

Troubles in the teacher's work

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Abstract: Introduction: The teacher's work is permeated by a number of adverse factors including poor working conditions, inadequate wages, lack of teaching materials and resources, relationship problems with students, high workload, little or no interest in their work management. Such conditions end up being expressed by teachers through physical and emotional illnesses. Objective: To identify the perception of teachers about their work and their relation to health, considering physical, emotional and organizational. Method: The study included 110 elementary school teachers that are distance course members (EAD). For data collection, it was used a semi-structured questionnaire addressing personal and professional, physical, mental and organizational work. Data analysis was performed using non-parametric statistics, with mean and standard deviation calculations. Results: The results reveal that the bureaucratic activities are the most physically demanding and the mentally ones refer to the lack of interest of students and parents. The body region of biggest complaint was upper and lower limbs. As to working conditions, most teachers considered partially satisfactory, considering that these harms their health and can interfere with the student's learning. Conclusion: The teacher's work is permeated with troubles and requires prevention and intervention measures to develop confrontation strategies and reflection of the organizational context, with benefits also for students and schools.

Keywords: *Teacher, Work Conditions, Health, Troubles in the Teaching Work.*

Agruras no trabalho do professor

Resumo: Introdução: O trabalho do professor é permeado por um conjunto de fatores adversos que incluem condições de trabalho inadequadas, salários insuficientes, carência de materiais e recursos didáticos, problemas de relacionamento com os alunos, elevada carga de trabalho, pouca ou nenhuma participação na gestão do seu trabalho. Tais condições acabam sendo expressas pelos professores por meio de adoecimentos de ordem física e emocional. Objetivo: Identificar a percepção dos professores sobre o seu trabalho e sua relação com a saúde, considerando aspectos físicos, emocionais e organizacionais. Método: Participaram do estudo 110 professores do ensino fundamental integrantes de curso à distância (EAD). Para coleta de dados, utilizou-se um questionário semiestruturado que abordou dados pessoais e profissionais, aspectos físicos, mentais e organizacionais do trabalho. A análise de dados foi realizada por meio de estatística não paramétrica, com cálculos da média e do desvio-padrão. Resultados: As atividades burocráticas são as de maior demanda física e as mentais referem-se ao desinteresse dos alunos e pais. A região corporal de maior queixa foi membros superiores e inferiores. Quanto às condições de trabalho, a maioria dos professores considerou parcialmente satisfatórias, tendo em vista que estas prejudicam sua saúde e podem interferir na aprendizagem dos alunos. Conclusão: O trabalho do professor é permeado de agruras e requer medidas prevenção e intervenção no sentido de desenvolver estratégias de enfrentamento e reflexão do contexto organizacional, com benefício também para os alunos e as instituições escolares.

Palavras-chave: *Professor, Condições de Trabalho, Saúde, Sofrimento no Trabalho Docente.*

1 Introduction

Talking about the work of the teacher, unfortunately, refers to a panorama full of pain and suffering. In Oliveira (2005) considerations, the school space has been a source of troubles and sufferings for the teacher. There is a vast literature pointing out the main manifestations of illness in teachers, with emphasis on the physical, emotional, environmental, organizational and school structure.

Speech disturbances pointed out by Costa et al. (2013), musculoskeletal problems (SILVA; ALMEIDA, 2012), respiratory and cardiovascular problems (VEDOVATO; MONTEIRO, 2008), were among the physical manifestations expressed by illness (SUDA et al., 2011). Regarding the emotional factors, it is possible to mention the stress and the burnout (SILVA; ALMEIDA, 2011; MESQUITA et al., 2013; PEDDITZI; NONNIS, 2014), and depression (BATISTA; CARLOTTO; MOREIRA, 2013).

In environmental and organizational aspects in the teacher's work, it is possible to mention high temperatures, insufficient ventilation and lighting and noise (BATISTA et al., 2010), excessive work hours and insufficient remuneration (PINTO, 2009) lack of teaching materials and resources, problems in teacher training (SILVA; ALMEIDA, 2011). From the literature cited above, it can be seen an unfavorable context to the professional performance of the teacher and, therefore, marked by troubles and sufferings.

2 Reforms in the Educational Sector and Implications for the Teacher's Work

The transformations in the work of globalization and productive restructuring intensified in the 1990s resulted in changes in work, production, and labor. The increase of technological innovations changed the activities and made the work pace more intense, favoring the process of the sickness of workers (ANDRADE; CARDOSO, 2012). This context also led to changes in education, school and teaching work. Oliveira (2007) considers that the educational reforms carried out in the last decade have administrative, financial and pedagogical decentralization and school autonomy. As a result of this process of autonomy, there is an increase in the role of the teacher through the increase of responsibilities, going beyond the student's knowledge

process that is, the classroom space, and include school management and pedagogical planning.

Facing the several functions the school proposes to carry out, the teacher has to mobilize knowledge that goes beyond the limits of his/her education (OLIVEIRA, 2005).

Esteve (1999) considers that transformations in education and in the social context require a new teacher profile, whose collection for effectiveness has increased significantly. Oliveira (2007) states that the expansion of the role of the teacher is accompanied by a greater charge on the teacher in the success of the student's learning, with the installation of mechanisms to measure student performance.

Souza (2007) states that, in the logic of capitalism and technological modernization, the mechanism of measurement of productivity and quality of teaching offered to students occupies a fundamental position. Besides the factors already mentioned above, it is observed that working conditions are increasingly precarious. For the same authors, the commercial logic prevails to seek the low cost of production and high productivity. In this sense, actions are promoted to reduce the number of professionals, increase the proportion of students per classroom, high workload and responsibilities with the depreciation of working conditions and the quality of life of teachers.

Sampaio and Marin (2004) state that due to low pay, the teachers work in other schools contributing to an excessive work day, and activities at home, especially for women. It is not possible to disregard the activities that the teacher does at home, such as work correction, class organization, as highlighted by Meleiro (2007).

Oliveira (2001) states that the intense workday is associated with a process of devaluation of the teacher's role and salary flatness. In a study carried out by the author, it was identified that 80% of the teachers worked in more than one school, as a way of achieving income compatible with their needs. According to data from UNESCO (ORGANIZAÇÃO..., 2004), 65.5% of teachers in Brazil receive from two to ten minimum wages.

In this context, educators end up experiencing unfavorable work situations with low pay, insufficient teaching resources, excessive numbers of students, impaired interpersonal relationships and little or no participation in decisions about their own work (SILVA et al., 2015).

3 Some Words on Teacher Training

Resolution CNE/CP nº 1 (BRASIL, 2002) establishes that the training should contemplate the development of skills and competencies of the teacher, articulating knowledge and didactics, so he has autonomy to teach. However, teacher training is far from contemplating these elements. Oliveira (2006) highlights the validity of a conservative formative pattern, purely technical and with a low level of reflection, and sometimes decontextualized from school every day. Meleiro (2007) points to a degradation of the conditions of teacher training and practice in Brazil. Libâneo (2000) considers that many teachers have a solid background and commitment to work, but on the other hand there is a large contingent of teachers with significant failures in vocational training, finding it difficult to deal with the demands in the teaching-learning process from the students.

Nunes Sobrinho (2007) believes that there is a gap between the prescribed work (norms, laws, and rules) and real work (what is actually done by the worker) in the professional practice of teachers, which reveals a mismatch between the organization of the educational work and the educational system.

Thus, it can be affirmed that the teaching exercise configures a universe in which health risks are present, due to physical or emotional illnesses, which are closely related to working conditions (aspects of the environment and work placement, school infrastructure, work organization and teaching management). Such constraints may impact on the quality of teaching and prejudice the teaching-learning process of students, besides to causing damage to the health of teachers.

This study considers aspects of the physical environment (temperature, noise, vibration), chemical (toxic gases, dust), hygiene, safety and anthropometric measurements of the worker and characteristics of the job) as the concept of working conditions according to Dejours (1992). For the same author, the organization of work comprises the forms of division of labor, tasks, interpersonal relationships (boss and co-workers), assignments and responsibilities.

4 Objective

To identify the teachers' perception of their work, possible impacts to their health, considering physical, emotional and organizational aspects.

5 Method

5.1 Type of research

This is a descriptive, exploratory study with a quantitative approach that sought to investigate the working conditions and health of teachers.

5.2 Place

The teachers who participated in the research were students enrolled in a course of improvement on disability and inclusion, offered in the modality of distance learning, originating in different municipalities of the State of São Paulo.

5.3 Participants

The study included 110 regular elementary school teachers with distance and distance students (EAD). Teachers were asked about their routine in schools and classrooms. Almost all of the participants (98%) were female, with a mean age of 39 years old (SD = 8.32), average workload of 36.8 hours per week (SD = 12.4), time (SD = 8.76), most of them were married 61.8% (68), 14.5% (16) singles, 41% (45) teach in regular classes with students with disabilities, 27% (30) without students with disabilities, 22% (24) in multifunctional resource rooms, and 10% (11) in reinforcement rooms.

5.4 Instrument

For the data collection, a semi-structured questionnaire containing 13 multiple choice questions was used, which included: personal data; main activities carried out, including personal data; manifestations of pain in the different body segments, need to work away, major physical and mental demands, stress factors at work, working conditions (environment and work organization, materials and equipment, teaching resources); possible implications of working conditions on teacher health and student learning. It is an instrument developed by Silva (2009), whose initial application occurred with 60 participants. In this original version, the questions were opened, but after the treatment of the data, in front of the categories of responses of the participants, a version with the organization in the form of multiple choice options was generated, used to collect data in this research. Before the data collection, the instrument was sent to judges to verify their properties and received a favorable opinion.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to evaluate the consistency of the questionnaire, with a value of 0.52 as considered acceptable. It should be noted that there are no such instruments in the literature, which led to its elaboration.

5.5 Data collection procedures

This project is part of a larger project approved by the Research Ethics Committee, under protocol No. 1,021,194 of April 9, 2015. The questionnaires were collected through a distance learning platform during the period of the course in 2013, in the months of January to June, together with an explanatory letter on the objectives of the research. All the participants who became available to participate, who filled out the questionnaire in full and signed the Free and Informed Consent Form were included.

5.6 Procedures for processing and analyzing data

Data analysis was quantitative and performed using non-parametric statistics, with mean and standard deviation calculations. The data obtained in the instrument were tabulated in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and the results organized in Figures.

6 Results and Discussion

In this section, the data obtained in the semi-structured interview with the teachers will be presented, organized according to the following themes: Activities of greater physical demand; Main body regions of incidence of pain; Activities with greater

mental demand; Main stressors presented in the last six months; Assessment of working conditions, work organization, materials and equipment and availability of teaching resources; Relationship between the working conditions offered and the health of the teacher and Relationship between the working conditions and the quality of the service provided to the student.

Besides teaching classes, planning and preparation of classes, correction of materials, the release of grades, meetings with teachers, management and parents are among the routine activities of teachers. The literature has discussed an expansion of the work of the teacher, who has assumed management roles in the school (CARLOTTO; PALAZZO, 2006; OLIVEIRA, 2007).

Considering the activities carried out in their work, the teachers were asked about those with greater physical demand, the result of which is presented in Figure 1.

Bureaucratic activities consisting of filling in internal documents, call records, grades and meetings had 62 occurrences, being the most prevalent, followed by correction of materials (27), group activities with students (25), and the main activity of educators, which is to teach obtained only 19.

6.1 Manifestation of pain by the body segment

Considering the daily activities of teachers and the different body segments involved, the possible presence of pain in the exercise of professional activity

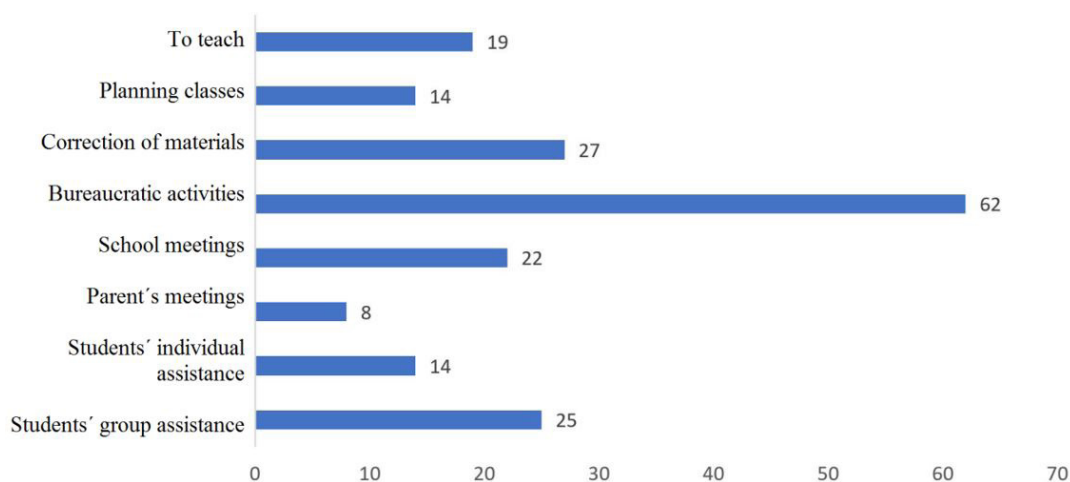


Figure 1. Activities of greater physical demand.

was questioned, and the synthesis is presented in Figure 2.

For most teachers (77%), discomfort did not result in removal, but 23% were removed for 1 to 15 days (17 occurrences), and 16 to 60 days (4 occurrences) with the head and spine as the body regions resulted in a higher rate of removal.

In his research on different ways of coping with teacher difficulties, Santos (2004) considers that often lack of work is a defense reaction used to deal with problems in school. Regarding the presence of pain, the most prevalent body region was the upper limbs (87 occurrences) followed by lower limbs (78), head (61) and spine (55).

6.2 Activities and factors with higher mental demand

The main activities pointed out by participants as having greater emotional demand are presented in Figure 3.

It can be observed that from the activities listed above, those that cause greater emotional exhaustion in the teachers is the parents' lack of interest (64), lack of student interest (63) and lack of behavior of the students (60). The data obtained in this research are consonant with the findings of Reinhold (2007) and Mariano and Muniz (2006), who identified students' lack of interest and lack of behavior. In the data of UNESCO (ORGANIZAÇÃO..., 2004) on

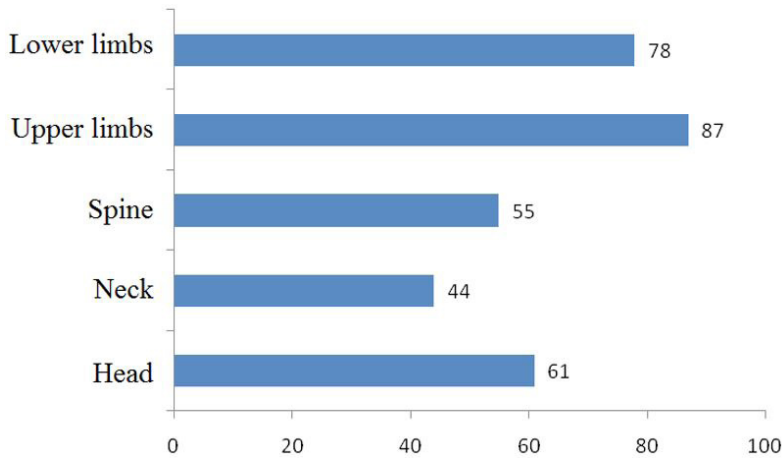


Figure 2. Main body regions of incidence of pain.

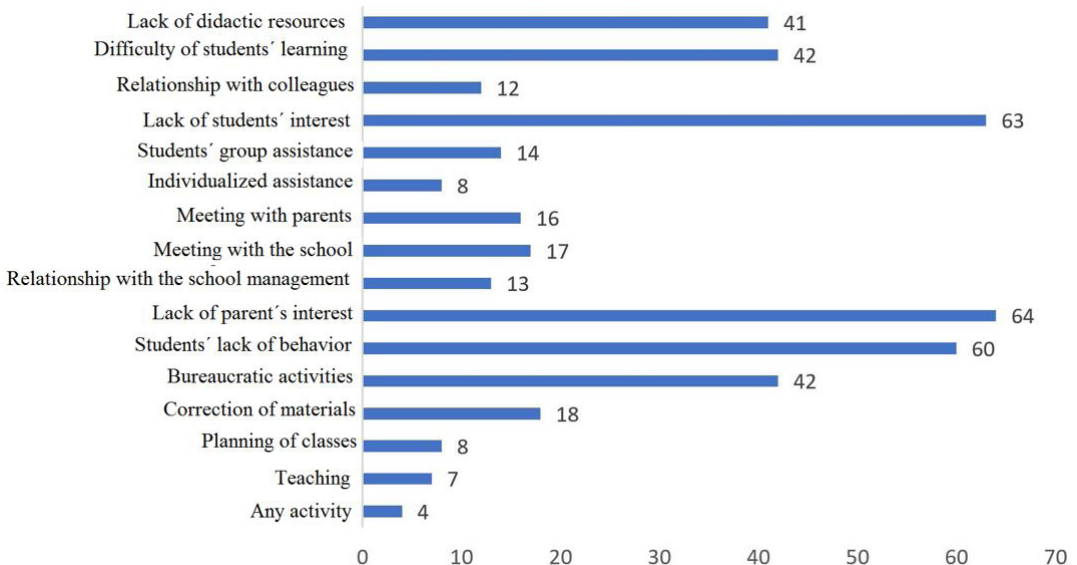


Figure 3. Activities and factors with higher mental demand. Source: Prepared by the author.

the factors that the Brazilian teachers understand as the greatest generators of problems in their professional practice, the difficulty of controlling student's behavior is prevalent (54.8%).

6.3 Symptoms presented in the last six months by teachers

Figure 4 will show several symptoms listed by the teachers according to the incidence in the last six months.

The most frequently reported symptoms in the last six months of teachers' work were memory-related factors such as forgetfulness (67), irritability or impatience (66), discouragement or demotivation (53) and insomnia (44). Even with these symptoms, there was no removal from the work or significant shortages caused by the symptoms mentioned above,

since the research covered the last six months, with only 6% need to leave the workplace and 94% did not need absent from the job. For Reinhold (2007), teachers are in continuous contact with situations permeated by wear, which favors the occurrence of stress, intense fatigue, and depressive episodes.

6.4 Evaluation of working conditions (environment, work organization, materials and equipment and availability of pedagogical resources)

Regarding the evaluation of working conditions by teachers, the responses are presented in Figure 5.

Regarding the work environment, 55% (61) of the participants evaluated it as partially satisfactory, 28%

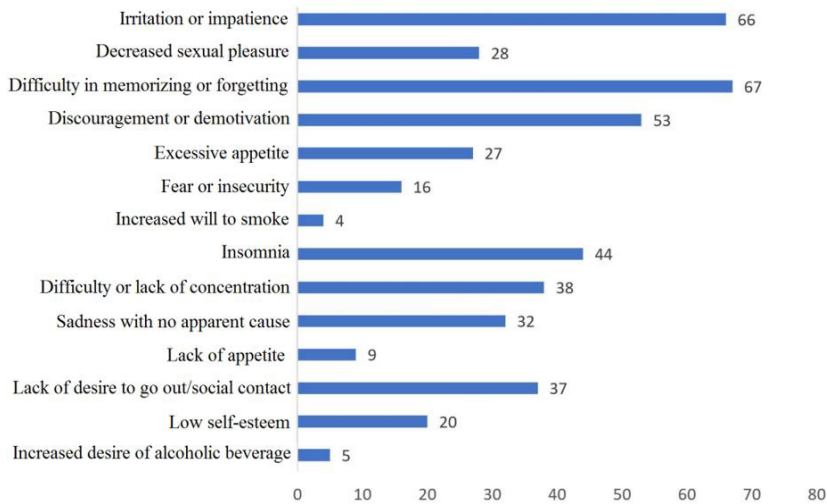


Figure 4. Main stressors presented in the last six months. Source: Prepared by the author.

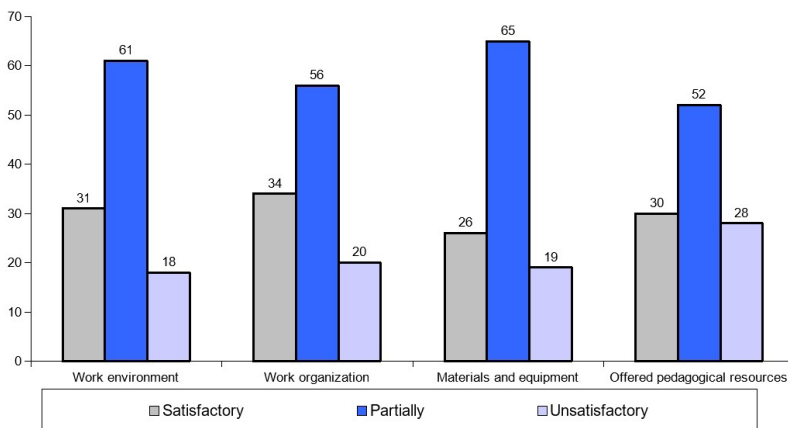


Figure 5. Evaluation of working conditions.

(31) as satisfactory and 17% (18) unsatisfactory, indicating that the rooms had insufficient ventilation with 44 occurrences, and a number of students per classroom (38).

Concerning the work organization, 52% (56) of the participants considered it to be partially satisfactory, 31% (34) as satisfactory and 17% (20) as unsatisfactory. Insufficient wages (72), double working hours (63), lack of time for improvement in the area of work (48) and overlapping of working hours with domestic work were mentioned as problems (48). It should be emphasized that, because it is a predominantly female sample, the question of the double journey should be considered as an overload factor, interfering in the free time, in the time for class preparation, in health, favoring illness (SAMPAIO; MARIN, 2004; MELEIRO, 2007; SILVA, 2009).

Souza et al. (2003) consider that in the teaching work, besides the devaluation, it is possible to stand out: the little social recognition, low wages, authoritarian management, extensive working day, deficient formation, adoption of inappropriate postures, excessive noise, classes with excessive numbers of students and accumulation of extra classic tasks.

Regarding the materials and equipment used to perform the professional activities, 60% (65) of the participants classified them as partially satisfactory, 24% (26) as satisfactory, and 16% (19) as unsatisfactory. Among the reasons for indicating the answer, 59 teachers pointed out that the desks were not adequate for wheelchair users, as well as pointing out the absence or insufficiency of resources adapted to assist the students (56).

Regarding the availability of partially offered pedagogical resources, 48% (52) evaluated it as satisfactory, 27% (30) as satisfactory and 25% (28) as unsatisfactory, being that the lack of pedagogical resources with 53 occurrences was the item of greater complaint, followed by the need to buy or bring home materials (44) so the activities can be carried out. In a study with teachers in Paraíba, Mariano and Muniz (2006) identified: problems in the environment (high temperature, very low classroom slab, favoring the increase of temperature); lack of equipment and didactic resources (broken fans, lack of laboratories, computers, and books).

6.5 Relationship between the working conditions offered and the teacher's health and working conditions and the quality of the service provided to the student

Regarding the working conditions offered to the teacher and possible impacts on their health and the teaching of students, it is possible to verify more frequently the evaluation of the working conditions as not being good and that they are harming the health of the teachers with 30 occurrences, followed by the statement that working conditions are also causing irritation to the teacher (29), a significant number of teachers (27) considered working conditions to be good, but said that they still interfere with their health. On the other hand, 21 teachers considered that working conditions are good and healthy and that they stimulate them to work. Regarding the interference of working conditions in the quality of service provided to the student, 33 teachers indicated impairment to learning, 22 reported irritation at work, which made it difficult for the students to learn. On the other hand, 29 teachers considered good working conditions, stimulating student learning, and 25 reported that such conditions favor the quality of teaching.

According to Silva and Carlotto (2003), teaching work is usually carried out under stressful conditions, such as low wages, absence or insufficiency of teaching resources, a high number of students, conflict with students, long working hours, poor participation in management education, school and their own work, school insecurity.

According to Reis et al. (2006), the stressful situations experienced by teachers affect their physical and mental health, as well as interfering in their professional performance.

Although it was not the objective of this study to compare teachers of students with and without disabilities, there was a slight prevalence of physical and emotional symptoms in the students, which also showed a greater lack of pedagogical resources.

7 Conclusion

The data revealed that bureaucratic activities, corrections of materials and group activities with the students cause high physical fatigue to the teachers, leading to the presence of pain, with emphasis on upper and lower limbs, head and spine. Despite the

high prevalence of pain pointed out by teachers, the number of removals was not significant. Regarding working conditions, the prevalent response was partially satisfactory, with teachers indicating that such conditions interfere with their health and hamper student learning.

The presence of emotional symptoms among teachers is highlighted, especially irritability, discouragement, and insomnia, which may favor the emergence of mental illnesses such as stress, anxiety disorders, and depression.

In this way, it can be affirmed that the teaching work is permeated by conditions with risks to their health, expressed through troubles and suffering, with possible implications for their families, as well as students, with possible implications in the teaching-learning process.

There is also a shortage of intervention programs with teachers, which should cover the development of strategies by the worker to deal with stress situations; changes in the work environment and in organizational aspects that hinder work, interfering in the production and impact the health of the professionals, contemplating personal aspects of the worker and the work context.

In this sense, it is necessary to invest in prevention and intervention programs with teachers to develop coping strategies and reflection of the organizational context as a way of investing in their health and consequently of the students, and in return for benefits for school institutions.

It is worth noting that studies with teachers are focused on the diagnosis, description, evaluation of working conditions and jobs, on capturing teachers' feelings in the practice of the profession, such as this study. There are many aspects already known and allow the proposal of intervention research and coping with the difficulties found by the teachers, both in the work environment, the elimination of risk factors and the construction of comfortable workstations with guaranteed productivity, interpersonal relationships (co-workers, supervisors, students and family members) and in the adoption of strategies for prevention and health promotion. It is also observed in the literature many studies that approach the subject of the health of the teacher in an isolated way, being necessary to focus the existing relationships between the working conditions, the sickness of the teachers and to include the interactions with the students and the multiple behaviors in the classroom.

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Author's Contributions

Both authors contributed to the conception of the article. All authors approved the final version of the text.

Funding Source

CNPq – Edital Universal - Ciências Humanas, Sociais e Sociais Aplicadas; Fapesp – Bolsa de Iniciação Científica.