

## **Narrativas escritas sobre a docência com crianças na pandemia<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Resumo**

O artigo é decorrente de uma pesquisa realizada com professoras que atuaram no ensino remoto, em uma instituição pública de Educação Infantil, da cidade de Passos, estado de Minas Gerais, Brasil. O objetivo foi investigar as especificidades que atravessam a atuação docente com crianças entre 4 e 5 anos, em tempos de pandemia. Para desenvolver a pesquisa utilizou-se como instrumento metodológico um questionário com questões dissertativas, para que as participantes descrevessem as sutilezas, desafios e aprendizagens da docência na pandemia. Enfim, os dados revelaram que a docência com crianças é desafiadora, mas também se demonstrou inventiva no ensino remoto, pois houve maior interação com as mídias, numa perspectiva além de utilitarista, mas também criativa e reflexiva.

**Palavras-chave:** Contexto pandêmico. Educação Infantil. Mídias. Práticas Pedagógicas. Docência.

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## Written narratives about teaching children in the pandemic

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### Abstract

The article is the result of a survey carried out with teachers who worked in remote education, in a public institution of Early Childhood Education, in the city of Passos, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The objective was to investigate the specificities that permeate teaching activities with children between 4 and 5 years old, during the pandemic. To develop the research, a questionnaire with essay questions was used as a methodological instrument, so that the participants could describe the subtleties, challenges and learning of teaching in the pandemic. Finally, the data revealed that teaching children is challenging, but it also proved to be inventive in remote education, as there was greater interaction with the media, from a perspective that not only was utilitarian, but also creative and reflective.

**Keywords:** Pandemic context. Early Childhood Education. Media. Pedagogical practices. Teaching.

# Narrativas escritas sobre la enseñanza com niños em la pandemia

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## Resumen

El artículo es el resultado de una encuesta realizada a docentes que trabajaban en educación remota, en una institución pública de Educación Infantil, en la ciudad de Passos, estado de Minas Gerais, Brasil. El objetivo fue investigar las especificidades que impregnan las actividades docentes con niños de entre 4 y 5 años, en tiempos de pandemia. Para el desarrollo de la investigación se utilizó como instrumento metodológico un cuestionario con preguntas de ensayo, de manera que los participantes pudieran describir las sutilezas, desafíos y aprendizajes de la docencia en la pandemia. Finalmente, los datos revelaron que la enseñanza con niños es un desafío, pero también resultó ser inventiva en la educación remota, ya que hubo una mayor interacción con los medios de comunicación, desde una perspectiva no solo utilitaria, sino también creativa y reflexiva.

**Palabras clave:** Contexto pandémico. Educación Infantil. Medios de comunicación. Prácticas pedagógicas. Ensenanza.

## Introduction

[...] From my window, I see the sunrise. I see people everywhere.  
[...] People with books in hand, on their way to school (JÚNIOR, 2019).

It could have been the beginning of just another week like any other, but this one was different - memories of the onset of quarantine in Brazil, March 16, 2020. We could open our windows and see life pulsating, much like Otávio Júnior (2019), who describes seeing his beautiful favela from his window, with people going to work and children heading to school. However, the pandemic brought on by the new coronavirus changed the view from every window. According to Anete Abramowicz and Margareth Park (2020), in March 2020, normality in Brazil was shattered; an unprecedented social experience affected all generations, who had never experienced a health crisis of such magnitude.

In this interim, we agree with Solange Santos and Marina Saraiva (2020) that 2020 will always be remembered as the year that never ends, for although it has officially concluded on the calendar, we will carry it with us for the rest of our lives. The Covid-19 pandemic, unfortunately, has affected us for more than two years, and thus, we extend our solidarity to the families of over 680,000 deceased in Brazil. Beyond mere numbers, these are lives cut short within a context of global health and political crises, overshadowed by obscurantism that has loomed over our country. To face denialist discourses and ideas, our resilience and hope must be continually evoked.

It is within this inconclusive context that this article emerges, stemming from an undergraduate research project conducted with four teachers who worked in remote teaching (academic year 2020 and the first semester of 2021) with classes of children aged 4 to 5 years in a public Early Childhood Education institution in the city of Passos, Minas Gerais, Brazil. This study aimed to investigate the particularities that affected teaching practices in the Early Childhood Education context, with a focus on pedagogical practices during the pandemic. Specifically, it sought to analyze the role of the teacher in Early Childhood Education, investigating how time and materials were organized in the planning of activities for preschool classes during remote learning.

Regarding the impacts of the pandemic in the field of education, we agree with Rayssa Oliveira (2021) that we are experiencing such a challenging time worldwide, in which:

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[...] all these possibilities for an affective bond between children, educators, and school spaces are in a period of waiting. For some, these places have become different - like bedrooms, corners of the home - that we see through screens and video calls, but for many, not even that. The school has disappeared from sight, touch, and physical presence, and educators struggle daily to keep affection and connection alive, even in a time of such necessary distancing (OLIVEIRA, 2021, p. 63).

However, this daily struggle by teachers to keep affection, connection, playful experiences, and learning alive seems fallacious to some people. On April 20, 2021, for example, Federal Deputy Ricardo José Magalhães Barros, in an interview addressing the topic of education during the pandemic, stated:

“[...] there is no reason for teachers not to be teaching, none at all. Healthcare professionals are going to work, transport workers are going to work, security personnel are going to work, retail workers are going to work, but teachers are the only ones who don't want to work. No, we are even voting now in Congress on a bill to classify education as an essential service. Brazil is the second country in the world that hasn't resumed classes, that didn't have classes during the pandemic. In Europe, the average period without classes was 70 days last year, 70 days on average without classes during the pandemic last year. Brazil didn't have even one day of classes. It's absurd, it's absurd the way we are allowing teachers to cause so much harm to our children in continuing their education [...]” (CNN BRASIL, 2021).

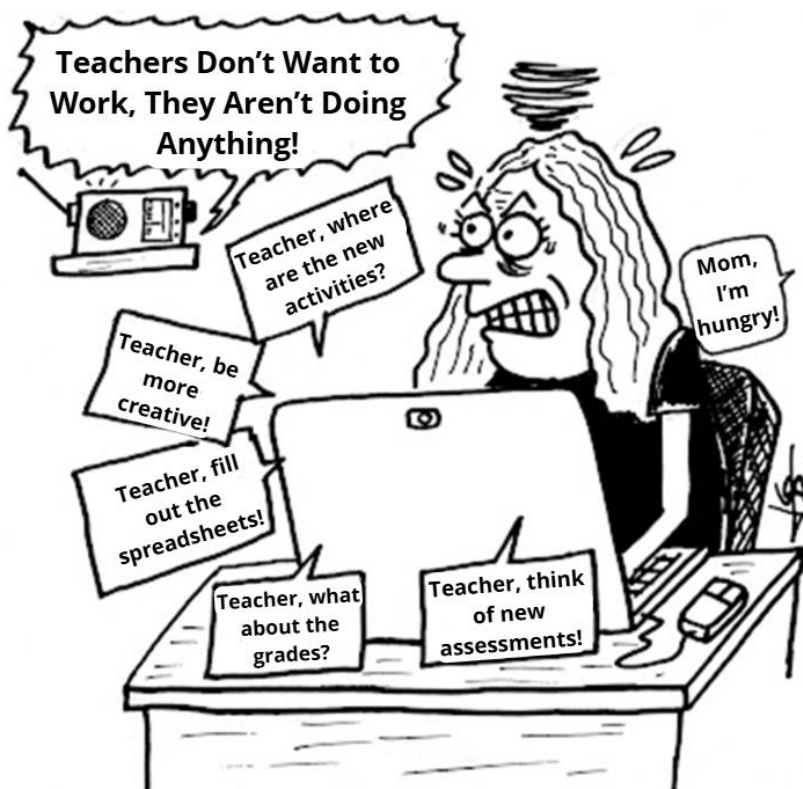
Contrary to what the deputy suggests, it is important to note that teachers at all levels, from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education, worked (and some still work) extensively in remote teaching in Brazil during the pandemic. They worked amid uncertainties, challenges, limited access to media, the precarization of teaching work, and other difficult circumstances.

Therefore, faced with such complexity and advocating for life, vaccination, and science, this article emerges as a thread of resistance, presenting a viable approach to analyzing teaching practices with children during the pandemic, based on written narratives from teachers in southwestern Minas Gerais.

Written narratives about teaching children in the pandemic

## Teaching in Early Childhood Education: Specificities that (Re)Shape in the Pandemic Context

Image 1 - Teaching Work During the Pandemic



Source: <http://grooeland.blogspot.com/2021/04/no-brasil-da-idiocracia-professoras-sao.html>

Before addressing the specificities of teaching in Early Childhood Education in the context of the pandemic, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of this stage of basic education. According to Andrea Moruzzi, Bianca Silva, and Bruna Barros (2020), the consolidation of the early childhood educational space as an integral part of basic education and as a fundamental right has been, and continues to be, marked by numerous debates encompassing issues related to childhood, teachers' knowledge, and, above all, teacher training. In this regard, it is important to highlight that:

The current configuration of early childhood education, as part of a national education system, is the result of a strong movement led by women who, in the 1970s, began to establish a field of research focused on children and childhood studies in Brazil (Abramowicz, 2015). If today we have a consolidated field of research on children, childhood, and early childhood education, it is because, during that period, women like Fúlvia Rosemberg, Maria Malta Campos, Sonia Kramer, among many others, raised the banner advocating for quality education for young children in Brazil, supported and involved by the Inter-Forum Movement on Early Childhood Education in Brazil (Mieib). Even before the 1988 Constitution, researchers such as those mentioned were already conducting studies that questioned

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the institutions serving children and the forms of care provided (MORUZZI; SILVA;  
BARROS, 2020, p. 177-178).

In the view of Anete Abramowicz (2017), from the period of the Constitution's enactment to the implementation of the Fundeb [from 1988 to 2009], Early Childhood Education seemingly achieved some gains within national public policies but was always regarded as a lesser policy compared to other educational policies. It is worth mentioning that with the institutionalization and development of the National Education Plan (PNE 2014/2024), debates intensified concerning the challenges for implementing and expanding Early Childhood Education across Brazilian municipalities.

According to Altino Martins Filho (2020), the historical trajectory of Early Childhood Education has been marked by numerous obstacles, filled with contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities. However, despite these winding paths, the fight for recognition of the teaching specificity in this stage has shown fruitful resistance over the decades, contributing to its continuous improvement as well as to the achievement of various rights.

As researchers connected to the Childhood and Language Research Group (GIIL/UEMG/Passos), it has been one of our lines of interest in recent years to deepen the debate on the specificity of teaching in Early Childhood Education. In this regard, we believe it is always essential to (re)affirm that being a teacher is not a vocation, nor is it a gift; likewise, being an Early Childhood Education teacher does not equate to being an aunt or uncle. Paulo Freire (1997) once said that teaching involves a certain task, a certain militancy, and a specificity in its execution; therefore, being a teacher implies embracing a profession, while being an aunt or uncle is a familial relationship.

Thus, we understand that educating and caring in Early Childhood Education requires the professionalization of teaching. It is essential to study, prepare, understand the unique qualities of infants and young children, as well as the relevant theories and/or approaches, to deliver excellent pedagogical practices that respect their rights to learning and participation. Silvia Cruz, Cristiane Martins, and Rosimeire Cruz (2021) argue that children have a right to quality education, and quality in Early Childhood Education cannot be ensured without considering the distinct features of this first stage. These features strengthen fundamental concepts that value the purpose of promoting the holistic development of children. Furthermore, the authors state that “clarity regarding this purpose is essential for the identity of this educational stage to be reaffirmed, enabling institutions to truly become spaces of education and care for these subjects” (CRUZ; MARTINS; CRUZ, 2021, p. 157).

Regarding legal guidelines and official documents, it is noted that the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (2010) highlight pedagogical proposals as a focal

Written narratives about teaching children in the pandemic point, based on ethical, political, and aesthetic principles. In practice, educational actions are expected to ensure autonomy, solidarity, respect, critical thinking, creativity, playfulness, and freedom of expression in artistic and cultural manifestations (BRASIL, 2010).

In terms of materials that promote the use of multiple languages in childhood settings, the curriculum guidelines also emphasize the importance of educational institutions providing tools such as recorders, projectors, computers, cameras, and other technological and media resources (BRASIL, 2010). For Márcia Gobbi (2010), it is necessary to create spaces where children can speak and feel, fostering plural perspectives on what they build and what they receive as expressions of Brazilian culture.

In the words of Paulo Fochi (2020), a curriculum must be grounded in relationships, interactions, and intentionally directed educational practices focused on everyday life experiences, cultural learning through collective spaces, and narrative production through diverse languages. In this discussion, Maria Tereza Tavares, Fabiana Pessanha, and Nayara Macedo (2021) emphasize the need to recognize the specificities and singularities of pedagogical practice in light of the relationships we build and aspire to in Early Childhood Education, whose richness lies in attentive observation of infants and children in all their diversity.

According to the National Common Curricular Base (2017), the rights to learning and development in Early Childhood Education must ensure children's rights to socialize, play, participate, explore, express themselves, and recognize their individuality. It is understood that infants and children have the right to interact with other children and adults using various languages; they have the right to play in different ways, spaces, and times; they may actively participate in some decisions that concern them; they have the right to explore movements, gestures, sounds, shapes, textures, colors, words, emotions, transformations, relationships, stories, objects, and elements of nature. They also have the right to express themselves as dialogical, creative, and sensitive individuals, articulating needs, emotions, feelings, doubts, hypotheses, discoveries, and opinions, thus expanding their self-awareness and understanding of the world (BRASIL, 2017).

Moreover, teaching in the initial stage of basic education is marked by the inseparability of educating, caring, and playing. Therefore, it is suggested that pedagogical proposals take into account the unique qualities of infants and young children, who should experience interactions and play (BRASIL, 2017).

Given the above, we highlight that Early Childhood Education is a stage with numerous specificities, including the organization of space, time, and materials. In this context, it is essential



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for teachers to experience a dense and continuous professional development, as Freire (1997, p. 8) states: “The task of the teacher, who is also a learner, while pleasurable, is also demanding”.

From these considerations on the specificity of teaching, some questions arise in the current context: How have pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education taken shape, especially in times of pandemic? What are the teaching learnings and challenges? What do teachers narrate about these experiences?

We know that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the cause of Covid-19, brought significant changes to the world due to its high transmissibility, affecting various spheres such as health, education, and many others. We recognized the importance of staying home, maintaining isolation to prevent the risk of increasing cases of this illness. As a result, countless institutions were closed, particularly schools, from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education. Thus:

The closure of daycare centers and preschools for months during the pandemic represented a major shift in the daily lives of millions of children and their families. This change may have impacted the development and learning of these individuals, who were left without access to organized spaces and planned experiences that support their holistic development (CRUZ; MARTINS; CRUZ, 2021, p. 159).

However, through the use of technological resources, various institutions attempted to continue experiences and interactions. Yet, listening, close observation, and touch so essential in Early Childhood Education were replaced by virtual meetings. Thus, with all these sudden changes, it became necessary to think, create, and (re)invent new practices that ensured the safety of children at home and respected the diversity of childhood. According to Cruz, Martins, and Cruz (2021, p. 148), one of the biggest challenges Early Childhood Education had to face was "finding ways to deal with this unprecedented situation without losing its identity as an educational stage that educates and cares for infants, toddlers, and young children".

In the midst of these discussions, we emphasize that the questions raised throughout this work do not have precise or homogeneous answers. However, given the current pandemic context, it is essential to understand how these changes have impacted Early Childhood Education. We note that in a context filled with uncertainties and intensive work, numerous challenges have arisen concerning teaching work and its precarization. It feels painful and disrespectful to hear statements suggesting that teachers did not work during the pandemic, that they did nothing, or are doing nothing in this context.

Written narratives about teaching children in the pandemic

Therefore, this article aims not only to discuss teaching in Early Childhood Education but also to speak with teachers and gain a deeper understanding of their work in this stage, exploring the contours of practices in pandemic times.

## Methodological Paths

This study is based on a qualitative research approach. In this context, we chose to use narrative as a methodological tool, with the aim of providing voice and autonomy to teachers, enabling them to share their experiences. According to Vera Paiva (2008, p. 01), we can define narratives as:

There are many meanings of narrative circulating among us: a story; something told or retold; an account of a real or fictional event; a description of a series of events connected in sequence; an account of occurrences; a sequence of past events; a series of logical and chronological events.

From this perspective, as emphasized by Cecília Galvão (2005, p. 328), “all human activity involves the use of language.” Thus, through various forms of language, such as writing, individuals can tell stories, recall past events, and reflect on their experiences. For this reason, the aforementioned method is considered a powerful methodology, which can be defined as:

[...] the most common narrative research can be described as a methodology that involves collecting stories on a particular theme, where the researcher finds information to understand a specific phenomenon. Stories can be gathered through various methods: interviews, diaries, autobiographies, recording of oral narratives, written narratives, and field notes (PAIVA, 2008, p. 03).

It is also worth noting that Galvão (2005) highlights three potentialities of narratives in studies with teachers: as a process of educational research, a process of pedagogical reflection, and a process of professional development. Therefore, through narratives, “teachers not only bring to the school a personal story that gives meaning to their actions, but they also live a story there that helps them make sense of the world” (GALVÃO, 2005, p. 331).

In this context, understanding the potential of narratives in studies with teachers, we developed and virtually sent a questionnaire containing guiding questions for data collection. It is important to note that the questions in the questionnaire focused on the daily life of teaching during the pandemic, considering pedagogical practices and the specificities of Early Childhood Education.

Without losing sight of our methodological perspective, it is worth noting that the questionnaire was used solely as a conversation starter, with the essence of data production grounded in the creation of a letter, as it is a form of written narrative. In other words, the teachers participating in the study

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were invited to respond to the questionnaire in letter format, allowing them the freedom to elaborate on the aspects that most impacted them while teaching preschool children in a remote learning setting.

To provide readers with context regarding each research participant, a specific nomenclature<sup>4</sup> was used in the data analysis: Teacher Rosa, Teacher Iris, Teacher Jasmine, and Teacher Liz. We also highlight certain characteristics that shape the life stories of the participants and mark their teaching careers:

- Teacher Rosa: 42 years old. Holds a degree in Pedagogy from UEMG. She has been teaching in Early Childhood Education for 6 years and is currently a preschool teacher with a class of 5-year-old children.
- Teacher Iris: 56 years old. Graduated in Pedagogy from UEMG in 2005. She has been working as an Early Childhood Education teacher for 13 years and is currently responsible for a class of 4- and 5-year-old children.
- Teacher Jasmine: 44 years old. Graduated in Pedagogy from FESP, now UEMG, in 1998. She has been teaching in Early Childhood Education for 15 years. Additionally, she holds a degree in Social Work and has several educational specializations, such as Psychopedagogy and Special Education. She currently teaches children aged 4 to 5 years.
- Teacher Liz: 27 years old. Holds a degree in Pedagogy and a postgraduate certificate in Literacy and Reading from FAVENI - Dom Alberto. She is currently a preschool teacher with a class of 4-year-old children.

The initial contact with the teachers participating in the research occurred during a pedagogical meeting led by the school administration, where the authors were invited to participate. We were given time to speak to invite all the teachers working at the school (a total of 12 teachers) and explain the research objectives. Out of this group of teachers, only 4 responded to the questionnaire/letter, and therefore, some excerpts from their written narratives about teaching during the pandemic will be highlighted and analyzed.

Lastly, we argue that it is essential to emphasize that the aim of this research was not to provide measurable answers and results but rather to highlight the various facets of teaching in Early Childhood Education during the pandemic. It is worth noting that the choice of written narratives as a methodological tool allowed for an intrinsic relationship among the individuals involved in the research, enabling an impartial and non-judgmental interpretation of the accounts.

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<sup>4</sup> The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of UEMG/Passos, the director of the Early Childhood Education institution authorized the study, and the participating teachers were given fictitious names and signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

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Based on the responses obtained, the data produced were organized into four categories: 1) Planning and activities in remote teaching; 2) Difficulties and challenges in remote teaching; 3) Learnings and positive aspects of teaching in Early Childhood Education during the pandemic; 4) Being a teacher in Early Childhood Education in the pandemic context. The analyses derived from these categories will be presented in the following sections.

## **Written Narratives of Teaching Contexts in an Early Childhood Education Institution in Southwestern Minas Gerais**

Based on the written narratives of the four participating teachers Rosa, Iris, Jasmine, and Liz certain information was selected and analyzed in alignment with the proposed objectives. Thus, we clarify that the data were organized into four categories, with the intention of understanding how pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education have taken shape during the pandemic.

In the first category of analysis, titled *Planning and Activities in Remote Teaching*, the teachers discussed the organization and structuring of experiences in Early Childhood Education during the pandemic. In this context, they pointed out that:

*Remote activities were conducted through video lessons and sent via WhatsApp. In some cases, they were printed. I think we tried to meet the needs in the best way possible [...] activities are sent through WhatsApp. Our meetings are held on Meet or Zoom. I plan according to the lived reality, working with concrete materials from the home environment and family activities (Teacher Iris).*

*Activities are carried out through contact on WhatsApp, forming a group with families, and in this way, we also maintained daily contact by phone with the mothers. We recorded videos of the activities with the routine, and when there were questions, they would contact me so I could help where the children were having difficulties (Teacher Jasmine).*

*The plan is to work only during our scheduled hours, but when I see a father or mother with questions, doing activities at night after a long day of work, I can't ignore it, and I help because, otherwise, the activity will fall behind, and the parents may lose motivation to continue with the tasks (Teacher Liz).*

We observed that the medium used to maintain contact with the children and their families was WhatsApp. Thus, the teachers' work during this pandemic period was complex and exhausting, as messages and questions arrived constantly. Furthermore, as noted by one of the teachers, planning, while challenging, is based on the children's reality.

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Despite all the changes caused by the pandemic, the teachers tried, through various resources and strategies, to maintain communication, as we agree with Célia Serrão and Renata Oliveira (2021) that listening to the children and families during this pandemic period contributed to building horizontal relationships, where the dialogue between school and family took on new dimensions in a collective movement to defend life. Regarding the pedagogical proposals, we acknowledge that it was necessary:

[...] to reaffirm the proposition of a pedagogy of childhood that is distanced from preparatory and schooling-focused approaches, aligned with ethical, aesthetic, and political principles. A pedagogy of childhood that allows itself to engage in dialogue with the structuring axes of pedagogical practices—play and interactions—conceiving and respecting the different dimensions of childhood in its complex and unequal contexts, reaffirming children's rights, as advocated by the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (BRASIL, 2009) (TAVARES; PESSANHA; MACEDO, 2021, p. 91-92).

Consequently, in the second category, the teachers highlighted the difficulties and challenges of remote teaching. In this regard, they shared:

*My biggest difficulty was expecting something from the family that they often couldn't provide, which was activities done correctly and attention to the child. The family isn't always able to offer this (Teacher Rosa).*

*Now the difficult part is organization [...] for me, that was the hard part because the material is different. I have a lot of concrete materials, but handling them through a camera is different. Still, in most videos, I try to show the concrete materials. Also, holding online meetings is very tiring. I feel distant, I miss the companionship, the exchange; I feel everyone is isolated, and there's no affection, no love among each other (Teacher Jasmine).*

*Lack of physical contact with the children. Showing affection through a kiss and a hug (Teacher Liz).*

We noticed in some excerpts from the teachers' letters that creating emotional bonds with the children and their families through digital media was a huge challenge. As emphasized by one of the professionals, organizing and planning activities to be carried out remotely is difficult. In addition to the lack of physical contact, many families, due to the demands of the current period, were unable to assist the children with the activities proposed by the institution.

As highlighted by Lidiane Silva (2020, p. 26), it has been, and continues to be, a significant challenge for teachers in Early Childhood Education:

[...] .to deal with the lack of materials and technology to work in remote teaching. Consequently, these challenges materialize as difficulties in planning and delivering

Written narratives about teaching children in the pandemic activities that further stimulate children's interest, as, in many situations outside the school environment, it is challenging to ensure an organized space for motor, playful, and other experiential activities.

Amid these discussions, we draw attention to another aspect concerning the number of participating teachers. For us, the limited acceptance also provides insights into the challenges teachers faced during the pandemic: work overload, anxiety, exhaustion, and additional participation in research. We did not interpret the lack of greater participation as a lack of interest; on the contrary, the refusals are also responses that help us understand how teachers' daily lives have been filled with numerous tasks. Moreover, it prompts us to consider how the university has been engaging and connecting with the local community.

In the third category, regarding learnings and positive aspects of teaching in Early Childhood Education during the pandemic, the teachers indicated that:

*The children who followed remote learning daily showed development (Teacher Rosa).*

*I haven't seen any positive aspects yet (Teacher Iris).*

*I believe it increased collaboration and appreciation for our work (Teacher Liz).*

*A positive aspect was the dedication to learning in a timely manner how to organize video editing and even move all the concrete materials to display them for the videos. Remote teaching led me to study technology and explore courses in various areas as well. I started listening to more courses on YouTube to train myself, since in-person courses had paused. I also experienced the daily lives of families, as they opened up to me about their problems and even social difficulties, allowing me to help them with supplies, as many had lost their jobs (Teacher Jasmine).*

Analyzing these accounts, we interpret that the teachers identify, based on their experiences, some positive aspects they found during remote teaching. As highlighted, the current period has, to some extent, also contributed to a greater appreciation of the teacher's work, as it has become evident that teaching is unique and has numerous specificities. Additionally, there was an increased search for courses and other resources related to media, which enhanced these teachers' continuous professional development.

It is worth noting that one of the teachers stated that she found no positive aspect in teaching in Early Childhood Education during the pandemic. In this context, this situation shows that some individuals in the field of education are feeling demotivated in the current period. We infer that this demotivation is related to the lack of resources and media materials to effectively conduct remote activities.

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Finally, in the fourth category of analysis, the teachers highlighted what it has been like to *be* a teacher in Early Childhood Education in the pandemic context. They indicated that:

I feel a sense of mission accomplished because I have done and continue to do everything within my power for my students. [...] Unfortunately, the feeling of helplessness is inevitable in the face of many obstacles. But I keep going, taking it one day at a time, striving to learn from all these experiences because I hope for a better future. That's why, even though everything is difficult, I refuse to give up (Teacher Rosa).

As everything happened so intensely, quickly, and with so much uncertainty, I felt very anxious and tense about various issues, both personal and professional. It was a flood of information, especially from the media, about the virus, which made me anxious and fearful, living solely in a state of excessive caution. I abruptly stopped everything I used to do in my personal life, especially social activities, and felt trapped in my fears and thoughts, wondering what it would be like not being with my family, friends, and at work (Teacher Jasmine).

Honestly, I wish I had never had to go through this. I love singing, dancing, acting, teaching, but it's with them close to me that unique feeling of just you and your students and no one else. The lack of that contact and the uncertainty of knowing if your student is actually doing the activities, if they're learning or not, is very difficult (Teacher Liz).

In light of these narratives, we observe that feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and fear can be common among teachers, and such feelings may be explained by Elina Macedo (2020, p. 1407), who argues that "education professionals, in turn, find themselves cornered by demands for productivity."

In the final category, we also analyzed that all four participating teachers complained that remote teaching is extremely exhausting and that it is very challenging to get feedback from families on the proposed activities. However, despite the difficulties, the teachers developed pedagogical proposals aimed at continuing playful experiences, as they began to incorporate materials present in the children's everyday environments.

Lastly, we found that being a teacher in the pandemic context required greater familiarity with media, which proved to be valuable tools for promoting interactions in remote teaching. Beyond a utilitarian perspective of media, these teachers also had the opportunity to engage in more creative and reflective practices. There were instances where they explored creativity by creating content through videos, documenting pedagogy with photographic records, and transcribing conversations with the children. Additionally, a reflective perspective on media use emerged to some extent, as the teachers regularly discussed with each other and with school administration how the remote experiences were unfolding and whether they were making sense for the children. Ultimately, the

Written narratives about teaching children in the pandemic quality of education, children's rights, and their participation were always highlighted in the planning and remote activities.

We understand that, from the unprecedented experience of the pandemic in the field of education, certain issues warrant deeper exploration, as they may provide insights to foster debate on the specificity of teaching with infants and young children: What alternative pedagogies can be (re)designed in remote interactions? How can Early Childhood Education remain vibrant and potent in (post)pandemic times? We continue to reflect...

## **Final considerations**

This study sought to investigate the specificities that impact teaching practices with children aged 4 to 5 years during the pandemic, from the perspective and experiences of four teachers who worked in remote teaching at a public Early Childhood Education institution in the city of Passos, Minas Gerais, Brazil. To achieve this objective, qualitative research was conducted, using the analysis of written narratives (letters) by the participants based on a questionnaire with twenty reflective questions.

Among the findings, supported by the teachers' narratives, it was observed that they feel very tired from remote teaching, frustrated by discussions of devaluation and the precariousness of teaching work. At the same time, they consider that, perhaps, the teaching profession has come to be viewed with greater relevance due to the impact of school closures.

We also found that the brief overview presented reveals some experiences of teachers' [life] contexts with children during the pandemic. The written narratives counter fallacious narratives, such as those from the federal deputy who suggests that teachers are doing nothing during the pandemic. On the contrary, the teachers made efforts to improve their media skills and, beyond a utilitarian perspective, they reflected daily on the meaning of remote teaching in the learning and lives of children in that context.

Therefore, we discuss teaching in pandemic times from the perspective of four teachers working in an Early Childhood Education institution in the city of Passos/MG. However, we acknowledge that providing opportunities for the voices and perspectives of administrators, families, and the children themselves on educational experiences in a (post)pandemic context could become further developments of this study. For now, we hope that the reflections raised provoke thought and inspire other research and practices in the pedagogical field, which are always in the process of being constructed.



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