


COVID-19 AND EDUCATION IN NORTH REGIONAL STATE EDUCATION SYSTEMS: first lessons

COVID-19 E A EDUCAÇÃO NOS SISTEMAS ESTADUAIS DE ENSINO DA REGIÃO NORTE: primeiras lições
COVID-19 Y LA EDUCACIÓN EN LOS SISTEMAS DE EDUCACIÓN REGIONAL DEL ESTADO DEL NORTE:
primeras lecciones

Katia Cristina C. F. Brito

PhD in Education from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar). Professor in the Pedagogy Course at the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT) and in the Professional Master in Education (PPPGE / UFT).
katiacristina@uft.edu.br

 0000-0001-8519-4884


Meire Lúcia Andrade da Silva

Master in Education (2019) from the Federal University of Tocantins (PPGE / UFT). Basic education teacher at the Municipal Education Network of Gurupi (TO).
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1237-6422>.
melucia26@hotmail.com

 0000-0002-8533-7176

Ana Gabriela Ferreira Brito

Bachelor of Psychology from the Centro Universitário Luterano de Palmas. anaqfbrito@gmail.com

 0000-0003-2701-2848

Mailing address: Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), Avenida NS-15, Quadra 109, Norte, s / n - Plano Norte, 77001-090 - Palmas, TO – Brazil

Received: 02.16.2020
Accepted: 03.20.2020.
Published: 04.01.2020.

RESUMO:

The article presents and analyzes the level of development of the actions and deliberations of the State Teaching Systems in the North Region from the occurrence of the first case of contamination by COVID-19 in Brazil, revealing potentialities, trends and gaps. It uses documentary analysis from three categories: suspension of classes, deliberations regarding the possibilities of remote teaching and destination of school meals. It was identified that the deliberations have been provisional and indicate a predominant tendency to use distance-learning mechanisms although there are few conditions for access and learning from the solutions presented.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: COVID-19; State Teaching Systems; North region; Education; Remote teaching.

Introduction

O The world is going through an unprecedented health crisis as a consequence of the 2019 coronavirus contamination (COVID), which continues to spread to countries and continents. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was characterized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic, and on January 30, 2020 it had already been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Importance, the highest level of alert issued by the Organization, according to the International Health Regulations.

Although the countries affected are experiencing different levels of incidence curves from strategies to mitigate social contact, there are various actions at the global level to

minimize the effects of the pandemic, but the strategies must be evaluated and implemented according to each reality in view of the abysmal differences in economic, political, social and cultural aspects of each nation and their respective regions.

The transmission of this microbiological agent has occurred overwhelmingly in many countries, while in others it has been slower. According to WHO (PAHO/WHO, 2020) worldwide, 3,090,445 cases have been confirmed, resulting in 217,769 deaths. In Brazil, 85,380 cases and 5,901 deaths were confirmed. The data set was updated in the afternoon of April 30, 2020.

Two months after the first case of the new coronavirus was registered in Brazil on February 25th, the situation of the pandemic still represents a great challenge, being the object of research by health professionals, sanitation, applied technology and public policies, in the different areas aiming to monitor and minimize its effects in the country.

When conducting the study in the Brazilian regions, it is observed that the number of infected and the lethality rate in Brazil is a factor that triggers different protection and prevention measures within the community.

According to the Ministry of Health (BRAZIL, 2020), in a panorama of the different regions, it can be observed that the Southeast region, with the highest number of registered cases, presents, until the moment of the present study, an index of 49,7% of the cases in relation to the total of infected people. Next, the Northeast region with 28.7%, and in sequence, the North (12.6%) and South (5.8%).

As far as deaths are concerned, the Northern region corresponds to 12.0% of registrations in Brazil. Amazonas being the state in the North of Brazil with the highest rate of deaths registered by COVID-19, followed by the state of Pará.

On the other hand, the North region has the lowest number of beds per inhabitant, only 2,206, concentrating 5% of the total Brazilian beds, being 5.7% of public beds and 4.3% of private beds. According to a study by the Federal Medicine Council (CRM, 2018) "the Northern region states have together fewer ICU beds in SUS (1,227) than five others: Minas Gerais (2,742), Rio de Janeiro (1,626), São Paulo (5,358), Paraná (1,748) and Rio Grande do Sul (1,506)".

These data reveal the vulnerability of the region and the need for public actions and policies that enable government interventions. It should be noted that the Northern region of Brazil is marked by two characteristics: socio-economic inequality and geographical isolation from other regions of the country. These characteristics are in contrast to its great economic and population growth, much above the national average.

The context presented means a historical challenge for society, especially for the governments of the federated entities: to articulate health actions that prevent the spread of the virus and the cure of those infected, with social, educational and economic actions in order to mitigate the consequences of this pandemic.

Specifically in the sphere of education, the federal government, which has the autonomy to establish general guidelines for basic education, presented as its main initiative the publication on April 1, 2020, of Provisional Measure No. 934, which establishes exceptional rules on the school year of basic education and higher education resulting from the measures to deal with the public health emergency situation dealt with in Law No. 13,979 of February 6, 2020.

According to article 1 of the Provisional Measure: the establishment of basic education is exempt, on an exceptional basis, from the obligation to observe 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 standards to be edited by the respective education systems" (BRAZIL, 2020). In the sole paragraph, it is pointed out that the exemption referred to in the caput shall apply for the school year affected by the measures to deal with the aforementioned public health emergency situation.

It is clear from the foregoing that the MP amends only part of Article 24, I of Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996 (LDB), maintaining the minimum of 800 mandatory hours, and has not amended or revoked any other article of the Law (BRAZIL, 1996).

In the wake of the federal government, the states of the federation have implemented measures and lowered standards in the educational sphere which, taken together, express the challenges presented in the face of a state of pandemic and the need for urgent action as will be presented in the following item.

The pandemic and its effects on the educational context of the Northern region

The documentary survey indicated that all states in the Northern region have implemented legal, economic and social measures to confront COVID-19 during the month of March 2020 as a result of national and international determinations. Nevertheless, such measures impact the daily lives of Brazilians who have experienced, since then, processes of denial of events, frustration, anxiety and concern, until great irreparable losses.

On the whole, the schools were abruptly and inexorably suspended. It should be remembered that in most Brazilian states there was no adequate time for preparation,

community consultation, context analysis or even the decision to continue studies in alternative ways.

The consequences of the necessary actions were unavoidable: the need to supply the nutritional deficiencies that were partially made by school feeding, the impossibility of attending to the learning rights of the students in a face-to-face way as foreseen by LDB, as well as, the need to reinvent the use of technologies in order to get closer to the school community, either to maintain links or to offer regular education in order to comply with the compulsory workload.

The study pointed out the path taken by the northern states with symmetries and dissonances throughout the prescribed period of quarantine and social isolation. In this perspective it is possible to mention actions regarding the school calendar and suspension of classes, meeting the nutritional needs of students and deliberations regarding the possibilities of remote teaching. These themes are presented below in a comparative analysis.

The information described here is part of the research carried out by the authors on the platform made available by the National Council of Secretaries of Education (Consed), the archives of the Group of Studies, Research and Extension in Municipal Education (GepeEM/ObSPE) and the collection of legislation enacted at the time of the pandemic.

As far as the first category is concerned, all the states under study have ordered the suspension of classes. These deliberations were presented in the set of measures that declared emergency situations within the state government. In the case of Acre, specific regulations were identified for the suspension of classes, and other legal determinations that, in general, presented the suspension in the set of other measures. The last determination, in the temporal delimitation of the survey, extended the suspension of classes until May 4. Considering the legislation as a whole, the suspension was extended three times during the study period.

Similarly, the state government of Amapá extended the suspension of in-person classes in state schools until May 31. In the state of Amazonas, the first case of COVID-19 confirmed took place on March 16, 2020, this being the date of the first determination to suspend classes for 15 days, only in the capital. On the following days, March 17 and 18, classes were suspended for a further 15 days in the metropolitan region and some municipalities near Manaus; and then in the whole state of Amazonas, respectively. On March 31, the suspension of classes throughout the state was extended for 30 days.

In the State of Pará, the class stoppage occurred on the same date, with an extension until April 15, being implemented in advance of the school vacation in July, lasting 15

days. In the States of Roraima and Rondônia, the suspension occurred from March 17th, being suspended for 15 days, and the same period will also count as July recess.

The Rondônia State Department of Education has extended the period of suspension of classes in the state education system for another 15 days, the measure became effective from April 1 until April 16, 2020. In the State of Tocantins, the suspension of classes took place from March 16th, with the vacation period in July being brought forward to April 23rd.

In all the states analyzed, the deliberations about the suspension of classes were promulgated between March 16 and 17, from then on the states of Acre and Manaus extended this suspension three times, and the others twice. This data denotes the temporary nature and uncertainty that permeate this moment and that defines the set of actions developed.

The justifications for all the deliberations studied indicate the need for monitoring the process of expansion of the virus in these states, as well as the continuity of joint studies and research aimed at taking new measures to promote health and appropriate learning conditions for students.

It is important to note that during the suspension of classroom attendance, all states have programmed activities to maintain school links with students, most of them mediated by technology. Another initiative of the states was the search for distance education resources to assist students. In all these measures, all the states under study have made available to students a platform called "Digital School Network" where thousands of digital resources presented by private groups free of charge on the Internet are presented. In this sense, it is worth noting that such actions indicate undeclared intentions

Although they proclaim concern about the schooling of children and young people in social isolation, international bodies and many governments and corporate coalitions conceal the fact that they are in the interests of educational and information and communications technology corporations, as well as corporations that are active in the collection of data on the population that are "mined" and used in advertising and political clashes, in general, in support of the right and the extreme right. (COLERMAX, 2020, p. 13).

For a better understanding of the paths taken in the first weeks when classes were suspended are related to following the states of the Northern region and their respective actions. It should be considered that even though there are no substantive differences in

the actions, these denote specificities in the search for solutions to the impasse of continuity of the school year.

- a) Pará: the students enrolled in the state network have access to content through recorded classes broadcast by TV Cultura, with the project "Todos em Casa pela Educação" (Everyone at Home for Education). For the initial years of Elementary School I, the secretariat is guiding teachers to develop activities. The schools will collect so that the appropriate corrections and guidance can be made. The Training Center for Basic Education Professionals of the State of Pará (Cefor) began in April to offer continuous training for teachers from Pará.

The courses offered are part of the Center's training portfolio and take place throughout the year, offering courses covering several areas of knowledge at the same time: Digital Tools for Distance Education, Reading and Writing Practices: possible lectures; Teaching Sciences in Brazil; School Management and Inclusive Education and Historiography among others. Each course has a workload of 30 hours.

- b) Acre: A set of actions is observed that have been changing and intensifying since the beginning of the class suspension process. The initial measures were the hiring of a tool to monitor the performance of tasks by students, then signed an agreement with telecommunication companies to release educational applications from data consumption and the recording of classes to send to students.

The state government has launched a platform with content for students, is analyzing a partnership with an open TV channel to offer classes and has released a guide for the development of activities during the suspension period of classes.

- c) Amazonas: Through the "Aula em Casa" project, elementary and high school students from the Amazonas state and municipal networks (Manaus) have access to the transmission of distance classes on open television channels, websites and applications. After the classes return in person, the students' learning level will be verified. The schedule of classes is available weekly, as well as a manual for students with guidance on the special regimens of classes not in person.

In addition to the guide, suggested materials, activities and video-classes are available on the Digital School Network platform, from the office itself. A manual for parents or guardians has also been made available, with guidelines

for special non-attendance classes, in which it is recommended that they ensure that students attend classes, guide them to use electronic devices for educational games and encourage them to delve deeper into the subject through other tools. They also advise them to attend classes together with the students whenever possible, guiding them to write down their doubts and follow the school's communication routine

- d) Amapá: The secretariat has made available platforms for non-presential activities, such as the Amapá Digital School, Connected Schools and the Virtual Learning Collaborative Environment (AVAMEC). In addition to the textbooks already delivered to students at the beginning of the 2020 school year, which can be used in activities developed by teachers. The schools follow with remote teaching strategies with the students using technological tools. Students who do not have Internet access have received help from teachers through activity books.

With the Literate Child Program, routine pedagogical proposals were made available for early childhood education and primary school. The materials are made available to schools in the municipal and state networks served by the program in a collaborative manner.

High school students who will take the National High School Exam in 2020 have the support of the video classes of Central do Enem, on the YouTube channel. The video-classes are published in the mornings, from Monday to Friday. Many schools also use the Google Classroom, a digital tool, to hold virtual classes.

- e) Roraima: built an orientation plan to guide students, parents, teachers, managers and pedagogical coordinators. According to the Plan, the classes will be in a non-presential format, according to the possibilities of each Educational Institution, locality and region in which it is inserted.

The plan was built through forms with analysis and diagnostics with contributions from managers, servers of the State Secretariat of Education and Sports (SEED) and thus the content and tasks will reach students using applications and social networks such as: Whatsapp; facebook; blogs; video lessons through channels; YouTube; educational platform sites and Google Classroom. To assist students who do not have the Internet resource, teachers have prepared booklets, handouts and exercises that were printed to be delivered to parents or guardians.

The indigenous communities of Roraima will also receive the printed material. The logistics for this material to reach the student is being carefully analyzed and programmed by SEED.

- f) Rondônia: Use of digital platform for classes and activities offered by Technological Mediation, with all the curricular components of the common and diversified part. The classes are planned and taught by teachers of the state network who work in Technological Mediation available through the platform "Google classroom". The student will receive a specific code and will have access to the classes per curricular component. When opening the schedule, the student can click on the link, where it will be directed to the class prepared in the digital platform.

The online classes are about forty minutes long and the secretary recommends that the students attend the normal schedule of the classroom activities, taking advantage of the time to organize which class they will attend, to maintain a daily study routine.

A step-by-step tutorial so that the student can have access to the contents in an objective way has been prepared and soon, classes will also be made available remotely to serve elementary school students.

- g) Tocantins: The first actions developed were studies and planning to implement digital educational resources. It is worth mentioning that the state of Tocantins anticipated vacations by remaining without school activities for most of the period under study.

Regarding the use of distance education tools, the state of Pará had already been working with this modality since 2017. It has planned continuing education courses for teachers and the inclusion team, as well as the states of Amazonas and Amapá, which are carrying out the actions in articulation with the municipal education systems. In addition, the organization of documents, planning, attendance schedules and guidance guides for parents and students. On the other hand, there were no initiatives that indicated surveys of the profile of each family for the remote and/or EaD, or even community consultation practices regarding the challenges and possibilities of action during the pandemic, which shows the distance from what is prescribed by Brazilian legislation regarding the implementation of democratic management in schools.

Regarding school feeding during the period of social isolation and suspension of classes, the states of Amazonas, Acre, Roraima, Rondônia, Pará and Tocantins, distributed basic food baskets/kits, as well as hygienic products for students and their families,

contemplating all the stages and modalities of teaching of the state networks. In programs determined as "snack at home".

Of these, Rondônia and Pará used food voucher cards, allowing the purchase of food in supermarkets, bakeries, butchers and horticultural establishments accredited by governments. In the other states, basic food baskets were delivered by registration, following the rules of distance and isolation. The state of Roraima makes reference and monitoring by the School Feeding Council (CAE).

This action is the result of Bill 786/2020, which establishes the distribution of school meals to students' families. Since the money from the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) continues to be transferred by the Union to states and municipalities for the purchase of school meals. The intention of the action is to attend almost 39 million children and adolescents that Brazil has enrolled in the public basic education network, according to the 2019 School Census. However, it is characterized as an emergency government action, understood as the role of the public power in offering support to students and families who are extremely vulnerable.

Concluding remarks

The discussions presented indicate that, in all the measures implemented in the Northern region, the suspension of classes occurred in all states. This determination was made almost concomitantly in view of the determinations of the WHO and the Ministry of Health pointing out the need for social isolation since the measures that include closure of schools and other public spaces, prohibition of agglomerations, besides hygiene measures that can, at the same time, reduce mortality in the pandemic and be economically beneficial.

Pandemics have unique characteristics in terms of progression and control possibilities. It is crucial to provide health education and raise awareness of these situations for effective prevention of the spread of disease. Thus, it is observed that relatives, teachers and managers have been confronted with a new reality marked by the absence of definitions, and by temporariness, where deadlines are uncertain and certainties are non-existent. It is important that the interventions of states and municipalities provide correct information and guidance in order to prevent contagion. In the state of Amapá, school managers were recommended to intensify the dissemination of prevention protocols to the school community.

"It is essential to remain calm and adopt prevention measures, to work pedagogically in this context so that teachers and students take ownership of the concepts and know how they can be multiplying agents in the prevention of coronavirus (COVID-19) with friends, families and the community." (AMAPÁ STATE GOVERNMENT, 2020).

Another measure unanimously adopted by the states under study was the use of resources that would be allocated to the National School Feeding Plan (PNAIC). These actions can mitigate the different effects of lack of food and the inequalities that are imposed in the Brazilian reality in times of pandemic.

The most controversial issue that has mobilized the whole society, educational organizations, managers and public policy scholars are the consequences of the suspension of classes. Completing approximately 45 days without classes in school chains, the whole process was marked by a phase of perplexity, data and information analysis and exchange of experiences. In this context, three of the seven states researched anticipated the period of vacation or school recess, which allowed more time for analysis and monitoring of trends in the world compared to the situation in Brazil, which would make it possible to seek the necessary paths.

The great trend that prevailed in the Brazilian states and, equally in most states of the Northern region, was the search for two paths: first, the regulation at the state level, within the respective state education councils, of principles, norms and guidelines so that the state network and the municipal education networks were anchored for decision making; and also the identification and implementation of technological resources, platforms, channels and radio stations, finally, different mechanisms aimed at establishing the remote education pointed out as possible by the National Education Council in Opinion No. 05 issued on April 28, 2020.

The data presented indicates that the state systems have prioritized the use of remote teaching mechanisms and spaces in the period in question, which has occurred in the most diverse ways to the detriment of the unequal conditions of access and connection to the Internet and technological means. In this sense, different questions arise when highlighting the initiatives of the states of the Northern region, especially the factors that have a close relationship with the learning process that remain absent in the face of the unfeasibility of guaranteeing learning rights in the initiatives described.

The context under analysis, experienced in days of pandemic in which everyone is oriented to stay at home, highlights the inequalities in access to technology, to adequate conditions of study, but still, denounces a process of and precariousness of teaching work that without minimum working conditions, in domestic space, without technical or

pedagogical support is faced with that of a technological apparatus building new class formats that require different skills and do not correspond to the reality of each teacher.

When reflecting on the potentialities of this context, it is necessary to observe that, to the detriment of the limitations and difficulties experienced, there are opportunities to consolidate new practices, new reflections on the paths of distance education in basic education, insofar as there is an accumulation of attempts and experiences in this theme, even if in a superficial way and without a consistent implementation project.

As for trends, it is observed that new issues that were latent in the educational process prior to the pandemic are returning to the debate and the importance of discussing the financing of education, teacher training, the structural and physical conditions of supply in the systems is emerging, bearing in mind that all these points will influence the safe return of pupils and teachers to school.

Finally, there are gaps and uncertainties. So many questions fit at this moment: is it possible to be home school? What is the objective of the different private institutions that finance virtual projects, equipment and teacher training for distance learning to be established? How can we think of schools without students and teachers? To what extent have society, the local community and students been effectively involved in the process of consolidating new methodologies justified by the pandemic? Doubts that open up new areas of research, provoke reflection and encourage social participation and collective action..

References

Colemarx. Em defesa da educação pública comprometida com a igualdade social:

porque os trabalhadores não devem aceitar aulas remotas. UFRJ - Rio de Janeiro - RJ. Disponível em: <http://www.colemarx.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Colemarx-texto-cr%C3%ADtico-EaD-2.pdf>. Acessado em:

Conselho Federal De Medicina. Menos de 10% dos municípios brasileiros possuem leito de UTI. Disponível em:

https://portal.cfm.org.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27828:2018-09-04-19-31-41&catid=3. Acessado em:

Governo do Estado do Amapá. Decreto suspende aulas e muda a rotina do serviço público no Amapá. Veja os detalhes: O governador Waldez Góes adotou outras medidas como a suspensão de eventos coletivos em ambientes fechados promovidos pelo governo do estado por 30 dias. Disponível em:

https://portal.ap.gov.br/ler_noticia.php?slug=1703/decreto-suspende-aulas-e-muda-a-rotina-do-servico-publico-no-amapa-veja-os-detalhes Acessado em:

Lei nº 13.979, de 6 de fevereiro de 2020. Dispõe sobre as medidas para enfrentamento da emergência de saúde pública de importância internacional decorrente do coronavírus responsável pelo surto de 2019. Disponível em:

<http://www.in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/lei-n-13.979-de-6-de-fevereiro-de-2020-242078735>. Acessado em:

Lei número 9394, 20 de dezembro de 1996. Estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional. Disponível em:

http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l9394.htm Acessado em:

Medida Provisória nº 934, de 1 de abril de 2020. Estabelece normas excepcionais sobre o ano letivo da educação básica e do ensino superior decorrentes das medidas para enfrentamento da situação de emergência de saúde pública de que trata a Lei nº 13.979, de 6 de fevereiro de 2020, 1 abr. 2020. Disponível em:

<http://www.in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/medida-provisoria-n-934-de-1-de-abril-de-2020-250710591> Acessado em:

Ministério da Saúde. (30 de abril de 2020). Coronavírus Brasil. Disponível em:

<https://covid.saude.gov.br/> . Acessado em:

Organização Pan-Americana de Saúde/ Organização Mundial de Saúde. Folha informativa – COVID-19 (doença causada pelo novo coronavírus). Disponível em:

https://www.paho.org/bra/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6101:covid19&Itemid=875 . Acessado em:

Projeto de Lei nº 786, de 24 de maio de 2020. Altera a Lei nº 11.947, de 16 de junho de 2009, para autorizar, em caráter excepcional, durante o período de suspensão das aulas em razão de situação de emergência ou calamidade pública, a distribuição de gêneros alimentícios adquiridos com recursos do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE) aos pais ou responsáveis dos estudantes das escolas públicas de educação básica, 2020. Disponível em:

<https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/141262> .
Acessado em:

RESUMO:

O artigo apresenta e analisa o nível de desenvolvimento das ações e deliberações dos Sistemas Estaduais de Ensino da Região Norte a partir da ocorrência do primeiro caso de contaminação pelo COVID-19 no Brasil desvelando potencialidades, tendências e lacunas. Utiliza-se de análise documental a partir de três categorias: suspensão das aulas, deliberações a respeito das possibilidades de ensino remoto e destinação da alimentação escolar. Identificou-se que as deliberações têm sido provisórias e indicam uma tendência predominante de utilização de ferramentas de educação a distância embora se identifique poucas condições de acesso e aprendizagem a partir das soluções apresentadas

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: COVID-19; Sistemas Estaduais de Ensino; Região Norte; Educação; Ensino remoto.

RESUMEN:

El artículo presenta y analiza el nivel de desarrollo de las acciones y deliberaciones de los Sistemas de Enseñanza del Estado de la Región Norte, desde la ocurrencia del primer caso de contaminación por COVID-19 en Brasil, revelando potencialidades, tendencias y brechas. Utiliza el análisis documental de tres categorías: suspensión de clases, deliberaciones sobre las posibilidades del aprendizaje a distancia y el destino de las comidas escolares. Se identificó que las deliberaciones fueron provisionales e indican una tendencia predominante en el uso de mecanismos de aprendizaje a distancia, aunque existen pocas condiciones para acceder y aprender de las soluciones presentadas.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: COVID-19; Sistemas de enseñanza del estado; Región del norte; Educación; Enseñanza remota.