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NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY: CHALLENGES FACED BY PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHERS RETURNING TO IN-PERSON EDUCATION IN COSTA RICA

ABSTRACT

The health emergency caused by COVID-19 affected educational systems worldwide between 2020 and 2022 with the closing of thousands of schools. In Costa Rica, in response to the public health crisis the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) implemented a model based on distance education in 2020, combined or blended instruction in 2021, and the return to in-person education in 2022. This study aims to describe the perceptions of five primary English teachers from the Educational Directorate of Sarapiquí, Costa Rica, regarding the return to in-person education, to better understand the teachers' professional context and pedagogical practices during the health crisis. This descriptive case study, grounded in inductive qualitative research, collected and triangulated data by means of semi-structured in-depth virtual interviews, document gathering (lesson plans), and body mapping. Content analysis was conducted to categorize the primary school teachers' perceptions and experiences using ATLAS.ti. Results showed that teachers depended on strong pedagogical considerations for planning, teaching, and learning processes. Nonetheless, they had to deal with multiple challenges, including dealing with differences and inconsistencies in school-based and MEP-based management processes and policies, which made it difficult for them to readapt to the face-to-face modality. Added to this were the challenges posed by work overload and general exhaustion. The teachers additionally identified multiple deficiencies in students' academic and educational competencies, in areas including learning to learn, socializing, and study routines, all accompanied by high levels of educational lag.

Keywords
Body mapping; COVID-19 pandemic; Education, Language; Qualitative research.

1. Introduction

The public health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic caused the longest ever closure of schools on a worldwide level, with some countries shutting schools for more than 150 consecutive days (Abizanda et al., 2022). This led to the unprecedented endangerment of students' learning processes and placed at risk advancements towards the goals established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Berlanga et al., 2020). Costa Rica responded to this worldwide emergency with the implementation of distance education in 2020, and combined education in 2021, before returning to full in-person education in 2022 (Ministerio de Educación Pública & Ministerio de Salud, 2022). This study aims to describe the perceptions of five primary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from the Educational Directorate of Sarapiquí, Costa Rica, regarding this return to in-person education, to better understand the teachers' professional context and pedagogical practices during the health crisis.

To contextualize the 2022 return to in-person education in Costa Rica, it is helpful to examine the previous processes of distance and combined education. In 2020, distance education was characterized by the physical-spatial separation of teachers and their students, who often lacked the internet connectivity and electronic devices to enable education to be conducted virtually, especially in rural areas (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2023). Distance classes therefore mostly relied on the use of independent study guidebooks (*Guías de Trabajo Autónomo*), which became the main teaching instrument employed during 2020. These guidebooks were collected from schools by parents and generally returned to teachers a month later. Teaching under such adverse conditions, teachers reported experiencing mostly negative feelings in 2020, along with the sensation of a work overload (López-Estrada et al., 2022).

In 2021, the Costa Rican Ministry of Education (MEP) implemented a strategy for the gradual return to in-person education at schools using a model combining face-to-face and distance educational practices, preferably mediated by technology (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2023b; Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2023c; Elacqua et al., 2021, p. 6). Under this model, students attended classes at school on certain days, complying with public health protocols of social distancing, the use of face masks, and frequent hand washing, while studying at home on other days, using technology when possible. However, particularly in rural and impoverished areas, severe limitations of connectivity and the availability of electronic devices in homes resulted in remote components mostly relying on the independent study guidebooks complemented by the use of WhatsApp as a tool to share instructions and educational videos with students. This latter was a common phenomenon in developing countries, coined the "WhatsAppization of education" (Equity for Children, 2020, para. 10). Nonetheless, many students had only limited access to cellphones and data, further complicating communication (López-Estrada et al., 2022). WhatsApp was thus often employed only to send files and to receive evidence of students' work, with limited interaction between teachers and students.

In the face of these challenges, the MEP prioritized expected learning outcomes for the 2020-2021 curriculum and extended the 2021 school year to finish in January 2022 instead of December 2021 (Díaz, 2021). Additionally, it declared 2022 the year of the return to in-person education, with the objectives of guaranteeing a safe return to classrooms and a pedagogical recovery that would narrow the gap left by previous years (Picado, 2022). To this end, it promulgated a series of guidelines for the opening of schools, along with the pedagogical approaches and evaluation methods to be used.

Specifically, for EFL classes, the MEP mandated the use of the 2016 syllabus for all primary grades (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2023d). Teachers were provided with an extensive series of guidelines on how to conduct classes, along with academic leveling matrices to prioritize expected learning outcomes, for use in diagnostic processes and everyday class delivery (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2023a).

Despite the measures taken, students' learning processes were negatively impacted by the loss of class time, reduction of contents, and connectivity inequalities (Programa Estado de La Nación, 2023). Furthermore, studies show that the pandemic caused an increase in "loneliness, anxiety, and depression" in children (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2020, p. 4), with negative consequences on their learning, educational competencies, and readjustment to in-person education. These problems, added to the fact that students expressed difficulties in establishing study routines during the pandemic (Arias et al., 2021), increased teacher workloads during the return to face-to-face classes.

Keeping in mind United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2023, p.27), this study aims to describe primary school EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences on returning to classes after the pandemic, to better comprehend their professional context and the pedagogical approaches they employed in this challenging year.

2. Materials and Methods

Epistemologically, this research was based on constructivism, which celebrates the construction of knowledge through personal and individual experiences (Grbich, 2007; Hatch, 2002). In this framework, individual perceptions are viewed as of fundamental significance since they are intimately related to everyone's visions of the world. For the purposes of the study, it can be understood that teachers' perceptions, opinions, and experiences are subjective, but share a common educational context during the pandemic due to the guidelines issued by the MEP.

This study focused on inductive qualitative research in which descriptions were transformed into general semantic constructs also known as categories (Hatch, 2002).

The main purpose of this research was to apprehend the significance of a complex social phenomenon, the return to in-person education in times of a pandemic, with the intention of shedding light on the consequences of the decision-making processes in Costa Rican primary education during the public health crisis.

A descriptive case-study research design was employed (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Lichtman, 2013). This was chosen because it allowed the detailed systematization of extensive in-depth data extracted from the investigation of a current phenomenon in a real context (Yin, 2009). The main unit of analysis was the return to in-person education after the pandemic. The study focused on the perceptions of five primary school English teachers working in public schools in the Regional Educational Directorate of Sarapiquí.

Data were gathered and triangulated through three main techniques: semi-structured in-depth virtual interviews, document gathering (didactic lesson plans), and body mapping. Interviews are one of the most common data collection techniques used in qualitative research, given that this allows to better "understand human experiences starting with the perspectives of those who undergo them" (Yin, 2009; Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006, p. 21). The researchers created and validated a matrix with open questions aimed at obtaining descriptive answers and the in-depth exploration of participants' experiences (Yin, 2009; Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006). Another data gathering technique was the collection of two digital didactic lesson plans per teacher to broaden the panorama on the pedagogical approaches and the evaluation processes employed; these lesson plans were accompanied by reflective narratives in which teachers discussed the effectiveness of the lessons. The last technique, body mapping, included an artistic representation of each participants' body, feelings and thoughts during the year of the return to in-person classes. Body Mapping involves individuals representing their bodies on paper in a way that transmits their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and surroundings with respect to the phenomenon under study (Gastaldo et al., 2018). These are represented via drawings, paintings, or any other artistic or symbolic methods that allow people to portray their stories.

Body mapping emerged in 2002 when Jane Solomon implemented this as an artistic therapy for women diagnosed with AIDS in South Africa (Gastaldo et al., 2018). After several years, body mapping started to be used for multiple purposes, including as a mechanism for therapy, teamwork, biographies, and story communication. It has also been used as a data collection technique in social sciences, health sciences, artistic research projects, and most recently in education. This technique is flexible in nature and promotes the individuals' protagonism since it focuses on the content, feelings, and the experiences that every individual considers important (Gubrium & Shafer, 2014; Orchard et al., 2014). It also gives voice to the participants, validating their own constructive experiences. (Victora & Knauth, 2001)

In the body mapping process, each teacher was asked to create a representation of their body during the return to in-person education.

Teachers received a guide for the creation of the body maps (Lys et al., 2018), and after making visual representations of their bodies, each participant wrote a reflection in which they provided further explanations of the colors, shapes, and symbols they included in their maps.

The target population for the study were five primary school English teachers from the Regional Educational Directorate of Sarapiquí, including the counties of Puerto Viejo, La Virgen, Horquetas, Llanuras del Gaspar, and Cureña. The teachers were selected through unique purposeful sampling based on the following criteria:

- English as a Foreign Language teachers appointed to teach first to sixth grades in rural primary schools as described by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2018, p. 10).
- Tenured teachers (to avoid the risk of dropout and guarantee permanence in the study).
- Teachers with a minimum degree of Licentiate in English teaching, who had taught during the implementation of distance and combined education in the two years prior to the study.
- Teachers working at schools with a minimum of 31 and a maximum of 200 students.
- Teachers with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 15 years, validated by the MEP.
- Three men and three women (to guarantee gender parity, that is, equal participation of men and women in the study (Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres, 2020).
- The study used content analysis (Hatch, 2002) through the creation of codes sorted into specific categories, decided upon after intensive, critical, and systematic reading of the data.
- Through this process, the project aimed to answer the following questions:
- What opinions do five primary school English as a Foreign Language teachers from the Regional Directorate of Sarapiquí express regarding the 2022 return to in-person education after the public health crisis provoked by COVID-19?
- What experiences did five primary school English as a Foreign Language teachers from the Regional Directorate of Sarapiquí have regarding the 2022 return to in-person education after the public health crisis provoked by COVID-19?

Data analysis followed the five steps proposed by (Hatch, 2002): data familiarization, codification of the data, category creation, category revision, and identification of the most prominent categories. The categories identified after coding the data using the ATLAS.ti software were those of strict inclusion and attribution (Spradley, 1979).

Internal validation was guaranteed by means of two key processes: data triangulation (Merriam, 2009) carried out through varied data collection techniques and intercoder reliability; and member checking, in which participants were presented with the preliminary results and consulted on these.

Finally, to comply with the ethical procedures of qualitative research, participants provided their informed consent, confidentiality was ensured using a specific code for each participant, and the data collection process followed strict compliance with public health protocols.

3. Results

Four major themes emerged from the data analysis: workplace context, educational management, pedagogical aspects, and the challenges of the return to face-to-face classes.

It should be noted that all interviews were carried out in Spanish, but for ease of reading, they were translated into English by the researchers for use in this paper.

3.1 Workplace Context

Two categories related to workplace context emerged: the socioeconomic conditions of students' families and communities, and the teachers' work routines. Socioeconomic factors included the economic, academic, geographic, cultural, and social situation of students, their families, and communities. In general, the teachers worked in poor communities, with severe issues of family migration (from Nicaragua, or internally within Costa Rica in search of better, more stable job opportunities).

Teachers were aware of the severity of the economic situation and how the pandemic hit certain families in their communities, so they adapted the materials for students' use, as stated by teacher DI-5:

> A pandemic that affected us all economically, so I printed the material for the students, because I know it's not just English, but they must pay for all the other subjects as well, and if I make them buy a book, a single book, it would cost at least, at that time [US$12.50 to US$14]. So, they must buy a book that often isn't adapted or doesn't offer the information or activities I need to teach the subject, clearly not complementing the curriculum or the MEP program well. So, I created cheaper, more personalized materials.

Teachers' routines included taking into account specific MEP mandates on how face-to-face classes were to be conducted, some of which were not initially clear. To counter this, the teachers maintained effective relationships with other colleagues, not only to clarify MEP mandates, but also to collaborate in planning and evaluation processes. Teacher DI-2 stated, "My colleagues and I continue working together, we had support, and in my case, we remained together. In fact, we keep in touch and share things and work together."

3.2 Educational Management

The main category for this theme was decision-making processes, which took place on two different levels, that of the MEP and at the individual school level.

In the case of the MEP, incongruences occurred at the beginning of each year due to different mechanisms mandated for 2020 and 2021. These involved drastic changes, including the imposition of sometimes problematic technological strategies, such as the use of SIRIMEP (online software to record students' performance and grades).

Teacher DI-2 indicated, "Some policies are emotionally tiring. In the case of SIRIMEP, we had to wake up very early to upload data, otherwise during the day the system would fail." The teachers also objected to other policies imposed by the MEP, such as diagnostic and linguistic competency tests carried out in 2022 after almost two years of emergency remote learning. In 2020 and 2021, contents were prioritized so that students could focus on certain topics to assure better student performance. In 2022, this MEP policy changed. Teacher DI-2 stated:

> I understand that [the MEP] established the expected learning outcomes, that they made the choices for 2021. But [...] prioritizing the expected learning outcomes should have continued into 2022 and should have even continued into 2023. It's necessary to prioritize, to achieve something complete. The content is almost impossible to cover. It's very heavy.

Teacher DI-5 added that the MEP should have provided better training for the different transitions that took place during the pandemic: "I feel that greater preparation, better performance of teachers, like learning to develop more skills that teachers have had to develop was needed."

At the school level, all MEP mandates were somewhat adapted to fit the school and community needs. Teacher DI-2 explained how at her school the teachers and the principal got together to organize the return to face-to-face classes:

> We met [...] to see what we were going to do, how we were going to start, how the distribution of groups and classes would be [...] We tried to manage it as best as we could, there were always problems in the community, but we tried to organize the entrance and return of students to school as best as we could.

3.3 Pedagogical Aspects

The third theme identified was pedagogical aspects, divided into five categories: educational resources, didactic planning, scope of contents, pedagogical approach, and learning processes. Educational resources referred to the availability (or otherwise) of resources for teachers, educational institutions, and students. The teachers asserted that in the two years prior to the resumption of face-to-face classes, most students lacked technological resources. Teacher DI-4 stated, "There was a very significant gap in content development during the pandemic, as not many had access to basic tools for optimal learning." This situation also applied to some rural schools for economic reasons, and it was often necessary for teachers to use their own resources to print materials for students.

Teachers struggled with planning classes since most students had fallen behind by almost two years.

The study participants prioritized reviewing prior content to later move forward during the year. Teacher DI-5 reflected, “We already were clear, I kept on revisiting and reinforcing. It was like starting over, let's say reviewing content.”

In 2020 and 2021, the MEP mandated the use of independent study guidebooks.

In 2022, teachers decided to continue using these guidebooks created in the previous two years as complementary materials for their teaching. They all agreed that this reuse resulted in less planning and was functional to the effective review and reinforcement of content for students.

All participants agreed that it was not possible to cover all contents assigned for the year (6 units). They ended up covering 3 or 4 units per year, a situation that continued in 2023. In a context in which the Costa Rican school year begins in February and ends in November, teacher DI-2 stated, “At this point [in June 2022], I'm only on Unit 2, just getting started on the unit.” Teacher DI-4 seconded this, indicating, “There is practically no time for interaction with the students, just assessing or applying the contents.”

Teachers employed drastically different pedagogical approaches to those used in distance education in 2020 and combined education in 2021; while they could not cover all contents, they used a wealth of teaching strategies in classes, including videos, face-to-face explanations and practice, dynamic and hands-on activities, and more ICT tools in the classroom (Teachers DI-3 and DI-4). Nonetheless, teacher DI-2 emphasized that she found some interactive activities challenging to implement with public health protocols still in place. She explained:

> I wanted to do more questions and answers, and I always told them, “Let's stand up and everyone must respond and interact. Take off your masks and answer, then when you finished, you can put them back on again.” And I couldn't hear the interactions. It was very difficult.

Although the teachers noted that students suffered serious deficiencies from the previous years, they agreed that returning to face-to-face classes resulted in increased learning and motivation for the students. Teacher DI-4 stated, “It has been the greatest benefit that the student is in class, and you can be constantly with them, checking on them, trying to see how they improve.” Teacher DI-5 similarly stated, “You realize that the children are much more motivated, there is more participation and enthusiasm. There has been a significant change.”

3.4 Challenges

The final theme was the challenges facing both students and their teachers. Challenges were implicit to the processes of returning to face-to-face classes, which included physical, cognitive, emotional, technological, and educational readjustments with respect to the routine of pre-pandemic classes.

Students’ readaptation processes included the reduction of effective class time, lack of educational competencies, and educational lag.

The teachers indicated that perhaps the biggest adaptation had to do with being physically in class and socializing in these spaces once more. Teacher DI-4 stated, “For [the students], it was exhausting when we returned to face-to-face classes. They were so tired; many didn't even know how to do the school tasks.” Similarly, Teacher DI-4 stated, “The students came from a comfort zone where they spent time at home watching television, very relaxed; there wasn't much to do, no routines, no discipline at home.”

While students needed to make up for lost time, teachers were assigned many administrative tasks resulting in less time for teaching. Teacher DI-1 commented:

> Currently, I'm on an English festival committee, I'm also on an arts festival committee, and sometimes we must suspend lessons because we need to decorate for the arts festival or attend a committee meeting. So, on those days, you don't work with the groups because you must attend meetings.

Teacher DI-2 stated:

> The regional advisor came to visit me, and [...] I showed him in my notebook the days we've lost due to holidays or multiple meetings. The number of days we've lost is significant. With so much administrative work, we've had very few effective class days.

Another challenge was students’ lack of competencies in areas such as learning to learn, socialization, civic responsibility, collaborative skills, linguistic communication, autonomy, and self-regulation. The teachers agreed that remote learning during 2020 and 2021 greatly affected students in these social areas. Teacher DI-2 stated, “There is always social interaction, and that social interaction affects how the child relates to the subject. However, in the virtual realm, it’s more difficult. That part is completely lost.”

The teachers noted behavioral problems in children returning to school. Teacher DI-2 stated, “There were children who had no boundaries. Social behavior was greatly affected in first and second grade. The lack of discipline, aggressiveness, and the absence of limits prevailed in 2022.” Teachers felt they had to re-teach students how to behave, interact, follow instructions, and socialize. Teacher DI-5 stated, “I had to start over, there were many things to pick up again. I had to begin reorienting, gradually taking steps to reintegrate them, reminding them of many teaching and learning processes.”

Finally, perhaps one of the biggest challenges was the educational lag evident in the students. The teachers reflected that it was frustrating and saddening to discover how behind the students were on returning to school in 2022 after almost two years at home. Teacher DI-2 stated:

> Returning to normality meant returning to a reality that no teacher wanted to face, as we were confronted head-on with the severely visible educational gap. It’s worth noting that this gap had many causes; it was the responsibility of parents, there were internet problems, knowledge issues (parents, teachers, and higher-ups), deficiencies in the use of tools, platforms.

Teacher DI-2 similarly asserted:

> We'd already studied [a particular topic] last year, but half of the group doesn't even remember it, even after reviewing it again and again. Last year [2022], there were blank minds. It felt like they hadn't had any English instruction not only last year, but also the year before. It was quite difficult and painful. The students came to face-to-face classes with their minds turned off. And it continues [in 2023].

Teacher challenges included readaptation processes, health protocols, heavy workloads, and generalized exhaustion. Teachers' opinions on the readaptation processes were divided between positive reactions and a focus on the difficulties and frustrations encountered. The teachers were delighted to be back in schools and communities, since "there was more closeness, more contact. Seeing the kids was full happiness" (Teacher DI-5). Teacher DI-2 similarly said seeing students every day "felt like a light in the darkness." Being back in contact with other colleagues was also experienced positively, as expressed by teacher DI-4: "Coming back was so nice, seeing my colleagues, the other English teachers." Summarizing these positive feelings, teacher DI-4's body map symbolized face-to-face school interactions as a body standing strong and firm, depicted in the color green to represent life as constant change, with change being normal, reflecting that regardless of difficult and uncertain times during the pandemic, "teachers and people in general must adapt, learn, live, and move forward" (Teacher DI-4). Negative feelings also emerged with the 2022 return to school. All study participants struggled to balance their teaching with administrative tasks.

The readaptation process demanded that teachers complied with new health protocols for the first five months of the academic year. The rural schools where the teachers worked were in very hot locations, and public health protocols included wearing masks and not turning on fans. Teacher DI-1 indicated that "due to the protocols, teaching was very tedious, and the weather was very hot." Teacher DI-5 reflected:

> How do you conduct an activity where you can't have people talking face to face? How can I ensure that my students interact without risking contagion? How can I manage when they can't even see each other's mouths move because we're all wearing masks?

Teachers ended up suffering health problems, such as losing their voices due to having to shout in class so that students could hear them. Additionally, specific activities such as phonemic awareness became highly challenging. Teacher DI-1 stated it was very difficult and counterproductive "to spend the whole day wearing a mask and speaking to the kids or pronouncing words that you know the kids, especially in English, need to see [you articulate]."

All the teachers felt heavily overworked during 2022. There were multiple causes for this, including resuming face-to-face teaching, adapting daily routines, incorporating changes in educational policies with regards to planning and evaluation strategies, and undertaking vast loads of administrative responsibilities.

The teachers felt that educational needs and prioritized contents should have been the major focus on returning to face-to-face classes, yet this was not the case. Teacher DI-4 emphasized that "in the end, it seems like my administrative role was more important, and I am not an administrator.

This year, I felt like my pedagogical persona played a secondary role." All this overload resulted in general exhaustion for the teachers. This was physical, mental, and emotional in nature. Teacher DI-1 stated:

> During face-to-face classes, there were many criticisms, we felt uncertainty, we got sick, and all of that diminishes your confidence as teachers, which carries a very strong emotional burden, perhaps more so than the physical one, because we have always been accustomed to working very hard.

The fact that teachers experienced firsthand students' minds as blank was especially saddening and worrisome. Teacher DI-1 summarized:

> [I'm] worn out and tired. There comes a point, like now, when I'm just waiting for the holidays to come so I can rest for a couple of weeks and try to recharge my energy because, in terms of work, I've been feeling exhausted.

4. Final Considerations

In Costa Rica, the MEP struggled to find appropriate solutions to the challenges posed by the public health crisis, both during the pandemic (López-Estrada et al., 2022) and on returning to in-person education. Teachers felt an extra burden due to the decisions made by authorities, which were commonly perceived as sudden and confusing, incorporating drastic changes with insufficient support.

The MEP's educational management can be contrasted with school management, with the latter being characterized by principals working together with teachers to face the challenge of readapting to on-site classes. This study showed the support given teachers by their school administrators somewhat ameliorated the pressure derived from the MEP's abrupt changes, confusing guidelines, and requirements to submit extensive reports.

The pandemic highlighted a series of inequalities between rural Costa Rican students and their urban counterparts (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2023; Programa Estado de la Nación, 2021). Difficulties in accessing technological devices and internet connectivity made it challenging for teachers to maintain adequate communication with their students, accentuating learning lags that already existed due to factors preceding the public health crisis (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2021). This problem increased the need teachers felt to access varied resources when in-person classes resumed, yet many rural schools only had access to basic tools.

Teachers had no recourse but to exploit their own creativity, reusing and adapting materials created during the pandemic to review and reinforce key contents.

On a positive note, teachers found combining efforts with their peers helped them lower their workload. This companionship and teamwork were constant throughout the pandemic (Elizondo-Mejías et al., 2021; López-Estrada et al., 2022) and continued during the return to face-to-face classes, giving teachers support in readaptation processes and somewhat easing their workloads.

Reduced class time due to teachers working on administrative and extracurricular matters accentuated the educational lag caused by the public health crisis.

Furthermore, students' lack of educational competencies such as learning to learn, socializing, and working autonomously made the readaptation process more complicated for both teachers and students.

These elements, combined with requirements to comply with the public health protocols still in force, heightened the socioemotional problems that teachers had been experiencing since 2020: stress, anxiety, overwork, and a feeling of general exhaustion (Morales-Santillán, 2022). These health issues made the readaptation process more difficult and demotivated teachers in their efforts to overcome the effects of the pandemic in a key year.

The pandemic had multiple effects on the Costa Rican educational system during its outbreak, peak, and post-epidemic stages. Some of the problems that became visible during these years preceded the public health crisis and continued during the return to in-person education, including educational management being subject to abrupt and sometimes ambiguous decisions, inequalities between rural and urban areas, and the urgent need to improve access to educational and technological resources. During 2022, teachers underwent a difficult readaptation process, struggling against student's educational lag and lack of development of educational competencies, two main consequences of the pandemic that it will probably take many years to recover from. Further studies need to be carried out in this regard to explore the ongoing effects of the crisis on teachers and on students.

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