TEACHING IN THE PANDEMIC CONTEXT: A STUDY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS WITH BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS

TRABALHO DOCENTE NO CONTEXTO PANDÊMICO: UM ESTUDO DE REPRESENTAÇÕES SOCIAIS COM PROFESSORES DA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA

EL TRABAJO DOCENTE EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA PANDEMIA: UN ESTUDIO DE LAS REPRESENTACIONES SOCIALES CON DOCENTES DE EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA

Martha Marques Teixeira PEREIRA
E-mail: marthamarquest@hotmail.com

Lúcia VILLAS BÔAS
E-mail: lboas@fcc.org.br

How to reference this article:


Editors: Prof. Dr. Margarete May Berkenbrock Rosito Prof. Dr. Alessandro do Nascimento Santos Prof. Dr. Ecleide Cunico Furlanetto Prof. Dr. Maria Conceição Passeggi Prof. Dr. Maria do Carmo Meirrelles Toledo Cruz

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

1 University of the City of São Paulo (UNICID), São Paulo – SP – Brazil. Master of Education
2 Carlos Chagas Foundation (FCC), São Paulo – SP – Brasil. Researcher at the Education Research Department at University of the City of São Paulo (UNICID). Professor at the Post-Graduate Program in Education and the Professional Master’s Program in Education Management.
ABSTRACT: This study, part of a research program titled ‘School Education in Times of Pandemic in the View of Basic Education Teachers’ (Carlos Chagas Foundation), aims to reflect on teaching during the pandemic based on social representation theory. Thus, it examines part of its database, analyzing the answers of 2,905 teachers of the final grades of primary education in São Paulo to this question: In your opinion, will the current situation lead to an appreciation or a devaluation of teaching? Please justify. Results indicated that, in teachers’ view: the moment will lead to greater professional recognition for the work they performed; this will not translate into wage recognition; teaching will suffer from more precariousness, possibly with the continuation of remote learning; there is a threat from the emergence of debates involving homeschooling.

KEYWORDS: Teaching work. Later years of Primary Education. COVID-19. Social representations.

RESUMO: Este estudo, parte do programa de pesquisa “Educação escolar em tempos de pandemia na visão de professoras/es da Educação Básica” (Fundação Carlos Chagas), visa refletir sobre o trabalho docente na pandemia a partir da teoria das representações sociais. Assim, realiza um recorte no seu banco de dados, analisando respostas de 2.905 professoras/es dos anos finais do Ensino Fundamental de São Paulo à questão: Na sua opinião, o momento pelo qual estamos passando vai levar a uma valorização ou a uma desvalorização do trabalho docente? Justifique. Os resultados indicaram que, na visão dos professores, o momento vai levar a um maior reconhecimento profissional pelo trabalho que desempenharam. Isso não se traduzirá em reconhecimento salarial, pois haverá maior precarização do trabalho docente eventualmente com a manutenção do ensino remoto; há ameaça pela emergência de debates envolvendo o homeschooling.


RESUMEN: Estudio, parte del programa de investigación ‘La educación escolar en tiempos de pandemia en la visión de los profesores de Educación Básica’ (Fundación Carlos Chagas) tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre el trabajo docente en la pandemia de la teoría de las representaciones sociales. Así, hace un corte en su base de datos, analizando las respuestas de 2.905 profesores de los últimos años de la Enseñanza Básica en São Paulo a la pregunta: En su opinión, ¿el momento que estamos atravesando llevará a una valorización o desvalorización del trabajo docente? Justifica. Los resultados indicaron que: el momento dará lugar a un mayor reconocimiento profesional por el trabajo que realizan; esto no se traducirá en un reconocimiento salarial; habrá una mayor precariedad del trabajo docente eventualmente con el mantenimiento de la enseñanza a distancia; hay amenaza por la aparición de debates que implican el homeschooling.

Introduction

In education, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was rapidly felt through the suspension of in-person activities, with direct effects on the school calendar. This led to 39 million students in basic education discontinuing their attendance at educational institutions (UNESCO, 2020), a colossal challenge to ensuring and upholding the right to education.

Emergency education programs and curriculum materials were then developed by education departments, school units, and teachers to respond quickly to educational needs and urgencies, often without in-depth discussions about their suitability or effectiveness (FUNDAÇÃO CARLOS CHAGAS - FCC, 2020).

As an emergency measure, many governments resorted to information and communication technologies (ICTs) despite the fact that technological resources were still far from covering a great part of the population, as stated by UNESCO (2021) about the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Still, according to UNESCO (2021), the primary pedagogical strategy employed during suspended in-person classes was the Internet in an online format. In this regard, Stevanim (2021) considers that social and digital inequalities make it more difficult to ensure the right to education during the pandemic. Thus, emergency remote teaching, important though it was, conflicted with the reality of a great part of the population, as the process was accompanied by public policies of investments for the necessary support (COSTA, 2012). This scenario of latent inequality intensified the disparity of access to school activities between the rich and the poor, foreshadowing a worrying post-pandemic scenario, such as school dropout, whose effects have to be mitigated.

Added to this lack of digital infrastructure is the difficulty on the part of teachers themselves in utilizing the platforms, holding online and/or recorded classes and activities, and assessing students from a distance since there was not enough time for their training.

While significant investments were made to sustain educational activities during social distancing, primarily by schools and their faculty, the preexisting effects of social inequality became even more pronounced, increasing the pressure on disadvantaged classes, as they lacked partially or entirely the basic inputs for emergency remote teaching, which impacted both learning and access to school activities. (BARBOSA; ANJOS; AZONI, 2022; COUTO, COUTO; CRUZ, 2020)

In this uncertain and unpredictable context, the FCC’s Education Research Department (DPE) supported the research program titled “School Education in Times of Pandemic in the
Teaching in the pandemic context: A study of social representations with basic education teachers

View of Basic Education Teachers³, the fruit of a partnership with Itaú Social and UNESCO Brazil through the UNESCO Chair on Teacher Education, based at the institution. (FCC, 2020).

Now that the pandemic is controlled and school activities resumed their normal pace, concerns about the damage caused to students’ schooling process and the worsening of inequalities of access and opportunities remain in the national scenario. Added to these is the need to investigate teachers’ opinions about their work in the exceptional context and the resumption of in-person activities.

To inform these discussions, this article⁴ examines a segment of the research database developed by FCC for the project to reflect on the opinions of 2,905 teachers of the later years of primary education in the state of São Paulo about the teaching conducted during the initial months of social distancing⁵.

The term ‘opinion’ is used in the analysis and discussion of data to manifest the expression of the study subjects, as the term appeared in the open-ended question in the data collection instrument of the research program from which this article derives: In your opinion, will the current situation lead to an appreciation or a devaluation of teaching? Please justify.
About the term opinion, Moscovici (2012) considers that it is:

A reaction of individuals to an externally given object, regardless of the social actor, their intention, or viewpoint; a direct link with behavior; the judgment [opinion] is directed to the object or stimulus and constitutes, in a sense, an announcement, an internalized double of the future action (MOSCOVICI, 2012, p. 43-44, our translation).

He correlates it as an active element in the constitution of the representational process when he sets the premise that “there is no division between the external universe and that of the individual (or the group), that subject and object are not totally heterogeneous in their common field” (MOSCOVICI, 2012, p. 45, our translation), which reaffirms the consistency of keeping this term with this article’s theoretical framework and object of study.

---
³ The following researchers at FCC’s DPE participated in the program: Adelina Novaes, Adriana Pagaime, Amélia Artes, Cláudia Pimenta, Lúcia Villas Bôas (coordinator), Marina Nunes, Raquel Valle (statistician), Sandra Unbehaum (coordinator) and Thaís Gava.
⁴ This text is part of the master’s dissertation of Martha Marques Teixeira Pereira.
⁵ This stage of primary education was selected in view of the gap regarding academic investments that collaborate to improve educational practices focused on the later years of primary education (6th to 9th grade). It is at this stage that the division of subjects between subject-specific teachers begins, adding further complexity to professional practice.
This data was analyzed in the light of social representation theory, albeit in specific instances, due to the limits of the data collection instrument, so as to inform the comprehension of teachers’ perspectives on teaching within the context of the Pandemic.

**Education and the Pandemic as a Field of Investigation: Insights from Some Studies about the Topic**

Education and the Pandemic have been the object of numerous scientific-academic endeavors intended to investigate scenarios, propose alternatives, and inform and compare experiences. Despite their recent nature, they already offer significant reflections for the future.

The chart below presents a selection of studies of institutions that took the lead and conducted research from the outset of social distancing, yielding the earliest results about how the Pandemic unfolded in the educational field.

**Chart 1** – Main literature consulted about the themes of education and the Pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Research Data</th>
<th>Research Name</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

⁶ T.N.: In original, “Educação Escolar em Tempos de Pandemia na visão das professoras/es da educação básica”.
⁷ T.N.: In original, “Sentimento e Percepção dos professores brasileiros nos diferentes estágios do Coronavírus no Brasil”.
⁸ T.N.: In original, “Respuesta del ámbito educativo de la UNESCO a la COVID-19”.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.26843/ae.v16i00.1206

e-ISSN: 1982-8632
Teaching in the pandemic context: A study of social representations with basic education teachers

Todos pela Educação

April, 2020.

Technical note "Learning in the Basic Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic".


UNDIME

From July 19 to August 09, 2020

Education in the Pandemic.


Source: The authors (2022)

Generally, this study considered works published by non-government organizations and professional associations across different sectors. These institutions took the lead and promptly published studies about the discussed subject to present how social distancing was being experienced in the educational context. They highlighted scholarly responses concerning emergency remote teaching, the effects and tensions stemming from this experience, and analyses of the strategies for resuming the new normality.

These studies indicate important challenges in the recovery from the education crisis. They go beyond the learning that points to the need for scientific and financial investments to address these damages and formulate an action plan that is not only adequate but feasible within the current reality. In general, among the selected works, it is possible to observe the following points of convergence:

- The use of digital technologies for educational purposes was challenging for both students and teachers, due to the lack of basic inputs or proficiency;
- Insufficient infrastructure and connectivity was the main problem that exacerbated the inequality between the rich and the poor in terms of accessing remote learning, with direct impacts on the worsening of school dropout indicators;

---

10 T.N.: In original, “Respuesta del ámbito educativo de la UNESCO a la COVID-19”.
Active student search was one of the main educational strategies to mitigate the effects of student dropout;
• The learning gap is one of the most challenging post-pandemic consequences.

Additionally, other studies, such as those of Weyh and Nehring (2020) and Costa (2021), recognize that emergency remote teaching as an educational response to the COVID-19 pandemic came as an important option for ensuring, at least minimally, education activities for students, but they also consider that this process has accelerated inequality and unevenness due to infrastructure discrepancies between public and private schools.

An important reflection, which will contribute critically to the analyses of social inequality and the effect of COVID-19 control measures, concerns how social distancing was experienced by the rich and the poor, contrary to an expression that circulated routinely during the pandemic that ‘we are all in the same boat.’ According to Couto, Couto, and Cruz (2020), people with more financial means experienced a more creative social distancing period, sustained by better internet access conditions. In contrast, people who were socially vulnerable and digitally excluded experienced the distancing period in much harsher conditions and were exposed to contagion. This has shown roots that need to be looked at by governments, social organizations, and the school system.

That is what Weyh and Hehring (2020) emphasize in raising two important points about remote learning: the first concerns providing education that is not in-person, which, despite being a good solution, is incompatible with the reality of a great part of students, leading to uncertainty about how to ensure learning; and the second involves social issues, when they highlight that “some of these children and youths used to have their few daily meals on what was provided as school lunch. This is no longer available, except when food baskets are donated” (WEYH, NEHRING, 2020, p. 7, our translation).

Feelings regarding education during the pandemic indicate insecurity with the sudden changes to educational activities. “The doubts and uncertainties concerned how the new steps would be, from establishing contact with classes to organizing and planning classes to delivering and assessing student work” (WEYH, NEHRING, 2020, p. 6, our translation).

The pandemic context imputed to the education system the responsibility for developing strategies to fill exposed gaps, such as doing distance learning activities, but the pressure on those on the frontline was beyond their ability to respond – as in the case of teachers, who found themselves before a new trip without a route, having to reconcile their feelings of anxiety, pain,
losses, and fears inherent to the context with the arduous mission of representing a captain who does not know their destination.

Teachers found themselves challenged by an unprecedented accumulation of physical, mental, and work activities to maintain school obligations where formal education materiality was transposed to the virtual environment, including greater involvement of families in school routines.

Most basic education teachers did not master digital technologies when applied to educational purposes and did not feel prepared for remote teaching. The lack of infrastructure and the difficulty engaging students stand out as the main reported challenges (FCC, 2020; INSTITUTO PENÍNSULA, 2020; TODOS PELA EDUCAÇÃO, 2020).

Even from a distance, teachers’ work was central. The studies point out that, when it comes to distance teaching, teachers’ work plays a significant role in ensuring a good experience, regardless of the solution used.

Given the current scenario, in which they are equally impacted by the pandemic, supporting them both personally and professionally is an absolutely fundamental measure. Faustino and Silva (2020) put this question into debate and propose alternative interventions for teachers and coordinators.

The study by Weyh and Nehring (2020) showed that the COVID-19 pandemic experience led educators to see more clearly the dimension of education beyond the acquisition of skills and knowledge, recognizing the importance of students’ individuality and teamwork to overcome crises. However, to assign new meanings to teaching practices, full involvement on the part of school management is necessary. And they stress that the lessons learned during the pandemic need to last. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of the formation of social thought about teaching does matter and will be the phenomenon on which this article is based.

The resumption of in-person school activities was attempted several times in 2021 through strategies such as alternate schedules and hybrid learning (alternating in-person and virtual moments), and even so, at times of surge in disease cases, the strategies had to retreat to the remote model as a caution measure. This movement reflected in a collective impression among education professionals that there was a lack of substantiality about the control measures, producing even more pressure on the school.

It was not until mid-2021, with the expansion of vaccine coverage, that the resumption of in-person routine consolidated and remained, even with other COVID-19 waves and flu outbreaks occurring simultaneously in the first half of 2022. This suggests that the scientific
advances regarding the disease, including vaccination, brought real contributions to the resumption process.

The most imminent concern that sparked debates in that period of return to in-person activities was about recovering learning, though references to obstacles such as transportation organization, health infrastructure improvements, and internet access were identified as sources of difficulty to be faced by government education departments in the relationship of students and their families, according to the National Union of State and Municipal Education Managers - UNDIME (2022).

Beyond disciplinary issues, school education should strengthen humanitarian relations to respond to real, contemporary, complex, and multidimensional issues, as required by emergency contexts. The subject ‘teaching during the pandemic’, in particular, deserves prominence among such responses since important data can emerge from reflecting from the perspective of the collectivity impressed by social representations to outline post-pandemic school education and address situations like the ones we experienced.

The Theoretical Framework of Social Representations as a Heuristic Tool to Understand the Phenomenon

Understanding the dynamics of the formation of social thought about teaching in a reality that is built, on the one hand, by work relations and, on the other, by the relevant social role that the teacher assumed during the pandemic is the phenomenon on which this study is based, and for which the theoretical framework of social representations can provide analysis and comprehension means.

The construction of popular knowledge from common sense was extensively discussed in social psychology and sociology by a group of scholars on the subject (such as Henri Tajfel, Willem Doise, Serge Moscovici, and Émile Durkheim) who aroused interest in understanding the cognitive process mediated by the social relations that guide and orient collective behaviors.

Defined by Moscovici (1978, p. 26, our translation) as: “[...] a modality of particular knowledge whose function is to produce behaviors and the communication between individuals”, the theory is intended to understand the process of integration of new knowledge into day-to-day reality, through interpretations that abandon judgments, distortions or the impoverishment of its precepts, linking them to a system of individual values, notions and practices, which guide the social interactions and behaviors in which such knowledge is embedded. Thus, social representations allow understanding of reality. “[...] they possess a
function that is constitutive of reality, the only reality we knew by experience and in which most people move” (MOSCOVICI, 1978, p. 26-27, our translation).

From this perspective, knowledge is permeated in the nucleus between the individual and the social subject. In other words, common knowledge, which is socially provided, outlines the individual's possibilities of apprehending their social world and delineates the construction of both individual and social reality. Knowledge thus becomes real, even palpable to those who share it, as described by Moscovici himself:

Social representations are almost tangible entities. They circulate, meet, and crystallize incessantly through a speech, a gesture, an encounter in our day-to-day universe. In most social relations established, the objects that are produced or consumed, the communication exchanged, are impregnated with them. We know that social representations correspond, on the one hand, to a symbolic substance that enters the production and, on the other, to the practice that produces that substance, just like science or myths correspond to scientific or mythical practice (MOSCOVICI, 1978, p. 41, our translation).

Therefore, the individual subject alone is not sufficiently capable of producing representations of an object but acquires this competency in relational processes with others, having the object simultaneously as a mediator and a product. Thus, social representations are configured as responses to individuals’ and groups’ needs to act, to build meanings and behaviors about new objects that are continuously born in social interactions.

Thus, this theoretical perspective will serve as a heuristic tool for reflecting on the possible estrangement caused by the unpredictable and exceptional pandemic scenario, as well as the opinion of teachers about the teaching performed in this context, inasmuch as the representations build a structure that supports individuals’ understanding of the world, guiding their actions.
Methodological Procedures and Data Analysis

The analyses were performed for a segment of the database of the program ‘School Education in Times of Pandemic in the View of Basic Education Teachers’, based on the following criteria: ‘teachers of the later years of primary education’ and ‘working in the state of São Paulo’, totaling 2,905 participants.

The text corpus derived from these teachers’ answers to the open-ended question of the online questionnaire administered by the Carlos Chagas Foundation’s Educational Research Department through the Survey Monkey platform from April to May 2020: In your opinion, will the current situation lead to an appreciation or a devaluation of teaching? Please justify.

To build the database, the following variables were considered:

Weekly hours: (1) up to 20 hours; (2) from 21 to 30 hours; (3) from 31 to 40 hours; and (4) over 40 hours.

Service time: (1) up to 2 years; (2) from 3 to 5 years; (3) from 6 to 10 years; (4) from 11 to 15 years; and (5) over 15 years.

Work hours: (1) up to 20 weekly hours; (2) from 21 to 30 weekly hours; (3) from 31 to 40 weekly hours; and (4) over 40 weekly hours.

The software used to process the analyzed material was ALCESTE\(^\text{11}\) (Analyse Lexical par Contexte d’un Ensemble deSegments de Texte). Its report showed a 72% relevance rate, which is considered a high level by the system itself. The report originated 4 classes of words or classes of significant utterances:

\(^\text{11}\) The program ‘reads’ the discursive material, building a dictionary in which the most frequent vocabulary is identified. In a second step, it calculates the matrices and classifies the text segments formed by successions of main words dimensioned by ALCESTE itself according to the utterances’ content similarities through a descending hierarchical classification that considers the vocabulary with an average or above-average frequency, providing a view of the relationships between the clusters resulting from this procedure. Based on this classification, it generates a graph that indicates the number of clusters, their composition, and the relationship between them, providing a view of the structure of the analyzed material (FCC, 2020).
Figure 1 – Dendrogram resulting from the classification of the text material suggested by ALCESTE for the question: In your opinion, will the current situation lead to an appreciation or a devaluation of teaching? Please justify

As can be seen, the hierarchical structure of the classes is divided into two initial ramifications (A and B). At a second level of separation, ramification A was again divided into two parts, forming classes 1 and 2; in turn, classification B originated classes 3 and 4, thus totaling 4 lexical classes. The classification process stopped when these four classes were obtained, since they proved stable.

Class 1 is the most specific, and the first to stand out in the classification, meaning that its vocabulary is the most homogeneous, representing 34.67% of the textual units classified, and it is characterized by words such as: appreciation, importance, teacher, and presence. Next comes class 2, representing 25.34% of the textual units classified. Its significant words are parents, child, difficulty, and teaching. Then comes class 3, which represents 31.36% of the textual units classified. Its most significant words are: appreciation, no, education, being, and valued. Class 4, representing 8.63% of the textual units classified, is marked by the words: [we] are, working, doing, serves, updating.

After analyzing each ramification and its respective lexical classes, they were thematized as follows: Ramification (A), denominated Opinion based on pedagogical aspects linked to the teaching-learning process comprehends classes 1 and 2, in which class 1 refers to appreciation by the importance of physical presence (relational) mediated by school spaces in learning.
learning, and class 2 refers to *Appreciation by parents’ perception of the arduous work of teaching their children* (it identifies the work as something painful). The second ramification (B), titled *Opinion based on non-pedagogical aspects* (commitment, wage, government, policies, effort in using digital technologies) comprehends class 3, *Devaluation by governmental neglect*, and class 4, *Expectation of appreciation based on individual commitment for improving work during the pandemic*.

By analyzing the groups of words and the respondents’ texts, it is possible to observe that what separates classes 1 and 2 from classes 3 and 4 is the presence or absence of pedagogical aspects when thought is built about the appreciation or devaluation of teaching. Classes 1 and 2 use factors related to pedagogical vocabulary, such as *teaching, learning, task, study*, to form their opinion about teaching; in turn, categories 3 and 4 refer to conditions external to learning to form their opinion. Here, words like wage, government and *personal commitment* appear.

The texts in class 1 indicate that the pandemic will lead to appreciation, given the importance of the teacher’s physical presence and how school spaces are missed in the learning process. The word cloud and the elementary context units (ECUs) allow viewing this aspect better:

**Chart 2 – Word cloud characterizing the texts in class 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word cloud</th>
<th>ECU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I believe that there will be an <em>appreciation</em> of teaching. Because the school’s interpersonal relationships are fundamental for students’ integral education. Despite the several tools available, the teacher is irreplaceable and essential.” (C. O, 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“<em>Appreciation</em> of teaching, because the teacher is fundamental, and so is in-person education” (F.T, 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“<em>Appreciation, because the teacher’s presence is irreplaceable.</em>” (A.M, 2020)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors (2022)

Class 2 also believes in an appreciation, though from the perspective that parents ‘felt firsthand’ what the mission of teaching their children is, and therefore the pandemic experience will lead to an appreciation of teaching:
Chart 3 – Word cloud characterizing the texts in class 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word cloud</th>
<th>ECU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“An appreciation, because the current context allowed parents to understand better the importance of the teacher and the school in their children’s teaching and learning process, parents have come to experience classroom situations at home, experiencing their children’s difficulties, and understanding that only the teacher’s presence can help in direct interventions with the pedagogical presence, so when all this passes, families will understand more about, and be more respectful and grateful to their children’s school and teachers.” (N.P., 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, parents who are now helping their children at home are feeling firsthand how hard it is to teach” (M. J, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, at the moment, most people are complaining that their children cannot perform the activities, it is difficult to help them. I believe that now they will learn to respect and appreciate teachers.” (J. S, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors (2022)

In contrast, class 3, quite representative in the universe studied (over 30%), indicates a discursive production associated with a devaluation of teaching and is anchored on the prospects of a possible emergence of ‘distance basic education’ as a governmental interest that connotes a threatening aspect about the future of teaching:

Chart 4 – Word cloud characterizing the texts of class 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word cloud</th>
<th>ECU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Devaluation. They will find ways of hiring fewer teachers, and they will use DISTANCE LEARNING as a plan for the next few years, since in public education, there is always an expense cut policy, and they care little about the quality of teaching and learning. Just observe the actions of the Temer administration and its expense ceiling policy and the current government that defends a liberal economy. Education is already treated as a commodity, the pandemic will provide distorted examples for governments and companies to justify DISTANCE EDUCATION.” (B. T, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I couldn’t tell. I have the feeling that students and their families have been showing appreciation for teaching, but I believe that authorities and those in power are taking advantage of installing an education model that values technology rather than the teacher.” (J. A, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Devaluation. The use of materials produced by YouTubers, for example, by the São Paulo State Department of Education is an example of that.” (M. R, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors (2022)

Class 4 signals a more hopeful opinion toward appreciation since the moment has demanded much personal effort beyond regular hours, and this has been shown to society. Therefore, they believe that the value of teaching will start to be recognized:
Chart 5 – Word cloud characterizing the texts in class 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word cloud</th>
<th>ECUs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Sincerely, I hope it will lead to an appreciation, because I am assisting students and parents far beyond my work hours. I am always available, even at night, on holidays and weekends, And because we’re working in a modality that is different from what we were used to, this demands much more to prepare classes and activities. We are doing our best to serve our students well and manage to deal with technologies.” (B. C, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I want to believe that we will have an appreciation of the teacher, because we are all feeling stressed out and overburdened but still doing everything beyond our possible for our students” (B. C, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Appreciation, after all, we teachers are working much more online the in person, and what’s more, overnight we’ve had to learn technological tools by ourselves, in self-taught mode.” (G. A, 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors (2022)

In general, data converge with the consulted literature (Neves, Fialho, Machado, 2021; SANTOS et al., 2021) in that the pandemic highlighted the precariousness present in teaching. The difficulties presented, particularly with remote teaching, where professional life fused with personal life, brought about changes in work relations, mainly required by the need to fit into the new formats, since specific knowledge and training to use digital tools were insufficient for teaching, thus requiring additional effort.

From the perspective of the occupational dynamics in the pandemic context, the overload of activities inherent to emergency remote teaching ended up stealing professional development space from those who were, at least theoretically, responsible for social transformation. According to Neves, Fialho, and Machado (2021), such antagonism indicates that teaching appreciation has occurred more in discourse than in action.

As a rule, basic education teachers comprehended teaching during the pandemic as excessive demand. In the same vein, Paes and Freitas (2020) attest that teaching during the pandemic has reflected in little or no compensation return, lack of technical and psychological support, inexistent planning and organization for work processes, and precariousness through an old factor, is intensifying.

Terms like uberization, YouTuberization, and McDonaldization, derived from forms of labor exploitation, are incorporated into the education context. What is meant by uberization is that the worker is supposed to provide all of their work instruments, similar to the relations established by the mobility company Uber, which uses its mobile phone application to connect passengers to a private driver, thereby exempting itself from establishing employment relations...
Teaching in the pandemic context: A study of social representations with basic education teachers

and providing working conditions. *YouTuberization* is a term used to characterize the transformation of in-person into online teaching, in a reference to the platform *YouTube*, which has increased its strength and prominence in remote teaching. McDonaldization refers to the market-related aspect of education systems where management is increasingly managerial and less democratic (BARBOSA, FERREIRA, KATO, 2020; NEVES, FIALHO, MACHADO, 2021; SANTOS et al., 2021;).

These terms express how work relations have been built over time, impacting how education is done and potentially affecting issues that concern the future prospects for teaching.

In the analysis of Venco (2019), *uberization* is associated with ‘work on demand’ and, in education, its roots are established in temporary hiring systems to fill provisory vacancies, implying flexible labor replacement on an exceptional basis. However, these schemes have been increasingly used, furthering the precariousness of teaching conditions:

This approach is already in course among teachers, which ends up involving them in an educational policy guided by neoliberal principles of reduction of the state’s role. This policy enables, as regards labor relations, the application of precarious agreements and an intentional permissiveness for employing professionals with qualifications unrelated to education or students who, besides their incomplete training status, teach classes unrelated to the scope of their training in a highly improvised manner and supported by standardized material (VENCO, 2019, p. 13, our translation).

This discussion about precariousness in teaching is reported by the literature, particularly in the field of working conditions, though beyond this sphere, the answers to the survey question indicate that teachers underscore the prospect of recognition for the work they performed and the social role they played during the pandemic. In this respect, expressions like ‘feeling firsthand’, ‘the teacher’s physical presence’, and ‘parents’ difficulty helping children at home’, very recurrent in classes 1 and 2, point to the conception that the ‘pandemic’ factor will lead to an appreciation from the perspective of teachers’ functional performance and role in society, adding an affective aspect to the professional dimension. It is important to remember that this study deals with expectations and impressions since the collection of data took place at the beginning of the pandemic period.

The same terms also connote that teaching is reported as painful, difficult, and strenuous, even for groups 1, 2, and 4, considering that the pandemic will lead to an appreciation of teaching.

It is noticeable that the terms ‘remote teaching’ and ‘technological resources’ were incorporated into the discourse of basic education teachers as relevant factors in the process of
forming opinions about teaching in the context of the pandemic. If, on the one hand, these terms connote physical distance, on the other, they bring up an important question regarding the proximity between the school and students’ families, in this respect, with the real problems experienced by the latter, such as grief for the loss of family members, the worsening of financial conditions due to income reduction by the economic crisis, the dynamics of remote school routine, and the practical difficulties implied in it, strengthening bonds and expanding support networks.

Class 3, which represents the group that thinks that the pandemic will lead to a devaluation of teaching is mainly based on the labor issues regarding the professional relationship. The terms ‘remuneration’, ‘government’, ‘disrepute of teaching’, and ‘cuts in education spending as a public policy’, embedded in the discourses, point to signs of a formation of conceptions based on labor precariousness, thus highlighting the market-related issue and, in a sense, alluding to the representations of teaching before the pandemic, as in perspective presented in the studies of Rosso et al. (2016) which intersects the social representations of teaching from a historical construction of the changes in labor relations until the context of neoliberalism, which values market-related aspects, thus bringing along a dichotomy between low wages associated with toilsome labor processes.

It is essential to bring some references to social representations about teaching that have been built into this discussion. Rosso and Camargo (2012) show the knowledge of teaching-related factors that cause wear to professional practice in education is provided at three structuring levels: that of experience; that of the tradition and historical origin of teaching, and that of the formation of the academic debate:

From experience come the pains, the grievance of not being able to be what is expected of the teacher due to the contingencies, spaces and times that consume and erode their productive capacity. From tradition and the past, the symbolic charge crystallizes in the pursuit of recognition (ROSSO, CAMARGO, 2012, p. 195, our translation)

This study has also pointed out that in his representational field, the image of the school and the family are pillars, therefore they participated as key elements in the formation of social representations about the wear from teaching, elements that indicated that “education and its quality, decent conditions and work satisfaction, the respect of students, the presence of the family, and social recognition and appreciation are elements that have been lost” (ROSSO, CAMARGO, 2012, p. 195, our translation). Thus, they indicate social representations of distress, but at the same time the insistence on the persistence of the mission of educating.
This sense of distress and persistence is also manifested in teachers’ opinions about teaching in the context of the pandemic, and permeates the discourses in all classes of the ALCESTE report. Expressions like “I hope for appreciation as it has shown how the teacher’s presence was missed” (O. R, 2020), “It is noticeable how very important the teacher’s work is for keeping even a less arduous routine in thousands of homes, enabling learning and bringing some connection with the world outside the home” (C. T, 2020), manifested in class 1; “parents are feeling firsthand what is a study routine” (N. O, 2020), uttered in class 2; “I have been investing in my self-improvement to be an example to be followed, but I just have expenses, and I can’t see a return from them” (M. P, 2020), part of class 3; “I want to believe that we will have an appreciation of the teacher, because we are all feeling stressed out, overburdened, but still doing beyond our possible for our students” (V. A, 2020), from class 4, are strong in teachers’ general discourse about their work, with some degree of proximity to the social representations of teachers about the wear from teaching even before the pandemic, according to Rosso and Camargo (2012).

The ‘persistence’ and ‘devaluation’ aspects are so remarkable in teaching that they already appear in the social representations produced by subjects still in training. Lima, Sicca and David (2012) indicate that students in training in a pedagogy program envision their future work as ‘warriors’, also demonstrating eagerness to continue to overcome the difficulties that mark their professional and education trajectories, in whose representational system, deficiencies related to initial teacher education are already evoked.

About the factor ‘professional work in education’, as shown by the studies of Rosso and Camargo (2012) and Lima, Sicca and David (2012), it is possible to observe that there are shared representations involving the question of ‘painful work’, associated with the factors ‘resilience and persistence’ among the teachers already placed in the job market, and among professionals undergoing initial teacher education. It is also possible to infer that these representations remain strongly present within the context of the pandemic, as referred in the speeches of the teachers participating in the present investigation.

Thus, it seems that the factors ‘pandemic’ and ‘emergency remote teaching’ were not, by themselves, sufficiently capable of provoking some degree of destabilization in the social representations already built by professionals who are active in the job market, however, they extended bridges towards developing a certain kind of sense of threat to teaching, given the possibility of emergence of remote learning in basic education as an official modality.
In this respect, in the same vein as in Abdalla (2017), the constitution of the teaching profession identity permeates, among others, the cultural and institutional aspects, as well the demands for public policies, and in this meantime, “the relationships progressively restructure the social/professional representations and configure ways of being in the profession” (ABDALLA, 2017, p. 132, our translation).

Final considerations

It is possible to indicate that, in teachers’ views, the exceptional moment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, in which basic education schooling experienced the unprecedented situation of emergency remote teaching, will lead to an appreciation of teaching, considering the spheres of family and society, mainly based on the perspective that the teacher’s physical presence moderating school activities is fundamental for the significance of the teaching-learning process.

On the other hand, the study also revealed that the moment impacted by the experience of remote teaching would lead to devaluation by the government, supported by the perspective that remote teaching has enabled the government to see possibilities of increasing precariousness for both teaching and the school in their concrete format.

Moreover, the representational system produced by the teachers about teaching in this context, despite presenting elements that point to appreciation, reinforces the social representations already constructed, which refer to work that is painful, difficult, and arduous, though effectively rewarding, motivated by the belief in the social transformation role played by the teacher, a reason for which persistence in the profession is justified.

Translated by Fernando Effori de Mello.
REFERENCES


Credit Author Statement

Acknowledgments: The authors thank CAPES for the grant awarded to Martha Marques Teixeira Pereira to carry out this study and the Carlos Chagas Foundation for authorizing the use of data and for its statistical support.

Funding: Carlos Chagas Foundation. Translation Service.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: Ethical procedures involving the research were ensured, however, submission to the Ethics Committee was not required, considering that the work was conducted with a database.

Availability of data and material: The data used in this study was provided by the Carlos Chagas Foundation and kept confidential, without authorization for disclosure.

Contributions of authors: Please describe each author’s contribution to the present work. The author’s contributions: theoretical deepening; bibliographic survey, literature review, data analysis and interpretation; writting the text. The co-author’s contributions: orientation and guidance regarding the study field; text review, provision of materials (texts and database), analysis checking, text organization, support in theoretical deepening, and theoretical-methodological guidance.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, and normalization.