

International Journal of Human Sciences Research

LITERACY AND EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING: REVIEW OF AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICE

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Abstract: The complexity of the literacy process is notorious, even in favorable teaching-learning conditions. During the period of social distancing and consequent closure of schools, caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, from March to October 2020, different pedagogical practices had to be applied in favor of student learning, adding challenges to those that already existed normally. Thus, this work aimed to share the actions carried out in this context, in order to direct the work of those who guide the literacy process. Therefore, the objective of this study was to describe the literacy methodology applied by a private school in Ribeirão Preto, pointing out the fundamental points that made it effective. This study took into consideration, the existing literature on literacy and literacy methodologies, as well as the little public research on the period of Emergency Remote Teaching. The data collection instrument was documentary research, investigating the institution's own documents, prior to and concomitant with the pandemic. The systematization of the alphabetic code associated with the child's insertion into the literate world effectively, during Emergency Remote Education, depended on the joint action of school management, teachers and other members of the school community, and the technological structure provided by the institution and families. Thus, the results obtained in the research show that classes specific to the individualities of each student added to the contextualization of literacy were the essential points for the fulfillment and effectiveness of literacy in the 1st year classes of Elementary School.

Keywords: Literacy; Literacy; Covid-19 pandemic; Teaching methodology.

INTRODUCTION

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, and the social distancing caused by it, there was a need to modify the structure of various sectors of society, one of them being the work carried out by educational institutions. Faced with the sudden entry into Emergency Remote Education, schools were faced with the challenge of reviewing their pedagogical practices and adapting them to the online modality, maintaining the link between schools, students and their families. This way, learning that always took into consideration, the constant presence of the teacher, started to be monitored remotely and had to be adapted for planning on a screen, with possible connection failures, family interference, breaks in concentration.

According to a survey carried out by the UFRJ Educational Opportunities Research Laboratory, organized by professors Kolinski and Bartholo (2021), the decrease in learning opportunities offered and the limitation of interaction with teachers, due to the temporary closure of schools in the period of social distancing has made the home learning environment more crucial for children's development.

This way, the different services provided by school institutions during the pandemic generated positive or negative teaching experiences and, therefore, a deepening of educational inequalities.

If literacy was already considered an education challenge according to the SAEB Report of the National Literacy Assessment (2018), which points out that less than half of students in the 3rd year of Elementary School reach sufficient levels in reading, the remote context of education caused by the pandemic further damaged this situation, as it mainly caused the interruption of interaction between literacy teacher and student.

Given this, the present work is the result of observation and documentary analysis of the literacy system proposed by a private school in the city of Ribeirão Preto during the Covid-19 Pandemic between the period from March to October 2020. This fundamental stage of Basic Education and initial learning of written language, according to Soares (2021), does not only encompass the appropriation of the alphabetic system and its conventions, but it begins the child's insertion into their social practices of written language and In this period of social distancing, it required differentiated pedagogical actions, which must be presented, aiming to share practices and improve the work of those who guide this process.

From what was presented by the Literacy in Network research (2020), pedagogical and curricular changes are far from being a simple adjustment in the teaching format and constituted a great challenge for those who are directly in charge of education, specifically, with regard to the literacy stage, due to unequal conditions of access to Digital Technologies and domestic support.

Therefore, the objective of this work is to describe which adaptations to the literacy and literacy process, during Emergency Remote Education, at the private Early Childhood Education and Elementary School in Ribeirão Preto, were effective, taking the importance that some factors had in the development of these strategies: the literacy methodology that was already used, the institution's pedagogical proposal and the joint action of management and the school community. This survey will provide guidance to various school institutions that seek to promote the process of literacy through Remote Education.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This work is a case study of the Literacy and Literacy methodology developed in the 1st year, by an Early Childhood Education and Elementary School in the private education network of Ribeirão Preto – SP, during the Emergency Remote Teaching caused by the COVID Pandemic. -19. The unit analyzed is characterized by a traditional institution in the city, with more than fifty years of experience in education.

During the period explored in the research (from March to October 2020), the school had 4 1st year elementary school classes, totaling 56 students. It was also taken into consideration, that the school serves a target audience from middle-class families, with the majority of parents and guardians working in commerce. This socioeconomic condition allowed most families to have, in addition to Internet at home, technological support such as computers and electronic devices that allowed classes to be followed during Emergency Remote Education.

To analyze the strategies and adaptations made by the teaching staff and students during this period, it was important to start the work through a systematic review, with data synthesized by qualitative analysis, according to Ludke and André (2014), taking into consideration, the study of part of the existing literature on Literacy and Literacy, mainly in light of the studies by Magda Soares (2020; 2021). Descriptions and studies of pedagogical practices, based on active methodologies, were also taken into consideration, as well as the little research published on the teaching-learning process during Emergency Remote Teaching in 2020.

The data collection instrument was documentary research, investigating the Pedagogical Political Project of the school in question, the Action Plan established by it during the pandemic, the minutes of meetings

held by the teaching team and students during the months observed, the control absences and attendance of students, the planning and school activities available at the school of the 1st year classes of Elementary School and the bimonthly evaluation reports of the students in the sample.

These documents were gathered directly at the institution, through observation and documentary analysis, since, according to Ludke and Andre (2014), they allow for a greater approximation and contact with real, daily experiences with the research object, which are stable sources of information, and also through statistical tools that compare the engagement rate of students during the months observed.

Finally, the systematization of this information took place first by establishing an overview of how the literacy process developed in a face-to-face teaching system, as this analysis allowed us to understand the strategies chosen to adapt the institution to Emergency Remote Education. Subsequently, there was a survey and clarification of the pedagogical practices adopted by both the management team and the teachers who taught classes for the 1st year classes, throughout the months of March to October 2020. This parallel between pedagogical practices face-to-face and the remote teaching-learning process, together with student engagement rates and teachers' evaluation reports were essential to confirm the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Results and Discussion chapter of this research was divided into two subchapters. The first, "Alphabetization and Literacy in Early Childhood Education", includes a bibliographical review that aims to elucidate the methods used by the school institution analyzed to teach its students to read and write in the 1st year of Elementary School in a face-

to-face system and what are the theories behind this methodology. The second subchapter brings together, in a chronological sequence, the changes introduced into daily school life due to the mandatory implementation of Emergency Remote Education. In this last part, the results of the adaptations and strategies adopted are highlighted, allowing the literacy process to be effective.

LITERACY AND LITERACY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The presence of literacy in Early Childhood Education is a premise defended by Magda Soares (2020), as the author states that ignoring the child's inclusion in the literate world before the age of 6, the age of entry into Elementary School, is to ignore the cultural context in which she is immersed outside the school institution, as she brings with her knowledge and experiences that awaken her interest in the world of writing.

Activities constantly present in everyday school life, such as doodling, storytelling, games and drawings, are not considered literacy activities, but they provide the child with experiences of discovering the representation system of what written language is. This first conceptualization of the alphabetic system, identified by Emília Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky (1985) as the prehistory of writing, demonstrates an attempt by young children to imitate adult cursive writing, presenting a recognition of the arbitrary nature of writing.

Thus, frequent reading of stories, according to Soares (2020), is an activity that enriches the child's vocabulary, provides the development of skills in understanding written texts, the logical sequence between facts, being a practice that begins to be carried out from the first years of Early Childhood Education and must be continued throughout the initial years of Elementary Education, so that there is simultaneity in literacy and literacy and

not a dissociation between these processes. Furthermore, children need to be immersed in real situations of language use in society, so that their experiences make sense in relation to their previous knowledge. Thus, the author confirms that teaching the alphabetic code must be reconciled with its social use on different occasions.

This principle defended by Magda Soares (2020) is presented in the pedagogical proposal of the observed school. The objective is to guarantee students access to processes of appropriation, renewal and articulation of knowledge and learning from different languages, and, through educational intentionality, the teacher promotes experiences during play that allow children to develop cognitive skills. and linguistic aspects necessary for the appropriation of the relationships between the sounds of speech and its writing.

In this context, the school institution, which is the result of the case study, brings together, from the age of 2, a set of procedures that guide the initial learning of reading and writing. It is the school's practice to include activities of a playful nature in the child's routine, such as spontaneous writing, observation of adult writing, familiarization with the letters of the alphabet, frequent visual contact with the writing of known words, through daily activities such as doing the calendar, write the name of the helper on the board, along with the list of the day's routine.

This environment that surrounds it with writing with different functions creates favorable, even necessary, conditions for the appropriation of the alphabetic system. Reading stories is also a daily activity carried out in the observed institution, not just a moment of oral reading, as the teacher analyzes with the children in advance what they expect from the narrative based on the title and cover design, pauses in pre-

established moments, asking questions of understanding and inference.

Thus, gradually, as the student grows, the universe of experiences is expanded that enable the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary to consolidate learning the alphabetic code at age 6, in the 1st year of Elementary School. In other words, throughout Early Childhood Education, the observed school had already developed with its students the fundamental skills so that they could enter the 1st year with the necessary subsidies for the systematization of the literacy process and had placed literacy as the basis of the process, already that reading and writing are means of interaction.

These activities present in Early Childhood Education guide the child towards literacy, because they develop phonological awareness, which will be fundamental for understanding the alphabetic principle. Soares (2020) justifies the need for this stimulus, since the alphabetic system represents the sounds of the language, it is necessary for the student to become capable of distinguishing meaning and sound, perceiving in the spoken or heard sentence, the sounds that delimit, constitute each word and its syllables.

The observed institution does not direct its pedagogical work by providing itself only with a method that supports literacy and literacy work, but inserts the child into the literate and alphabetic world in a successful way, making them acquire the skills and competencies necessary to master these processes, having professionals who understand the cognitive and linguistic procedures and, based on them, develop skills that stimulate and guide the child's learning, identifying and interpreting their difficulties, teaching literacy with methodologies and not relying on just one.

ADAPTATIONS OF THE LITERACY PROCESS FOR EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING

The social distancing imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, established by Decree No. 64,864 of March 16, 2020 of the State of São Paulo, made it impossible for schools to continue carrying out their work, considering the physical environment and the interaction between teachers and students. As a result, the school reported in this study needed to present a quick solution to this new emergency educational model.

The action of school management at this time was fundamental to provide the conditions, means and all resources necessary for the optimal functioning of the school and the work of the teaching staff in this new teaching format. Libâneo (2018) states that management participation and monitoring, taking learning objectives as a reference, are necessary steps to guarantee learning for all students.

Thus, the first step established, after the suspension of in-person school services, was to bring together the pedagogical management group and reestablish the functions between the counselors, coordinators, educational psychologist and director. Previously, these people divided their work by segment, however, to better monitor the work and adaptation of both teachers and students and to allow new functions not to be accumulated only for some professionals, the team was redivided to guide each two or three groups. from Early Childhood Education to Elementary School – initial years and coordinating three teachers, focusing on one class in Elementary School – final years.

Furthermore, it continued to be the school's practice to hold weekly meetings with all teachers, coordinators and principal, in order to exchange experiences, communicate messages and allow teachers to be part of the direction of pedagogical actions. This

action, based on democratic management, together with the involvement of the team of professionals, allowed the institution to guarantee the quality of teaching-learning processes and effectiveness in decision-making, monitoring the adaptation of families and student learning, reviewing the pedagogical practices, ensuring the best conditions for carrying out teaching work.

In addition to restructuring the management team, there was a continuous review of pedagogical practices, always thinking about improving the work, following the unexpected advance of the Pandemic. Initially, class time in the 1st year of Elementary School was reduced from 4 hours a day – the total amount that students spent at the school institution – to around an hour of recorded classes and transmitted via video link, via the electronic diary that the school already used it. In addition, printed activities were sent, numbered according to the sequence that would be followed, according to the classes. Therefore, daily, the teachers sent parents or guardians the specifications of what would be worked on and developed in the following day's class. The moments dedicated to literacy were concentrated on three days a week.

In each video, the teacher presented a letter of the alphabet, relying on the students' visual and auditory understanding to recognize the syllabic family of that letter. In order for them to understand the pronunciation and association of the consonant with the vowel, in a simple syllable model of the Portuguese consonant-vowel [CV] language, the teacher gave examples of words formed by them.

Soares (2021) concluded in his work that children are able to perceive the similarity between sound segments of words and this sensitivity to rhymes and alliteration has been considered one of the dimensions of phonological awareness that is related to learning to read and write.

This work of phonetizing writing, together with the visual perception of the composition of words into graphemes, makes the child capable of segmenting words into syllables, thus causing them to begin writing letters to represent these oral sections. This step will be the necessary beginning for her to reach the conditions to become sensitive to phonemes and then write alphabetically. Thus, phonological awareness, introduced throughout Early Childhood Education, enabled the child to make progress in learning to read and write in the 1st year of Elementary School.

Until this first moment, having completed approximately one month of the determination of Emergency Remote Teaching, the pedagogical achievement of students by teachers was recorded, shown in Figure 1 below, which presents unified data based on the absence control of the observed institution.

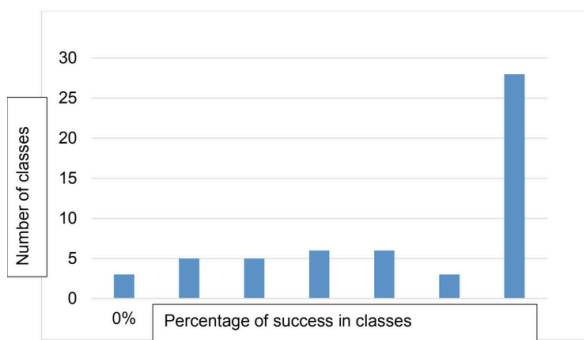


Figure 1. Percentage of use of classes and school activities of students in the 1st year of Elementary School

Source: Original survey results

It was evident that almost half of the students were performing at or below 70% of the classes, that is, low from the teachers' point of view. Thus, of the total of 56 children, 25 were not accessing most of the recordings, nor returning to their teachers a good number of the activities to be carried out during the school period.

Even though the majority of students were showing progress in learning, there was concern about the other half, with unsatisfactory performance. Thus, the pedagogical team began to identify the possible losses of this sudden and unforeseen interruption of school activities and migration to the remote teaching system.

With little use of asynchronous classes and the extension of social distancing, it was decided that from mid-April to mid-May, Elementary School and Early Childhood Education students would go on vacation, completing a total of 1 month and a week of interruption of classes. This decision was made in favor of adaptation to the new education system by both students' families and teachers. During the first four weeks, school management brought forward the holidays normally allocated in July, as a way of alleviating the tension among professionals and reflecting on the practices that had been developed so far. Thus, all coordinators rethought the established strategic planning, reevaluated the possibilities for transmitting classes, student engagement and the participation of those responsible for monitoring learning, adjusting the changes to align them with their identity.

The impossibility of replacing the interaction between teacher and student, for a long period for the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process, meant that the organization for returning to classes was changed. With new technological resources and greater control over their functionalities, the transmission of classes began to be carried out synchronously, with full recording through cloud recording, but still maintaining the reduced class time.

This change was fundamental for the 1st year, which is the time when students must go through the literacy stages, reaching the end of the school year in the alphabetic stage. As described by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1985),

he must be able to make grapheme-phoneme, phoneme-grapheme correspondences, realizing that each sound emission can be represented in writing by one or more letters. Therefore, for the teacher to prove these associations, it was necessary for the student to participate with her in the production of meaning.

Even though, as explained by Scliar-Cabral (2003), the recognition of consonants depends on their immediate vowel context, this attempt at pronunciation allows the student to make unconscious inferences, searching in their vocabulary, constituted in previous years by literacy activities, words that have the same phoneme. This task is the basis for other activities that will advance the student's literacy.

It is worth highlighting that the institution's Pedagogical Political Project reveals that the theme letters of the exercises and classes carried out by the students have an order of presentation starting with the vowels, as they have sound relationships that are easy to perceive and will allow the student, when later learning the consonants, be able to write full words.

Figure 2 represents the order of letters and syllabic families in which they are taught to learners. This sequence was selected, regardless of the online class system, as there is a phonetic ease in associating the first consonants with vowels to form syllabic families, in addition to simple and monosyllabic words being able to be formed from them. Furthermore, the fine motor coordination of students who are developing is better able to write these letters.

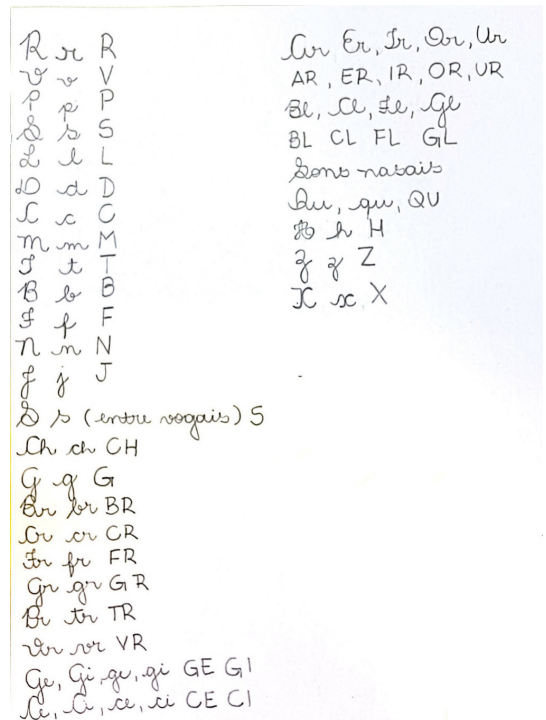


Figure 2. Order of letters and syllabic families of literacy activities at the school in question

Source: Original research results.

Before the interruption of face-to-face classes, the student went through the alphabetical code learning path individually, at their own pace, and the teacher guided the process. Each child had greater freedom to develop their writing skills, even though, at the end of the year, they had to complete all activities successfully.

However, with the transmission of classes synchronously, the impossibility of monitoring, during class, the activity of all students and the desire for interaction between teacher-student and student-student, the independent path of acquiring the alphabetic code was replaced by collective work and inserted into other projects developed in other classes. Thus, the activities started with the identification of one of the letters specified in Figure 1, through some words chosen by the teacher, which were selected according to the project carried out on the day or week, such as reading a book, an event on

the school calendar. Then, the children shared words with the teacher that identify this same phoneme, represented by this letter. After this step, all syllabic families were fixed on the digital whiteboard and students had to copy them into their notebooks. The next stage was associated with the use of the movable alphabet to assemble words autonomously. This allowed them to apply what they were learning and compare their choices with what was later corrected by the teacher.

In this second stage of adaptations to Emergency Remote Teaching (Moment 2), after the transition from asynchronous to synchronous classes, there was an increase in the participation and engagement rate of students compared to the period before the holidays (Moment 1), as specified in Figure 3.

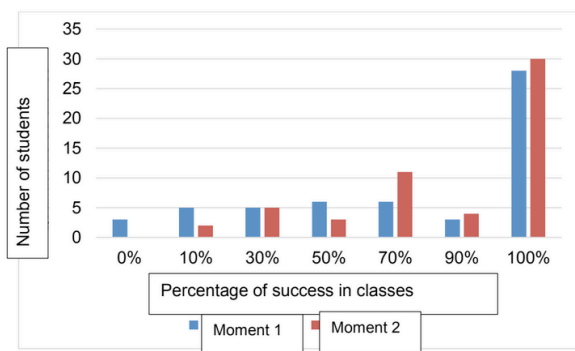


Figure 3. Comparison between total student engagement at Moment 1 and Moment 2

Source: Original survey results.

As it can be seen in the graph above, it was found that at Moment 2 there were no longer any students completely absent from the teaching-learning process and the adaptations also enabled a general increase in participation.

The flexible dimension of literacy, through recorded classes at the beginning of the school year, was replaced by synchronous hybrid activities in favor of student engagement and concentration during transmissions. This adaptation facilitated learning to write, but it still left aside learning to read. Given

this, it was necessary once again to review the practices applied to date and implement individual assistance per student per week in mid-July 2021.

This need, identified by the teachers, did not exceed the workload, as regular class time had already been reduced, and allowed students to regain the personalization of learning and to be trained in reading and textual comprehension. In the same way as with regular activities, these meetings called “special classes” had specific materials to be used, which were given in print to the students, with associated reading tasks.

At this stage, after implementing the third adaptation to the methodology, there was a significant increase in student participation and the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process, shown in Figure 4.

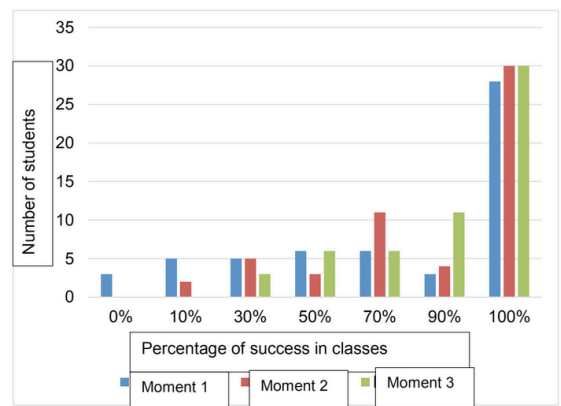


Figure 4. Comparison between total student engagement in Moments 1, 2 and 3

Source: Original research results.

It was found that, in the third moment, only 9 of the 56 students had a participation rate below 70% and effective return to school activities. The total student participation rate started at 71% initially, evolving to 80%, ending at 87%. The numbers presented in the graph above are a consequence not only of strategic planning based on participatory management, but are also motivated by the family routine already adjusted to the needs

of distance learning. Five months after the decision to close educational institutions, parents were able to organize their professional responsibilities and adapt them to the fixed schedules of live classes.

Furthermore, with the low prospect of a full return to the face-to-face system, those responsible began to invest in technological devices for exclusive use by students. As noted in the Management Plan of the observed school, 76% of students already had their own individual electronic equipment in August 2020 to monitor remote classes.

Near the end of August, at the end of the presentation of all the phonetic components in Figure 2, those students who still showed consonant changes both in speaking and writing, received support from school reinforcement, in addition to the special classes that had a main focus on reading. Only 25% of the 56 students needed tutoring, according to records in the school report and control of activities carried out by the teachers.

At the end of the period analyzed in this work, that is, October 2020, it became clear that the adaptations and changes necessary to establish Emergency Remote Education in the 1st year of Elementary School were more drastic than in other classes in the same segment. The perception of the particular needs of each student can be punctuated by the existence of daily synchronous classes, return of literacy activities carried out by students, constant pedagogical monitoring by the multidisciplinary team, which made up the management and, mainly, by individual meetings in “special classes”.

The final proof of good classroom management, promoted by teachers in conjunction with coordination and management, occurred when comparing, through Figure 5, the rates of literacy students in 2019 (typical school year) and in 2020 (year of Emergency Remote Teaching).

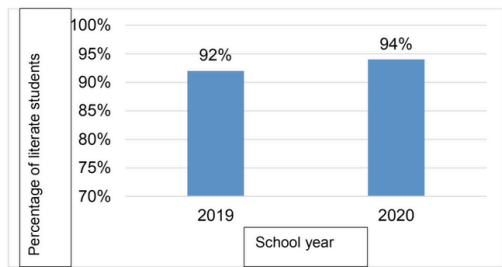


Figure 5. Percentage of literate students in 2019 and 2020.

Source: Original research results.

It was evident from the graph above that the attentive look at the individual needs of students added to the collective work of contextualizing literacy led to a 2% growth in the rate of literate students in the year, not allowing the difficulties faced by social distancing to prevent an excellent work. Therefore, the perception of the particular needs of each student can be punctuated by the existence of daily synchronous classes, return of literacy activities carried out by students, constant pedagogical monitoring by the multidisciplinary team, which made up the management and, mainly, by individual meetings in the “classes special”. All these adaptations to the face-to-face methodology and the constant reviews of practices allowed the teaching-learning process at the analyzed school to be effective.

CONCLUSION

The sudden removal of students from school institutions and the beginning of Emergency Remote Education, caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, did not prevent the private school in Ribeirão Preto from building, through pedagogical reviews and strategic management planning, a methodology for systematization of the alphabetic code and effective reading. The participation and constant engagement of the school community, through pedagogical monitoring and joint action by teachers and the management team, associated with the

literacy methodology that was already used, complemented the factors for the process to be successful and replicable., as a source of effective experience for other institutions.

THANKS

I am grateful for the continued patience of the 1st year teachers and the Management of the observed school, as, in addition to being the result of the analysis of this work, they contributed significantly to providing guidance on the relevant evidence that must be collected.

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