, with their institutional and curricular differentials.

Gatti (2020) asks several situations for the post-pandemic, among them, if its effects will be in the direction of transformations in the ways of conceiving life, values, relating, working, producing, consuming and educating, or, in the direction of a return to pre-pandemic conditions. In relation to regular education, several aspects must be considered when returning to face-to-face classes, but the key vector is flexible and local planning.

As for the future of the school, Mendes et al. (2020) analyzed 22 articles and a document from May to November 2020, covering, in addition to Brazil, eight more countries. The authors considered the power of the school as a formative space that cannot be replaced or reproduced in other spaces and by other actors, as well as teaching efforts, family involvement and human resilience in a world in a state of exception.

Research has shown that the adoption of remote teaching as an emergency alternative for the provision of basic education was predominant in practically all school systems in municipalities, states and the Union. In this direction, they highlighted the consequences of this implementation carried out in isolation by the three Brazilian federative entities, that is, the absence of a national and articulated coordination for the implementation of educational policies that, at least, minimize the consequences of the pandemic. Therefore, this scenario accentuated the existing educational inequalities, as children and adolescents in social vulnerability were the most impacted by the numerous challenges of Covid-19, since they find themselves in limitations of access to technology, socio-structural conditions, weaknesses of family involvement in teaching-learning activities, among others.

From the point of view of the organization of pedagogical work, the studies pointed to a series of difficulties linked to the lack of planning resulting from the emergency in the implementation of remote teaching by the teaching networks, the didactic-pedagogical and emotional conditions for carrying out work practices due to social isolation and the lack of initial and pedagogical training of education professionals, above all, to deal with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The scientific productions in the area also signaled the possibility of increasing truancy and the

trend of hybrid teaching as an educational modality in a post-pandemic scenario.

## CONCLUSION

In the literature review, it was possible to verify that the sanitary measures significantly changed the social, economic and cultural contexts of the people. Daily life was substantially impacted causing changes in life in society in its most elementary aspects, as well as in the productive and reproductive dynamics.

While the numbers of those infected and deaths increased, states and municipalities fought political and ideological disputes with the presidency of the republic and its allies, which resulted in heterogeneous and uncoordinated actions with precarious mechanisms of incentive and cooperation between the federated entities, in addition to flexibilization of measures. of disease prevention and containment.

With so many uncertainties and insecurities, between guaranteeing the right to life, but also the right to education, educational systems have undergone changes that were not planned or even foreseen in public policies. Although the Education Councils at the national, state and municipal levels issued resolutions and/or opinions with guidelines for educational institutions belonging to their respective systems for the return to school, there was no synchronized coordination of political actions on the part of the three Brazilian federative entities.

To meet the academic years of 2020 and 2021, school calendars were reorganized with non-face-to-face classes in which pedagogical methodologies and practices were improvised with extracurricular activities supported or not by digital technologies, in addition to seeking other means of communication with family members, as well as how to claim a greater participation of these in the teaching-learning process of their respective sons and daughters.

The work overload of the teaching staff was another aspect raised in the studies with reports of high levels of anxiety, concern and anguish of these professionals. Social distancing greatly hampered the pedagogical process at the beginning of remote classes, as not all parents were able to learn to teach and use digital technologies or even to have technological resources.

In this context, the importance of technological resources was also evident, as well as the inability of teachers to deal with information tools and technologies. According to data from the ICT Education 2019 survey (CGI.BR, 2020, p. 23), this was largely because only 14% of public schools in the country had a virtual learning environment or platform. According to Moraes (1993), the history of educational informatics in Brazil has its roots in the seventies, however, the implementation of public policies for the insertion of technologies in the school environment proved to be inefficient and discontinued without an effective materialization until the present day.

Conditioned by the pandemic, the growth of social inequalities is one of the intrinsic phenomena cited by the authors, aggravated by the neglect of government authorities in a synchronized movement of denial and trivialization of human life. Brazilian education continues to be penalized by the lack of investment, which makes it impossible to reduce the impacts on learning, aggravated by the lack of structure in the implementation of emergency distance learning.

According to Puente et al. (2021), in a survey carried out by Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), Brazilian municipalities reduced investments in education by 93% in 2021. The rate of children out of school jumped from 1.39% in 2019 to 5, 5% in 2020, with a worsening in students between five and nine years. It is expected that the country has gone back 15 years in literacy, a situation aggravated by the short time in the classroom as a result of social isolation.

After more than two years, even with vaccination and the decrease in the number of deaths worldwide, there is no prediction for the end of the pandemic. In this sense, the research analyzed so far sought to outline initial considerations on the impacts caused by the spread of the Covid-19 disease in Brazilian basic education. Therefore, the bibliographic survey on the subject does not end here and should be continuous because the phenomenon is still ongoing and the complexity that involves understanding all its dimensions, which will require Brazilian governments to invest in science and technology and the scientific community to make efforts collectives to elucidate the challenges imposed by the educational situation in a pandemic scenario.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The term *Lockdown* has no single definition and can be translated into Portuguese to describe a period of time when people are not allowed to leave their homes or travel freely, because of the dangers of disease (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2021, translation).

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