Institutional reconfigurations: Covid-19 pandemic and Brazilian basic education

Danielli Cossul
Bachelor of Science in Psychology
University of Santa Cruz do Sul

Eduardo Steindorf Saraiva
Post-doctorate in Social Psychology
University of Santa Cruz do Sul

ABSTRACT
This study presents a report of an experience in Psychology carried out from insertions in a Brazilian public school. The objective was to understand the instituting processes resulting from the tensions faced by the school during the covid-19 pandemic. The institutional analysis script proposed by Gregório Baremblitt guided the praxis in the field, which took place from September to December 2021. Four face-to-face meetings were held, lasting 60 to 90 minutes, in addition to participant observations in different spaces within the school and digital interactions. The data were organized in a field diary, recorded and transcribed with consent. The results reveal that the digitalization of pedagogical practices is a fundamental instituting movement. In addition, this basic movement involved correlated institutions, such as the transfiguration of the role of the teacher in the imaginary of families, the redefinition of the boundaries between public and private life, and the aggravation of social vulnerabilities. This study may be of interest to education professionals of different levels and university students, as it offers insights into how to conduct an institutional analysis from the analyst's point of view. In addition, it sheds light on the empirical reality of the institution by translating the experience of the school community, providing reflections that can be useful to understand similar post-pandemic scenarios.

Keywords: Psychology, Basic education, Digital technologies, Digital literacy.

1 INTRODUCTION

The incidence of the Covid-19 pandemic has imposed necessary changes for the protection and continuity of life in society. Schools, considered high-risk environments for contagion (da Silva, 2021), had their work dynamics reconfigured for remote teaching (Marin et al., 2020). However, solving the challenges related to maintaining the student-school connection through the reconfiguration of traditional teaching models is not as simple as it may seem. Latin America is characterized by the precariousness of educational policies for the digital age, highlighted by the lack of technological resources and insufficient training in digital literacy for teachers and students (Leiva et al., 2020). In addition, the consequences of the pandemic have had cascading effects, leading to reduced income, unemployment, difficulty accessing health services and education systems (Nicola et al., 2020).

The production of confrontations and reflections is fundamental to explore periods of crisis such as this one. At the time of this study, the population was vulnerable, and the social inequalities that have existed for a long time in Brazil were fully exposed (de Albuquerque et al., 2023; Guzzo et

al., 2022). Researchers point out that the context of the pandemic has created "chaotic micro contexts" in terms of mental health (Leiva et al., 2020). Some tensions cited in the literature are related to job stability, wages, and routines (Barros et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2021). These authors explain that work during the pandemic was marked by a crisis scenario that generated uncertainty, fear, and anxiety in the face of the unknown. In addition, routines were weakened by the difficulty of teachers recognizing themselves through their productive activity. Added to this, the impracticality of traditional teaching methods and the necessary restructuring of relationships have given rise to unique forms of suffering (Cardoso et al., 2021; dos Santos & Miquilini, 2023).

Since its origins, the school has been on the front line of health care for children and adolescents, offering support, welcoming, and listening, which are essential for this population to face troubled periods (Lara et al., 2023). During the pandemic, in view of the aggravating factors in terms of population suffering, this institution closely monitored, although limited due to social distancing, several situations experienced by students, teachers, employees and family members. In this sense, in addition to acknowledging the adversities experienced by education during the pandemic period, this study sought to identify the instituting movements of a Brazilian public school. These movements are understood as responsible for the creation and continuous recreation of processes that challenge and reconfigure the institution within its specific context (Baremblitt et al., 2021; Baremblitt, 1996). To this end, we sought to identify the main challenges faced by the management team and the strategies adopted to overcome these challenges. The theoretical framework of Institutional Analysis, developed by Baremblitt (1996), was used to guide the on-site practice, the analysis of these challenges and their developments.

It is noteworthy that this writing is configured as an experience report and combines concise data of the observed reality with reflective and dialogued perspectives of the authors. In addition, it seeks to expand the discussions presented in another article by the same author (Cossul & Saraiva, 2023).

2 METHODOLOGY
2.1 FIELD OF ANALYSIS AND FIELD OF INTERVENTION

The field of analysis is a "segment of social life" (Baremblitt, 1996, p. 66) that is selected by analysts as a specific object of study. Institutional analysts position themselves to understand how this field develops at a specific historical moment. In the case of this study, the historical moment is the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the defined field of analysis is Education and the field of intervention is a public school of basic education located in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the south of Brazil.

The progression of an institutional analysis is guided by a logical system that regulates reality and produces ways of being and existing (Baremblitt, 1996). This regulation is permeated, for example, by institutional health guidelines that guide the population on appropriate procedures to control the transmission of diseases.

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD OF INTERVENTION AND THE SUBJECTS

The school where the interventions were carried out covers classes from elementary school to high school. As of October 4, 2021, a total of 290 students were enrolled, the staff consisted of 45 teachers, 11 staff members, and 7 administrators.

The activities were conducted with the administrative team composed of the principal, two vice-principals, two educational advisors and two supervisors. This population segment was defined considering that the administrative team is responsible for managing different tensions that arise from the macro system, such as government agencies, and that have repercussions to the micro, such as classrooms and families, where administrative issues, knowledge, life histories, worldviews and emotions circulated simultaneously.

2.3 DATA PRODUCTION

Data production took place from September 2021 to December 2021. The participants in this study were divided into group A and group B, according to work shifts (morning and afternoon). Three face-to-face meetings were held with group A (4 people) and three with group B (3 people), lasting 60 to 90 minutes, along with digital communication through social networks and participant observations (with interactions) in different spaces within the school. The following guiding questions were applied: i) what challenges did the school face during the pandemic period? ii) What coping mechanisms were used by education professionals?

Efforts were made on the part of the analysts to create listening spaces in which the group of managers could approach these questions reflectively and dialogically. Movements like this help in the development of communication, in the construction of an environment of trust and mutual respect (FREIRE; AIRES, 2012). In this way, the participants of the group described and shared their own perceptions of the events they experienced during the pandemic. These data were recorded in a field diary and audio recordings, transcribed and analyzed based on the Institutional Analysis framework.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

To understand the nuances of the construction of new possibilities for the educational field, that is, new emerging ways of being and existing revealed through the perceptions of the participants, three artificial analyzers were used:

A) challenges faced by the institution: it addresses the difficulties or obstacles that the institution faced during the covid-19 pandemic and are related to various aspects, such as changes in the environment, psychosocial demands of the community, economic pressures and technological infrastructure.

B) strategies adopted to address the challenges: describes the approaches or actions that the institution has taken to deal with the emerging challenges. These strategies may include changes in internal politics, transfiguration of processes, adaptations of people, or any other measure used to cope with obstacles.

C) results achieved: contemplates the effects or impacts of the strategies implemented. Outcomes may include measures that have achieved successes, emergence of new difficulties, learnings, or any changes observed in the institution in response to the challenges faced.

Artificial analyzers are mechanisms that reveal the reality experienced by the organization in times of change (Baremblitt, 1996). Thus, they are related to instituting processes linked to the dynamics of establishing, modifying or adapting the institution to meet the specific needs or challenges (Pereira, 2007) of an emerging context.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD
3.1 MEETINGS BETWEEN ANALYSTS AND THE INSTITUTION

This section represents a challenge to comprehension, both by the subjects belonging to the place where the insertions were made, and by the institutional analysts who infiltrated the daily lives of these subjects. As an example, the initial interactions presented an atmosphere of resistance to the lack of knowledge of both the analysis proposal and the analysts who carried it out. However, over time, through formal conversations (meetings) and informal conversations (various on-site interactions), the management team expressed the need to elaborate on their work experiences during the pandemic.

The dynamics of the interactions between these actors require analysts to seek a balance between a priori knowledge, refraining from epistemological assumptions. This approach typical of the field of Institutional Psychology seeks, limited by the analysts' involvement, to ensure that the interpretation of the observed reality is not reduced to a mere transcription of the analysts' preconceived perspectives. The concept of implication in this theoretical field defines non-neutrality as an operative mechanism in the analysis (Baremblitt, 1996). In this way, the self-analytic process constitutes a starting point that never ends for analysts (Lourau, 2004), as the relationships established in the field are permeated by the socio-historical, structuralist, and psychoaffective dimensions internalized by them (Borges & Silva, 2020).

Once the dynamics of the experience of institutional analysis have been considered and understood, the actual presentation of the results can begin. For this, it is necessary to understand supply and demand, since these concepts represent the intrinsic correlations that are fundamental to the understanding of the context under study. The offer consists of the analysts' intention to carry out an institutional analysis, therefore, it is the infiltration of these subjects that aims to cut out the challenges faced by school managers during the pandemic and translate them into this writing. The demand is the request for analysis made by the institution and the imaginary and desirable solutions attributed to the presence of analysts (Baremblitt, 1996).

Between the lines of supply, it is possible to understand demand, as both are mutually constituted. Demand encompasses everything that managers expect analysts to accomplish. In this process, there is an ebb and flow of conscious and unconscious information that needs to be understood and interpreted by analysts, since they express the singularities of the institution and operate in the dialogical encounters between these actors. With this in mind, it is understandable that the manifestation of a request, whether conscious or not, is at the same time a demonstration of interest and a manifestation of a need.

In the case of this study, the desire – desiring force linked to the need for managers to validate their efforts to maintain the school routine through institutional analysis – was identified. This demand was closely linked to the significant volume of information received during the pandemic, with a restricted deadline to meet the needs (mentioned by the director). In this context, the urgency in decision-making and the rapid execution of tasks may have resulted in gaps in symbolic reflection and in the elaboration of experiments. These gaps, in turn, may have impacted the ways of being and existing, generating the need for greater recognition by professionals, both with themselves and with the school community.

3.2 SUBJECTIVITIES ON STAGE

Public schools in the state of Rio Grande do Sul were legally closed on March 17, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Brasil, 2020). The participants of this study report that at that moment, what prevailed was a mixture of surprise and fear in the face of the unknown. The supervisor reports that "in the first 15 days, everyone tried to deal with the fear", following in the same vein, the vice-principal describes his experience as a "generalized panic", and the educational advisor complements by characterizing his experience as "very frightening".

Despite the impact of surprise, fear and generalized panic, the school community coordinated by the participants of this study sought ways to face this scenario. Consolidated processes in public schools, which are based on a regular schedule of classes, breaks and moments of face-to-face coexistence, needed to be transfigured so that new possibilities could be developed. This emergency

reconfiguration of the educational field resulted in 8 challenges identified in this study. These challenges are correlated (Table 1) with 14 strategies adopted to deal with the challenges and with 12 developments. The operationalization of these practices is presented in the following subsections, accompanied by reflections constructed by the analysts, which is an attempt to translate the observed experiences.

Table 1. Coping with the changes imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic

Challenges	Strategies	Results
Maintaining dialogue with families	WhatsApp groups	Strengthening the bond among members of the school community.
Economic Deprivation of families	Provision of state-funded food aid	Teachers and administrators are familiar with the reality in which students live.
Maintenance of classes	Sending files through WhatsApp; classes on Google Meet and Google Classroom.	Difficulty accessing tools; low quality of education; decline in academic performance.
Digital literacy	Sharing video tutorials; flexibility in work hours	Increase in workload, mental and emotional exhaustion. Stress.
Preparation for the return to in- person classes	Distribution and use of masks and hand sanitizer; placement of floor markings indicating physical distancing; rotation of on-site staff.	The school was always prepared to welcome the students; fear and insecurity.
Validation of the academic year	Compliance with state orders	Need to manage teachers' frustration and insecurity in the face of uncertainty.
Teacher illness	Encouragement of health care; the principal took responsibility for the class.	Strengthened bond between the administrative team and teachers.
Absent Student	Identification of the cause through contact with the family; involvement of the authorities.	The student returns but continues to be frequently absent.

Note: authors (2022)

3.2.1 Digitalisation of education

The school initially adopted measures that included the distribution of printed materials and the maintenance of digital interactions between actors through social networks, such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups. Subsequently, the transition to Google Classroom (digital teaching platform) took place to send pedagogical content and conduct classes.

The use of WhatsApp groups, according to the participants' view, on the one hand, positively impacted the bond between members of the school community, bringing teachers, management teams, family members and students closer together. On the other hand, technological challenges had to be

faced, which were related, for example, to access to digital tools, which in a cascade effect, caused declines in academic performance.

The repercussions on academic performance consist of learning that took place at a unique pace and intensity, characterized by a limited understanding of the challenges experienced by students who were on the other side of the screen. The managers shed light on digital learning as an ineffective alternative for children and adolescents, as they understand that there has been a reduction in the quality of education, a drop in academic performance, and gaps in learning. This understanding is in line with what Almeida & Dalben (2020) point out about remote education. According to these authors, this modality has been essentially fragile in terms of quality when compared to the face-to-face model, especially for children and adolescents in the public education system, which is the scenario portrayed in this study.

In this sense, these nuances are also connected with questions about the validation of the academic year and school dropout. To deal with these new issues, the managers complied with orders from the government to validate the academic year, however, the operationalization of these orders was confronted by new challenges: many students did not turn in their assignments because they did not have access to digital technologies; others, at older ages, had to deal with family pressures, such as helping with domestic activities and working in other places, formal and informal, leaving little time for pedagogical activities; Other students showed symptoms of sadness, helplessness, and anxiety due to the abrupt change in their routines imposed by social isolation. This reality contributed to the development of teachers' feelings of frustration and insecurity in the face of uncertainty. These professionals asked themselves "how to weigh academic performance in atypical circumstances like this?". Although strategies have been implemented to deal with school dropouts, such as identifying the causes through contact with families and involving the authorities, the distancing of students from school could not be completely mitigated.

Efforts to strengthen the family-school bond were ongoing. The principal points out that the pandemic has shown that "nothing can replace the physical presence of the teacher in the classroom". The other interviewees share this same perspective and point out that the "role of the teacher goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge". According to these professionals, they play the role of mediators for human beings, being essential to develop skills of interpretation, interaction and construction of affective bonds.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the analysts did not maintain contact with the family members, but the reconfiguration of the teacher's view is of remarkable relevance, therefore, this aspect is shared in this analysis, even if limited to the view of management professionals. The team points out that during a period of social isolation, when students spent more time at home, parents reevaluated the role of the teacher, who came to be recognized not only as a transmitter of pedagogical knowledge, but

as someone who plays a role of care, guidance and emotional support for the student-children. It is, therefore, a figure that has come to be recognized as directly related to the general well-being of students.

3.2.2 Digital literacy and new frontiers

Due to the widespread use of technologies, digital literacy has become essential to maintain work routines. The implementation of Google Classroom, for example, required teachers and administrative staff to participate in courses to develop skills aligned with this feature. The digital literacy initiatives received occasional criticism, as they were carried out simultaneously with the workday, due to this, the deputy director mentions that "this was the most exhausting part".

The knowledge acquired by teachers and administrators through these digital literacy initiatives was shared with families and peers, since many were not familiar with electronic devices and their use. As an example, the vice-principal mentions that she created videos as a mother, as her daughter studied at the school, and sometimes as vice-principal, in order to guide families on access to the classroom and the digital handling of pedagogical assignment files.

The sharing of instructions on the use of digital technologies took place at flexible times, often opposite to working hours. The managers point out that this factor compromised the interaction with their families, because the students' families could only respond at night (a time opposite to the school's working day). As a result, there was an increase in workload, mental exhaustion and stress. Associated with this, the interviewees revealed that the team's performance was crossed by the imposition of new frontiers. The time allocated to rest and leisure was invaded by obligations, in the face of which work activities were prioritized so that the demands of the school community were met.

Finally, when considering the realities presented in this subsection, which is correlated to subsection 3.2.1 on digitalization in public education, it is understood that the previously distant idea of digitalization, before the pandemic, has evolved from an imaginary concept to something instituted, with social isolation being the determining factor of this process. The accounts presented serve as clues to how digitalization has had a significant impact on people's lives, especially at a time when there was no preparation for radical change. This resulted in the weakening of the boundaries between the public (work) and private (family life) spheres, as mentioned by the vice-principal, who noted during this period the "lack of separation between what is mine and what belongs to the school".

3.2.3 Emerging vulnerabilities and return to face-to-face

Every person in the community, including students, family members, teachers, and administrators, was responsible for acquiring electronic devices such as cellphones and computers. It

was common to observe that families purchased a single device to meet school and personal needs and often, these devices were shared among family members.

This framework subsidized new problematizations about digitized education, with the public context being a determining factor, given the vulnerabilities of families that became more evident with the pandemic period. Research along these lines points out that the state's insufficient investment in technology made access to the internet a privilege for a few during the pandemic, exacerbating and exposing inequalities (Macedo, 2020).

The vulnerability conditions were not only related to the use of digital technologies. The school in question plays a crucial role in feeding children and teenagers. Due to the pandemic, food-related activities were interrupted, but the management team, aware of the difficulties faced by students and their families, took the initiative to distribute food to those in need. This shows that the school has a pedagogical role that goes beyond the traditional, playing significant actions in preserving the lives of these families by ensuring access to food that was offered in the institution's spaces before the pandemic.

Carrying out this movement of expanded care required the management team to broaden its awareness in favor of those who, in the eyes of the state - or due to the lack of a state gaze - were at risk of falling into marginalization. To be on the sidelines means to become a body that has no use or purpose to continue operating in the market system in which we are inserted. In Brazil, the challenge is not to fall into these margins, and during the pandemic, this adversity became even more evident. In view of this, the managers recognize that the school played an essential role during the health crisis. The work of these professionals, as well as teachers, contributed to ensuring social protection and ensuring the rights of children and adolescents, considering various dimensions of their lives.

The consideration of various dimensions of students' lives, such as social (protection), affective (bonds) and physiological (feeding), also demanded a perspective that understood the complexity of the school environment. It is about recognizing the school space as composed of individuals who have unique experiences, thoughts, and ways of life. At certain moments, this complexity could only be understood by those who were open to seeing the uniqueness of each student and each family.

4 FINAL THOUGHTS

This article presents an experience report in Psychology whose general objective was to identify instituting movements of a public school located in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil, in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic. The institutional analysis framework proposed by Baremblitt (1996) guided the authors' praxis in the field under study.

The results highlight eight challenges interconnected with fourteen strategies adopted to overcome them, with twelve effects arising from these measures. The instituting movements, as

interpreted by the authors, are recognized as transitory and intrinsic to these categories. In general terms, the digitalization of pedagogical practices is a fundamental instituting movement. In addition, this movement involved correlated, but no less important, institutions, such as the transfiguration of the role of the teacher in the imaginary of families, the redefinition of the boundaries between public and private life, and the aggravation of social vulnerabilities.

This study may be of interest to basic education professionals at different levels, as well as higher education students, as it presents insights into the practice of institutional analysis from the analyst's point of view and sheds light on the empirical reality based on the observations and translation of the experience of the school community. It is worth noting that the approach used is limited to the managers' perspective.

REFERENCES

Baremblitt, G., Barros, J. P. P., & Hur, D. U. (2021). A Psicologia nos Contextos Institucionais. In (Vol. 41, pp. e032020): SciELO Brasil.

Baremblitt, G. F. (1996). *Compêndio de análise institucional e outras correntes: teoria e prática*. Rosa dos tempos Rio de Janeiro.

Barros, C. C. A., da Silva Souza, A., Dutra, F. D. E., Gusmão, R. S. C., & Cardoso, B. L. C. (2021). Precarização do trabalho docente: reflexões em tempos de pandemia e pós pandemia. *Ensino em Perspectivas*, *2*(2), 1-23.

Borges, F. A., & Silva, A. R. N. d. (2020). O diário de pesquisa como instrumento de acompanhamento da aprendizagem e de análise de implicação do estudante/pesquisador. *Interface-Comunicação, Saúde, Educação*, *24*.

Cardoso, M. R., Demantova, A. G., Lara, G. V., Alves, J. C. D., Honorio, V. H. L., & de Aguiar Tannuri, Y. (2021). Sofrimento psíquico e trabalho em tempos de pandemia: uma intervenção clínica com educadores. *Estilos da Clinica*, *26*(1), 44-57.

Cossul, D., & Saraiva, E. S. (2023). Among knowledge, affections, and regulations: an institutional analysis of brazilian education management during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Revista de Gestão e Secretariado*, *14*(8), 13762-13775.

da Silva, J. R. (2021). A DOCÊNCIA EM TEMPOS DE PANDEMIA. *RECIMA21-Revista Científica Multidisciplinar-ISSN 2675-6218*, *2*(3), 296-301.

de Albuquerque, J. A., da Cruz Alexandrino, V., de Melo Silva, C. L., Dazzani, M. V. M., & Aquino, F. d. S. B. (2023). Demandas da Psicologia Escolar no Período de COVID-19: uma Revisão Sistemática. *Estudos e Pesquisas em Psicologia*, *23*(2), 545-565.

dos Santos, N. S., & Miquilini, M. B. (2023). A docência na pandemia: Tecnologia, isolamento e o sofrimento psíquico. *DOXA: Revista Brasileira de Psicologia e Educação*, e023024-e023024.

Guzzo, R. S. L., SOUZA, V. L. T. d., & FERREIRA, Á. L. M. C. d. M. (2022). A pandemia na vida cotidiana: reflexões sobre os impactos sociais e psicológicos à luz da perspectiva crítica. *Estudos de Psicologia (Campinas)*, *39*.

Lara, G. d., Saraiva, E. S., & Cossul, D. (2023). Automutilação na adolescência e vivência escolar: uma revisão integrativa da literatura. *Educação e Pesquisa*, *49*.

Leiva, A. M., Nazar, G., Martínez-Sangüinetti, M. A., Petermann-Rocha, F., Ricchezza, J., & Celis-Morales, C. (2020). Dimensión psicosocial de la pandemia: la otra cara del covid-19. *Ciencia y enfermería*, *26*.

LOURAU, R. (2004). Implicação: um novo paradigma. *René Lourau: analista institucional em tempo integral. São Paulo: Hucitec*, 246-258.

Marin, A. H., Andrada, B. C., Schmidt, B., Melo, B. D., Lima, C. C., Fernandes, C. M., . . . Katz, I. (2020). Saúde mental e atenção psicossocial na pandemia COVID-19: crianças na pandemia Covid-19.

Nicola, M., Alsafi, Z., Sohrabi, C., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., . . . Agha, R. (2020). The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review. *International journal of surgery*, *78*, 185-193.

Pereira, W. C. C. (2007). Movimento institucionalista: principais abordagens. *Estudos e pesquisas em psicologia*, *7*(1), 10-19.

Rodrigues, T. A., dos Santos Pinheiro, M. N., & Vasconcelos, M. A. d. D. M. (2021). Formação de professores durante o ensino remoto: tessituras em construção. *Ensino em Perspectivas*, *2*(4), 1-12.