

# School Psychology in the COVID-19 pandemic scenario: resignifying times and spaces for institutional action

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## Abstract

The spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 triggered a serious crisis and was classified as a pandemic in March 2020. Countless phenomena arose from this unprecedented event in recent history. In this connection, School Psychology has much to contribute as an area of scientific production, research and intervention. This theoretical article aimed to present critical reflections on actions, reactions and investigations in the area during the pandemic. Surveys of national and international literature in the period and theoretical and reflective contributions to the work in School Psychology were presented, highlighting topics such as: school inclusion, institutional work and continuing education. The conclusions showed that, although the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic has created challenges for the school psychologist, a number of transformations and advances have occurred such as the strengthening of the spirit of people who courageously remained working, teaching and learning. The topics discussed provided powerful indicators of resistance from the perspective of a school success culture extending beyond the pandemic period.

**Keywords:** Continuing training; Inclusion; Institutional performance; School psychology.

In December 2019, a serious health crisis was unleashed worldwide with the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), a disease caused by the new virus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

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Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Croda & Garcia, 2020; Goodman & Borio, 2020). Spreading rapidly and with wide reach, the outbreak that had emerged in China hit Brazil in February 2020, after having spread to several countries and continents. The World Health Organization classified the disease as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Organização Mundial da Saúde [OMS], 2020).

The Brazilian Ministry of Health declared a situation of public calamity throughout the country on March 20, 2020, for the period until December 31, 2020 (Presidência da República, 2020a). However, after almost two years, in November 2021, when this article was written, the COVID-19 situation in Brazil had become very alarming, with almost 620,000 fatalities and more than 22 million people infected (Ministério da Saúde, 2021a, 2021b). Despite the most effective procedures advocated worldwide by specialists and authorities to control the spread of the disease such as the use of protective face masks, frequent hand hygiene and the practice of social distancing (OMS, 2020), the Brazilian federal government did not encourage these behaviors in the country. On the contrary, it disseminated false news about contamination and medication, criticized and challenged state governments for implementing measures to control people circulation, triggered a denialist movement about scientific knowledge and did not develop a rapid policy of immunization of the population through a preventive vaccination program (Senado Federal, 2021).

The consequences of these nefarious actions by the government weakened the Brazilian population and made it vulnerable not only to the threat of COVID-19, but also to other contingencies. The absence of economic, social and educational policies enhanced, for example, phenomena such as unassisted unemployment and the worsening of social inequalities (Senado Federal, 2021).

The inertia of government decisions to organize educational policy in favor of justice and equity, corroborated with the exclusion (social, school, digital) and with the leaving the educational systems “to their own luck” and to precarious options. The results evidence the overload of teaching work, maintenance of most public schools shut down and fragility in the private network system with transitory alternatives that lead to an “open and close” movement at the mercy of a game of power.

There are countless phenomena arising from this serious crisis in which School Psychology has much to contribute, with reflections and actions. The vulnerable Brazilian population is increasingly tired, sick, immobilized, using its energy to live and survive. Becoming invisible and silenced while losing space for criticism, exercise of citizenship, emancipation, solidarity and awareness that educational contexts help provide. And, like many Brazilians, the School Psychology has managed to resist, creating alternatives in search of successful situations in personal and collective development.

This theoretical article aims to present critical reflections and discussions about actions, reactions and prospection of School Psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to surveys of national and international literature that show the spreading of research in this area, theoretical contributions and proposals for action in School Psychology will be presented based on central topics in School Psychology, highlighting, especially, school inclusion, institutional action and continuous education. These contributions seek to pave the way towards transformation and hope based on collective efforts.

## **School Psychology in Brazil and in the world during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Social distancing measures, as one of the initiatives to face the COVID-19 pandemic, led to an abrupt transition from face-to-face to remote teaching or, in some cases, to hybrid teaching systems. The professional activity of school psychologists also began turning virtual. Aiming to gain knowledge and to characterize the movement of (re)formulation of knowledge and practices in School Psychology in the face of this unprecedented scenario carried out a survey in the national and international literature in April 2021, covering the period from January 2020 to April 2021.

For the national survey used articles indexed in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) databases, in the Portal of periodicals of the *Portal de Periódicos da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior/Ministério da Educação (Capes/MEC)* and in Google Scholar. These databases were chosen because they are free and easy to access for scientific information. SciELO was considered by the United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as the largest provider of indexed open access journals in the world (Packer et al., 2014). The *Portal de Periódicos Capes* provides, through its website, access to different academic contents updated in electronic format. In just one virtual space, more than 45 thousand periodicals, national and international, several scientific databases, patents, theses and dissertations, among other types of materials, covering all areas of knowledge, are included. Among the advantages of the *Portal da Capes* are: the offer of reliable and high quality information, the democratization of information, greater capillarity and international insertion of scientific knowledge (Ministério da Educação, 2018). Google Scholar is a Google system that offers comprehensive tools and high visibility for searching different academic publications and literature such as articles, dissertations and theses, documents and others, covering different areas of knowledge. This database has many features and applications, providing, in a simple way, extensive research to the academic literature, in addition to providing identification of research, publications and authors with the greatest impact and relevance in the scientific world (Caregnato, 2012; Santos, 2017; Santos & Santos, 2017).

The international survey retrieved the databases of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), American Psychological Association (APA) and International School Psychology Association (ISPA), with emphasis on articles in the *School Psychology Review*, *National School Psychology Week*, *School Psychology*, *School Psychology Quarterly* and *School Psychology International*. The databases selected allow free access and provide a broad approach to the specific production in the area of School Psychology. The descriptors used in Portuguese were *Psicologia Escolar OR Psicologia Educacional AND Pandemia OR COVID-19*. In English, *School Psychology OR Educational Psychology OR Counseling AND Pandemic OR COVID-19* were used.

Through this procedure, a total of 56 articles were accessed, which, after reading their titles and abstracts, were grouped into eight different thematic categories: impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health (19), impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education (17), training, research and/or intervention in School Psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic (10), medical topics (5), training in Psychology during COVID-19 pandemic (2), historical and future perspectives of School Psychology (1), scientific production in Psychology (1) and continuing education in Psychology (1). Then, the ten productions which themes, objectives and debates concerned training, research and/or intervention in School Psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic were read in full (Camargo & Carneiro, 2020; Codding et al., 2020; Maia et al., 2020; Ortiz & Levine, 2021; Pott, 2020; Quinn & Zahn, 2020; Silva et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020; von Hagen et al., 2021).

Regarding the subject of training in School Psychology, Maia et al. (2020) described experiences in the School Psychology internship. Students reported on the development of the competences described in the National Curriculum Guidelines for undergraduate courses in Psychology and appropriation of theoretical and practical concepts used during the training even in the remote framework imposed by the pandemic. Camargo and Carneiro (2020) reviewed the professional practices of school psychologists and showed that, despite the challenges faced, action perspectives, innovations and reinventions in the pandemic context, from high school to higher education, were addressed, leading to the development of some powerful actions, mainly related to welcoming the educational community through listening and care (Camargo & Carneiro 2020).

During the pandemic, higher education was a recurring focus of reflections and research that pointed to the growing resignification of the school psychologist role at this level of education. Marinho-Araujo (2009) created a historic milestone in the area of School Psychology by innovating, with her studies and research, the expansion of the field of action of the school psychologist in higher education. Since then, new studies by the author and her research group have expanded the professional opportunities for the insertion of Psychology

in such context (Bisinoto & Marinho-Araujo, 2014; Bisinoto et al., 2014; Feitosa & Marinho-Araujo, 2016; Marinho-Araujo, 2014b, 2016; Marinho-Araujo et al., 2015; Souza-Ferreira & Marinho-Araujo, 2017).

Pott (2020), using theoretical assumptions from Historical-Cultural Psychology and philosophical postulates, advocates the role of the school psychologist as a mediator and trainer of collectives between the players of higher education institutions that had to adhere to remote teaching. For the author, these collectives can build efficient ways for the academic training process and to overcome the adversities of the pandemic. The reflections of Oliveira et al. (2021) indicated advances for School Psychology based on the analysis of the experience of students and higher education professionals during the pandemic and their adherence to different teaching-learning tools that ensured greater flexibility and creativity in remote activities, even if the digital divide has caused strong concern in relation to the new challenges in the work of the school psychologist. Silva et al. (2020) presented an experience report of psychologists working in Student Assistance on campuses of a Federal University located in 4 different municipalities that developed, during the pandemic, actions such as: (a) research and evaluation with the university community; (b) offering remote psychological assistance; and (c) elaboration and implementation of psychosocial actions. The experiences enhanced the important role of the school psychologist acting in crisis situations, rescuing the complexity on which life and university education are built.

In an international review, Song et al. (2020) provided a synthesis of different recent research in countries that were hit earlier by COVID-19, such as China, Italy, Spain and India, focusing on key issues related to School Psychology in the COVID-19 pandemic. They indicated the dissemination of innovations and adaptations in research, training and practices that helped information and advances in the area. Among the new actions, the authors highlighted important guidelines in connection with: (a) ethical, legal, safety and technology considerations related to psychoeducational conduct; (b) recommendations to parents; (c) studies on the impact of systems of oppression on minorities; and (d) syndemic theory, which clusters around vulnerable populations in complex and unfair ways, driving the spread of and interaction with the virus.

Training of school psychologists is a major concern in the work of Quinn and Zahn (2020), who highlight the fact that School Psychology students faced unique challenges to give priority to academic work, internship requirements, involvement in research, mobility, their own well being, often added to financial, professional and personal adversities. As a result, despite the novelty of online learning, it was possible to perceive opportunities for student growth and flexibility on the part of higher education institutions: programs were modified, deadlines extended, evaluation systems changed and some assignments eliminated.

Research by Ortiz and Levine (2021) offers reflections on how university counseling and assessment centers, important training venues for undergraduates and providing psychological services to the community, have been affected. The authors highlighted that the strain created by the pandemic provided an opportunity for those centers to challenge old practices, with principals, faculty and campus leadership working collaboratively to follow best practices and mitigate disruptions in service delivery.

The COVID-19 pandemic, by significantly interrupting primary, secondary and university education, has given rise to social inequality. Coddling et al. (2020) go deeper into this subject by highlighting movements against racism, white supremacy and police brutality. The authors emphasized the potential impacts of these and other contingencies for School Psychology, including studies related to educational equity, technology, and the use of new research methods.

For von Hagen et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has led school psychologists in many countries to provide remote services, using information and communication technologies. The authors indicated that professionals had little time to prepare for this change, which resulted in challenges, insecurity, reluctance and doubts regarding remote practices compared to face-to-face psychological services. The article discusses the impacts of remote services performed, with the aim of providing useful information to support school psychologists in making future decisions.

The national and international search for the articles presented retrieves recurrences in the challenges faced in the country and abroad in the training and performance experiences of school psychologists. The cross-sectional analyses of the referred papers point to the resilience and vitality of School Psychology, despite the number of demands and changes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next sections will present propositions and reflections on the topics present in the work of psychologists during the pandemic, with emphasis on: inclusion of students with disabilities, institutional performance and continuing education. It is expected that, in contrast to the challenges faced as a result of the current crisis, such proposals can cause successful confrontations and practices in the area.

## **Contributions of School Psychology for the inclusion of students with disabilities during the pandemic**

This section aims to discuss the consequences of the pandemic in the process of inclusion of students with disabilities. From critical readings on school inclusion policies for special education, suggestions associated to the performance of the school psychologist in connection with inclusive education will be presented.

During the pandemic, effects in school dynamics, functioning and structure were inevitable, causing an even greater impact on groups that, historically, are minority in relation to the scope of school inclusion policies (Song et al., 2020). Students belonging to *quilombola* communities, indigenous people living in rural areas, LGBTQIAP+ groups, low-income classes, youth under socio-educational measures and others should be the target of attention for access and permanence in the formal education system at a time when the structures of social inequalities are significantly more perceived.

Prior to the pandemic, the group of special education students was already going through a period of clashes between different social sectors, especially in recent years, with the intensification of neoliberal policies that put the perspective of inclusive education at risk of setback and segregation. The inclusion of people with disabilities in regular schools is still a recent achievement in Brazil due to previous governments and social policies (Fachinetti et al., 2021).

In order to present recent political actions managed since 2016, the *Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva* (PNEEPEI, National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education), implemented in 2008 by the Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação [MEC]), 2008), was chosen as a starting point. It is considered the main milestone of the inclusive education paradigm in this country, for setting the conception of a social project for the school space transformation with view at building a democratic society (Fleith, 2011). This Policy is the historical unfolding of a broad social movement through which school inclusion came to be understood as students with disabilities right to develop their potential through an adapted, quality education, according to the needs and characteristics of these students development (Fleith, 2011).

In the direction of the actions by consecutive governments to the PNEEPEI in 2008, there was promulgation of the Law nº 13,146/2015, known as the Brazilian Law of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, with constitutional amendment value (Presidência da República, 2015). Like the 2008 Policy, the federal law is also considered a political landmark that aims to promote disabled people's rights and freedom under conditions of equality, and ratifies the paradigm of school inclusion as a right guaranteed by the State to students with disabilities, from basic education to higher education, with attention to the specificities of each apprentice (Presidência da República, 2015). Both policies have been expanding the access and permanence of students with specific needs in common classes, which justifies the significant increase in the number of public enrollments in regular schools in the country (Galvão et al., 2018).

According to the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research), from the last Technical Report of the Basic Education Census carried out between 2016 and 2020, the number of students with disability and with autism spectrum disorders and with high abilities/giftedness reached 1.3 million in 2020, indicating a growth of 34.7% compared to 2016, this being the highest amount of inclusion observed in elementary education (69.6%) (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2021). The Report also highlights that, in 2016, this growth specifically represented 89.5% of special education students enrolled and, in 2020, that number increased to 93.3%, confirming the understanding that it is an indicator influenced by the growth in enrollments of this public in common classes. Despite the expressiveness of the data, since 2016, a series of political and social tensions emerged in connection with an attempt by the federal government to “update” the 2008 PNEEPEI, shortly after changes in the Ministry of Education.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Provisional Measure nº 934 (Presidência da República, 2020b, Preamble) was issued, which “[...] established exceptional rules for the school year of basic education and higher education due to the measures to face the situation of public health emergency”, which culminated in the drawing of the CNE Opinion nº 5/2020. In this document, guidelines were issued to rearrange the school calendar and the remote activities aiming at complying with the minimum annual credit hours. In this document, attention is drawn to the fact that family members are indicated as mediators for the development of school activities, and, although it assumes that the guidelines are extended to special education, it was not able to guarantee the specifics of adaptation for this public in the framework of the regular school, giving rise, once again, to the differentiated and separate treatment of the other students attending the common classes (Fachinetti et al., 2021).

As a result of the continuity of the actions of a government that has been undertaking a series of dismantling in Brazilian Education, on September 30, 2020, Decree nº 10,502 was signed and, from then on, gave validity to the National Policy on Special Education: Equitable, Inclusive and Lifelong (MEC, 2020). The propositions of the new Policy, right in the midst of a pandemic, increase social inequalities for students with disabilities, especially for providing guidelines pm the maintenance of special classes and schools which is being considered an outrage to the human rights promoted so far (Santos & Moreira, 2021).

In the midst of a scenario that expands, revitalizes and resignifies the ethical and political commitment of the school psychologist in the process of school inclusion in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to ratify the relevance of specific actions geared to minority groups. While the population is still going through the pandemic, with the measures of control and social isolation, school psychologists should continue their actions within public and private schools to support special education from the perspective of inclusion. It is assumed that school is a legitimate framework for students with and without disabilities to develop from the pedagogical purposes established in their curriculum and from which none can be separated without persistence in solutions and innovations for all. In this connection, Fleith (2011), states that the policies supported by the paradigm of social and school inclusion encourage general education to undertake administrative, strategic and technical-pedagogical efforts not only towards special education, but to expand new endeavors in educational institutions that call the attention of school psychologists.

Proposals for the performance of this professional in the process of special education students inclusion have already been pointed out by Galvão and Beckman (2016), Galvão et al. (2018), Fleith (2011) and Mítjans-Martínez (2007a, 2007b), and are still effective in the pandemic context. In the current scenario, it is argued that the school psychologist must be even more resistant to the daily tensions related to pedagogical decisions regarding students with disabilities from the following proposals: (a) Initiatives aimed at breaking stereotypes and prejudices that build myths about the special education audience, especially for supporting a priori conceptions that they would not be able to learn on virtual platforms; (b) Training of the technical-

pedagogical team on public policies of inclusion, political-ideological diversities that support them and the consequences for the school; (c) Support in the implementation of projects and pedagogical actions for students with and without disabilities in the use of virtual platforms, as well as in the hybrid modality, with an emphasis on successful experiences and overcoming barriers, in favor of a culture of inclusion, mutual respect and academic success among peers; (d) Listening and welcoming teachers with regard to their doubts, concerns, anxieties, questions through virtual meetings and monitoring the implementation of pedagogical adaptations for students with disabilities in the same environment shared by their colleagues; (e) Monitoring the teacher's efforts in the search for expansion, revision, resignification and innovation of their didactics for each student who has learning specificities in a context of expanding access to new and diverse teaching technologies; (f) Promoting psychological listening of students without disabilities, aiming to explore concepts about inclusion in remote and hybrid education for their peers with disabilities, encouraging student protagonism actions so that they engage in the collective search for the process of inclusion for all; (g) Observation of the social interactions of students with and without disabilities in the virtual setting, supporting teacher mediations for the appreciation of human diversity in relation to ways of learning, thinking, acting and expressing themselves; (h) Support to the teacher in the development of school activities in a co-tutoring system between students of higher and lower school proficiency, including students with disabilities to tutor advanced skills in relation to their peers without disabilities; (i) Mediation among family members, teachers and pedagogical coordinators to perform specific strategies in the partnership between parents and school, helping to better define the roles and responsibilities of each instance in remote teaching in a home environment; (j) Adoption of teaching strategies about health safety protocols for a safe return to face-to-face learning, providing learning opportunities for students with disabilities starting with breaking labels about an alleged inability of this audience to comply with such initiatives.

These are contributions to potential interventions by the school psychologist in the inclusion process during the pandemic context and that are not limited to these propositions. It will be the immersion of the psychologist in the school by any means, virtual or face-to-face that will provide an opportunity to approach the specificities of each institution, revealing excluding actions and causing the re-signification of the pedagogical practice for all.

### **Institutional performance and continuing education in School Psychology: potentialities during and after the pandemic**

This section aims to emphasize the potency of institutional action for school psychologists considering the limitations of the pandemic and in the preparation for future possibilities. Reflections and proposals for continuing education for innovation, expansion and professional strengthening will also be presented.

The diversity of the school setting, by itself, requires the psychologist to look at what is specific, but without losing sight of the dimensions that cross the school routine and the multiplicity of realities present in the same space: the school. So, it becomes essential to understand the social dynamics that, during the pandemic, highlighted difficulties, exclusions and problems of students and their families and that impacted access, permanence and performance of school activities.

From the perspective of institutional and preventive actions (Marinho-Araujo, 2014a; Marinho-Araujo & Almeida, 2014), the psychologist has participated in school dialogues, aiming, with his/her action, to enhance the circulation of knowledge, perceptions and meanings of educational actors. In the pandemic, these possibilities were very restricted and limited. But, on the other hand, other performance perspectives opened up, such as actions to welcome the school community, especially for the re-signification of expectations and concerns, as well as the reorganization of pedagogical practices.

As retrieved in the literature review, in some parts of the country, teachers, managers and other school players, including the school psychologist, have found alternatives to face the challenges imposed above all on the educational processes by the current historical moment. In the public education system of the Federal District, with 686 school units, the 144 school psychologists were urged to reorganize their activities in view of the students' non-presence in schools.

In the scenario of remote activities that was set out with social isolation measures and the closing of schools, these psychologists replanned several procedures to be used in the virtual space. One of the most important was the institutional mapping (Governo do Distrito Federal, 2010; Marinho-Araujo, 2010; Marinho-Araujo, 2014a), used to identify the factors that characterize and influence school dynamics, in order to build and adapt the performance to the new learning times and spaces and development of the subjects, rethinking the educational programs and projects according to the new reality. This mapping can allow, among other aspects, the approximation of the psychologist with teachers, families and students to become aware of the risk factors and conditions of access to school, as one of the ways to reduce or avoid school dropout. On the other hand, this approach can lead the professional to identify protection conditions and potential in the family-school relationship, considering that family members and/or guardians have acted directly, to a large extent, in monitoring and mediating students' learning processes.

As in the case of the Federal District, school psychologists from other Brazilian states must identify the most effective communication channels to establish contact with families, making them aware of the importance of participating in the students remote education, aiming to reduce the difficulties caused by the temporary distancing from school. This allows for a replanning of the remote format of the meetings with the school community, taking place through workshops, meetings and lives.

Another initiative that can be developed is the creation of virtual rooms, for teachers and families, where the school psychologist makes himself/herself available to share a different environment for exchanges, with videos, activities suggestions and a listening space, allowing (re)knowledge of the school as a place of sharing and powerful experiences. In this virtual environment, configured as a training space, moments of dialogue about the challenges and possibilities of advances in remote educational practices can be planned and made available, advising teachers in the development of the teaching and learning process.

These intervention possibilities demonstrate the importance of the psychologist's participation in the training of other professionals who make up the school. Within the perspective of institutional action, the school psychologist is recognized as having specialized knowledge that, being different from pedagogical knowledge, contributes to the understanding of educational processes and human development, as well as the subjective elements present in school routine in times of a pandemic and that have repercussions on institutional relationships and practices. However, in order to work with the training of educational players, it is important that the psychologist also invests in his/her own permanent improvement.

Continuing education in School Psychology has, historically, constituted a privileged space for updating the profile and professional identity through the construction of competences and different theoretical, technical, methodological, ethical and political resources (Marinho-Araujo & Almeida, 2014). However, as Cavalcante (2019) and Cavalcante and Marinho-Araujo (2020) point out, the national and international literature has little publicized this subject, despite its power to consolidate and improve critical, institutional and preventive action in School Psychology (Marinho-Araujo & Almeida, 2014).

In contrast, can perceive that, during the pandemic period, continuing education initiatives for school psychologists have become more frequent – and/or more publicized; such initiatives were conceived and carried out by different bodies, such as professional councils, scientific associations, education secretariats, higher education institutions, among others. The types of improvement and updating occurred in different formats: study groups, lives, scientific events, webinars, etc. There was also a greater dissemination of materials,



mostly prepared by researchers in the area, either independently or representing entities and groups, which aimed to foster learning and professional development of school psychologists, such as booklets, technical notes, videos, among other materials.

Considering the highlight of the successful experience of the *Gerência do Serviço Especializado de Apoio à Aprendizagem* (GSEAA, Management of the Specialized Learning Support Service) of the *Secretaria de Educação do Distrito Federal* (SEEDF, Federal District Department of Education) with the group of school psychologists, some suggestions for continuing education developed during the pandemic are presented. During the year, these professionals were provided with guidance documents for remote work and institutional virtual spaces for dialogue, reflection and professional development, such as the GSEAA Channel on the Youtube platform <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1YQ3DLKJffZm2hbmLACVIA>>. It has activities that covered relevant topics during and after the pandemic: (a) live on collective work advice for non-face-to-face activities; (b) webinar on violence and gender; (c) round table on School Psychology in the Management of Public Policies in Education in the Federal District, held during the XII Colloquium of School Psychology and the III International Colloquium of School Psychology, organized by the Laboratory of School Psychology of the University of Brasília; (d) conversation circle on prevention and intervention with families, developed within the scope of the *Serviço Especializado de Apoio à Aprendizagem* (SEAA, Specialized Learning Support Service) Forum, among others.

Faced with an educational scenario with so many restrictions arising from the challenges imposed by the pandemic, continuing education became extremely necessary, acquiring surprising strength and visibility. It became evident that school psychologists also need and seek, more than ever, guidance or answers.

With the global health crisis, certain exclusion phenomena, vulnerabilities and precariousness in educational spaces were revived or exacerbated. In order to face them, both the literature and successful management experiences – such as the one carried out at the GSEAA/SEEDF – warn of a constant criticism of actions that can set distancing of the school psychologist from their main commitments, such as: (a) demands for clinical practices or those focused on the mental health area, when the literature warns that school action should focus on the institutional collective and on working together with educational players, in a preventive and relational perspective; (b) requests to provide answers and solutions of cases that are not always the responsibility of the school psychologist; (c) sense of urgency, which can lead professionals to act as “on-duty workers” in the virtual dimension, tirelessly demanded to provide unreal solutions at all times and in any space; and (d) challenging demands to build a family-school partnership on the basis of blaming and blaming those responsible for a task they are not familiar with or are not prepared for.

These and other abrupt changes that impacted the professional identity of the school psychologist required continuing education, currently favored by the shortening of distances and the possibility of making time and spaces more flexible. However, it is important to point out that professional training should not be limited to periods marked by unprecedented challenges, such as those experienced in the current pandemic, but must be continuous, as professional development is a continuous and unfinished process.

Another necessary reflection refers to the quality of the training offered. There must be intentionality in the planning of qualified mediation so that a training initiative does not become episodic, but goes beyond the pandemic circumstance, through the construction and consolidation of competencies in line with the conceptions of performance in Critical School Psychology. Therefore, the building of options for the development of ethical, critical, creative and autonomous competences in a process of permanent learning can lead the school psychologist to prospect actions for the post-pandemic as well. The importance of focusing on empowerment and awareness of the school collective is reiterated, which will need to strengthen itself for the reconstruction of the teaching and learning processes and other resignifications that will be required in the future.

Finally, the potential of continuing education of school psychologists is enhanced in order to provide them with instruments for advising on the collective work of other professionals who make up the school staff. (Re)building specialized knowledge that contributes to the understanding of the educational processes and advances in human development, the school psychologist will be able to act in a more qualified way in the intervention in institutional relationships and practices, in a perspective of building a culture of school success beyond the pandemic period.

## **“On hold” considerations**

In March 2020, the world was ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Countless dimensions of human life were inexorably affected, including strongly the education systems, with consequences still unimaginable for family and social contexts and the future of the country and its citizens.

As a field of theoretical reflection, research and professional intervention, School Psychology vivifies its performance through psychological mediations that promote awareness, transformation and empowerment of many, especially in educational contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic initially scared school Psychologists who were without access to their main energy providers and sources of vitality: the educational contexts. However, countless professionals, with resilience, created, transformed and built successful innovations and practices.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for the training and professional intervention of the school psychologist, there were also countless possibilities that fostered transformations and advances in the area. The expansion of the reach of communication processes, networks and scientific partnerships, the flexibilization of professional priorities, ethical decision-making based on collective motives and social well-being, the commitment to justice and social equity guided the focus of the Psychology actions during the pandemic.

This article sought to highlight, based on the literature, critical reflections and successful experiences, the potency of School Psychology in achieving a work of approximation, strengthening and appreciation of people who courageously remained working, teaching and learning in educational institutions. The themes of inclusion, institutional action and continuing education dealt with in this paper provided indicators for paths of resistance and specific competencies of Psychology in the interface with Education.

The pandemic has taught us resilience, solidarity and collective recognition of humanity. Vulnerability threatens and weakens us, but our strength is daily renewed in hope.

The post-pandemic scenario has generated the expectation of greater reflexivity, collaboration and care also for the school psychologists themselves. They need to strengthen themselves to exercise, in educational contexts, their role as mediators of awareness and emancipation for many, in the construction of more respectful, dignified and fair relationships.

Finally, we, psychologists, professors and researchers who are the authors of this article, express our deep regrets and heartfelt solidarity with the families of more than 600,000 Brazilians who died because of COVID-19 and for the irresponsible neglect of the federal government.

## **Contributors**

All authors contributed equally to the drawing of the article, considering construction of the editorial line (conception and design), literature survey, arguments, theoretical discussions, analysis, interpretation and discussion of results, final considerations, writing, review and approval of the final version of the article.

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