Teacher – work intensification and use of voice

Professor – intensificação do trabalho e o uso da voz

Delmira de Fraga e Karmann¹, Selma Lancman²

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Identify, using elementary school teacher’s reports, which conditions could affect, directly or indirectly, the vocal performance of these professionals, taking in account their work conditions. Methods: Research conducted with eight female teachers from São Paulo city public education system that participate in a focal group during five sessions. Triggers themes like the role of the teacher at the present time, violence and the teacher’s health were used. Sessions were recorded and transcribed. Content was analyzed and organized in categories and subcategories into four main themes: voice, work, violence and the inclusion of students with disabilities. Results: Teachers reported the need to speak frequently in order to: guarantee attention and results from work; elaborate behavioral and attitudinal issues; solve and negotiate daily conflicts; manage violence in classroom; control situations; calm down the students. Apart from the class itself, there is intense and continuous voice use. Screaming and loud talking were related to the need to overcome internal and external noises; the number of students; exert immediate control over an eventuality. The disorganization of the routine (constant interruptions) overloads teachers both mentally and physically. The inclusion of students with disabilities contributes to this problem. Conclusion: New regulation of the educational policies restructured the teacher’s labor, leading to an overload and hardening of the classroom work, undermining working conditions and interfering in your organization. The teacher is asked daily to an intense voice use to solve various situations - in addition to delivering the lesson - without possibility of resting and in adverse conditions that cause body and mind illness.

Keywords: Voice; Voice disorders; Faculty; Education; Occupational health

RESUMO

Objetivo: Identificar, por meio de relatos de professores do Ensino Fundamental, condições que interferem, direta ou indiretamente, no seu desempenho vocal e nas circunstâncias do seu trabalho. Métodos: Pesquisa realizada com oito professoras da rede municipal de ensino de São Paulo, em cinco sessões de grupo focal. Os temas disparadores foram: o que é ser professor/a na atualidade, violência e saúde dos professores. As sessões foram gravadas e transcritas, os conteúdos analisados e organizados em categorias e subcategorias, dentro de quatro tópicos: voz, trabalho, violência e inclusão escolar. Resultados: Os professores necessitam falar muito para garantir atenção e resultado do trabalho; trabalhar conteúdos comportamentais e atitudinais; resolver e negociar conflitos; administrar a violência na sala de aula; controlar situações e acalmar as crianças. Há uso intenso e contínuo da voz para outras situações, além da aula. “Gritar” e “falar alto” foram associados a competir com o ruído interno e externo à sala de aula, à quantidade de alunos e a exercer controle imediato sobre imprevisibilidades. A desorganização da rotina (interrupções constantes) sobrecarrega os professores, física e mentalmente. As crianças do programa de inclusão escolar acentuam esses problemas. Conclusão: A nova regulação das políticas educacionais reestruturou a atividade docente, sobrecarregando e intensificando seu trabalho, prefigurando condições laborais e interferindo na sua organização. O professor é solicitado cotidianamente ao uso intenso da voz para resolver situações distintas - além de ministrar a aula - sem possibilidade de descanso e em condições adversas, resultando no adoecimento do corpo e da mente.

Descritores: Voz, Distúrbios da voz; Docentes; Educação; Saúde do trabalhador
INTRODUCTION

For twenty years, the teachers of the city of São Paulo are seen to, in groups, by the speech-language sector at São Paulo’s Public Service Hospital. From these encounters we can discern various other dimensions to the work produced by these teachers, such as environmental and organizational factors that interfere on their voices. A forum to debate groups of people suffering from voice related disorders was instated through workshops promoted by GT-Voz of PUC-SP, and other institutions of similar purpose. These discussions had for effect the acknowledgement of vocal alterations due to strain caused by certain conditions in their work environment. In order to better understand the condition of their vocal production, a survey of the teachers from the city of São Paulo, was put together in the form of a questionnaire. An analysis of the results indicated possible environmental factors as contributors to these voice disorders such as possible accidents or the presence of chemical or ergonomic risks. Some of the data collected was more distinct than the rest; in an average of 35 to 40 students per class; 60% of the subject teachers had or had had a insidious vocal disorder and only 38,6% of those had sought treatment. They evaluated the physical environment of their school as noisy and dusty with inefficient acoustics and of inadequate size. They considered their working areas to have substandard cleaning, done with products deemed to be irritatives and improper to an educational environment. With reference to general health, some of the complaints made by the subjects were headaches, anxiety disorders, back issues and allergies. Appertaining to vocal alteration symptoms, these teachers presented throat dryness, hoarseness, tiredness when talking, throat clearing and sore throat. Some of the more significant points discussed during this statistical analysis were the need to talk excessively or the habit of shouting during class. When it came to the work environment, the teachers complained not only of a stressful ambiance but also of a nerve-racking pace. They lacked the time to develop all the class activities while at the school, thus obliging them to take chores to their homes. They were forced to frequently carry heavy loads and carry out intense physical activities. In reference to work conditions a great majority of the teachers (80,9%) complained about factors that disrupted their personal life such as indiscipline, tagging, fights, property damages or aggressions.

A number of epidemiological studies on a national level have been carried out and have demonstrated the connection between health issues and the work conditions and organizational framework, especially in early childhood education and elementary schools. If we take a closer look at teachers from the city of São Paulo, we can observe that psychological and vocal disorders are the main causes of absences from the workplace. The teacher’s profession has been greatly studied by the area of speech as well as other areas, and yet they continue to fall ill, to face difficulties in leaving their place of work in order to get treatment and then to get sick once again after treatment. This suggests that vocal disorders in teachers has not been looked into sufficiently.

The objective of this research was to identify the conditions that directly or indirectly interfere with a teachers’ vocal capacity, provoked by their actual professional circumstances, via the testimonies of elementary school teachers. Thus allowing these circumstances to be considered during therapy and also to better understand work related vocal disorders.

METHODS

The article focus on the conditions surrounding use of a person’s voice in school and the teacher’s work. The research protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee in Research of the Faculty of Medicine, University of São Paulo (USP) (report 181/10) and by the Ethics Committee at the Public Service Hospital of the City of São Paulo (report 193/2010). We selected teachers with voice disorders from public schools of São Paulo, who spontaneously sought the assistance of the ENT Clinic, at the Public Service Hospital of São Paulo (HSPM) and were referred for evaluation to the Speech Sector of that hospital. The inclusion criteria for the survey were: to have undergone ENT and speech evaluation, to teach in Elementary School in the city of São Paulo, not to have undergone voice therapy at the hospital and to agree into signing an Informed Consent form (IC). The participants were excluded from the research if they were readapted or retired. None of those who agreed to participate withdrew from the program and all participants were informed of the objective of the research, the voluntary character of the participation and the secrecy of the data.

The eight Elementary School teachers whom formed the group had an average age of forty-two years and six months. The youngest was thirty-two and the oldest was forty-nine. They have been teaching for eight to twenty-six years, six to twenty-four of those within the public education system. Six of them worked two shifts and the other two participants worked one. Five had taken medical leave voice disorder by the time of the survey and three had not taken any sick leave.

On prearranged dates, the resulting group formed, participated in five focus group sessions, in a room at the Hospital protected from noise. There we conducted a qualitative exploratory research with the participation of the moderator/researcher and an observer. Each focus group session lasted approximately an hour and a half.

The themes and questions that guided these five sessions are presented in Chart number 1.

All the sessions were recorded and transcribed. Based on data generated in the focus groups, we developed a category coding in order to identify general themes and subcategories. These general themes are different to the subcategories in the sense that they are what can be called “autonomous”. The subcategories...
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- more specific topics - deal with specific aspects related to broader settings. This does not entail that these subcategories do not relate to more than one general theme. It is an iterative, systematic and extensive process. The latter observes concepts, language, sentence structure, polarities or even continuums and insights of the participants. It also detects codes, contradictions and similarities among other aspects of the data\(^2\).

In the interest of writing a cohesive article, it was necessary to organize the data into four general themes. This is because the discussions between the participants were extensive and rich in each of the sessions. Thus, this article will only use two general themes: Voice and The teacher’s work.

### RESULTS

The participants developed many themes during these sessions. Some of these related to the classroom, to their professional performance, the conditions and organization of teaching. They talked about being a teacher in today’s times. They addressed the relations they had with their students, and with the students’ parents. Other themes developed during these discussions were the school management, their feelings, fears, anxieties, difficulties, etc. Yet, all of these themes were discussed maintaining a relation to the use of their voice, in order to allow us to look at the world from their point of view.

Although the trigger questions used were about violence in a school environment, and the participants were asked to comment on whether there was violence and what they considered violence was in their work context, the participants offered up, spontaneously, concerns relative to their work, as well as their mental and physical health - including voice.

#### A) Voice

1) As an instrument of labor.

(P6) [...] Sometimes you’ll spend the whole day shouting and when you’ve finished giving class you’ve accomplished something. There will be times that you’ll leave exhausted and with a headache but it’ll have been worth it. But, what when it isn’t?

2) Adverse conditions: overload and wear.

2.1. The need to talk excessively, to shout, and to use other resources:

(P3) [...] one of the biggest problems we encounter is the number of students we have in each class. When it rains or

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<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
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<th>Material</th>
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<td>What is it to be a teacher?</td>
<td>Create a group dynamic; Discuss the meaning of (their line of) work.</td>
<td>They were asked to answer the following: 1º Why did you choose to be a teacher? With the line of debate: 2º What is it like to be a teacher nowadays? After a few comments, the need to ask the following appeared: 3º What is good about the School?</td>
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<td>Does violence between students affect your work?</td>
<td>Understand what they describe as violence. Take notes on how they react to this subject, how they feel about it and how it interferes in their line of work.</td>
<td>They were asked to answer the following: If there is violence, what is violence in a School environment to you? Is there any violence directed toward teachers? What is it like to work under these conditions? Comment: Teachers are ashamed to admit to the violence they suffer. They were asked to reflect upon the reaction towards the aggression of a school teacher for the next session.</td>
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<td>How does a students’ aggressive behavior towards a teacher, affect the latter?</td>
<td>Take notes on how they react in these types of situations, how they feel about it and how it interferes in their line of work.</td>
<td>We talked about the question that was put to the participants at the end of the last session: How does this affect the other teachers even if they weren’t directly affected by the aggression?</td>
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<td>If there is violence between the educational staff, how it affect you? (this suggestion was not followed through as it didn’t apply to this group)</td>
<td>Investigate if the work organization interferes in the relationship between the School staff (inserted in other debates)</td>
<td>Reading of passages from studies on Bullying. Thus, presenting data in order to clarify themes previously brought up by the participants.</td>
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<td>Have you noticed any repercussions on your health or your voice due to some type of violence?</td>
<td>Understand how they define the various attributes of violence and its connection to Health. Investigate if these issues are related to their voice disorders?</td>
<td>Reading of passages from an essay called “Histórias que fazem sentido” (stories that make sense) containing teachers reports on the subject. (material in annex).</td>
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- Chart 1. Summary of issues and material of each focus group session

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when there’s a special event and you see that a lot of pupils are absent... when there are only 24, 26... then Wow, on days when there are only twenty something of them, well, I don’t need to shout, I don’t need to speak loudly, you know what I mean? I can speak freely. If I say Guys... Class. They stop, and they look at me. But, on days when there are thirty-five or thirty-six... (With a weak and discouraged voice) there is no possible way.

2.2. Unpredictability in the class room:

(P3) I sometimes feel like one of those pressure meters that doctors use, [...]. Suddenly, it’s low and suddenly “boom”, its shoots right up, why? All of a sudden the room is quiet, and then... without notice... you’re forced to explode, to shout, to slam your fist on the table. We are not exempt [...] from having a psychiatric problem, a stroke [...] [3]

2.3. Voice disorders and the sense of impotency when faced with adversities:

(P6) There are times, when you have a classroom that’s so difficult, so difficult, that all you propose is left unfinished, truncated (verbal agreements: yes, yes, yes).

3) The sickening process

3.1. The paradox: to work with or without your voice:

(P2) I’ve often worked after I’ve lost my voice because I didn’t want to be absent... I was worried about my students. Even just to come here is a hard task. To think… that I must come here, wondering if there isn’t another way to look after this? I’ve listened to a lot of friends, more experienced colleagues of mine who tell me to – “Go, don’t miss it” [...]

3.2. Voice disorders and tensions/emotions:

(P1) A teacher must learn to recognize when their thermometer is rising, in order to not reach a level where they might harm a student. So, you’re there, while a boy keeps pestering everything, so you tell him to “Stop”, “Stop”. It’s almost as if the more you ask him to stop the more he pokes at you, isn’t it? So, you have to know that your thermometer will rise, don’t you? You have to take action, so you go and take a pill from your desk…

3.3. Forsaking the idea of looking after oneself and frustration:

(P2) It has been three years that I’ve been experiencing issues with my voice. Since the year before last my voice... has been like this. This is the voice that I have acquired. I never get well. Not even on my holidays, funny enough. It really is an immense sense of exhaustion, a great stress. All because we have been given many tasks, sometimes these aren’t even within our obligations and yet they are tasks that are brought within our classrooms…

4) Violence

4.1. Physical and emotional reactions to violence:

(P2) (when a teacher is attacked by a student) [...] we become outraged, we talk. Just venting, but it is fear, an inherent fear in colleagues and within the person who is suffering violence directly. The outrage and silence [...] we see ourselves this way ... lonely, in relation to this issue of violence.

B) The work of a teacher

1) Work conditions

1.1. Physical structure, material and human resources:

(P1) [...] The teacher, beyond anything else, needs to worry about not having anyone [...] to supervise you [...] Now when you have special needs children [...] You go seek help from administration, that person that’s supposed to guide you in the classroom: “Ah, pretend that you are no longer hearing their cries”, “after a while you’ll internalize this,” “you will no longer hear the screams of that child, don’t worry “... you go seek their advice in order to work better and not to pretend that the special needs student in your class isn’t there. After all, he’s a child, a human being, and he is your student. You end up feeling lost, alone to deal with all of this.

1.2. Violence, conditions and organization of schools:

(P4) [...] the time and space of schools encourages violence. There are so many children, you can’t blame the inspector. A lot of them have had to change jobs due to illness or are elderly. There are so few adults for so many children and they all come out of class at the same time. The school encourages it. It’s so much noise, the children don’t have time to eat, one wants to run, the other wishes to play. Time is short, and if you disconsider the time they need to go to the bathroom, the children have at most 15min of time to manage. The lunch queue is gigantic, so they don’t know whether to eat or to play. So many classes are freed at the same time that the teachers can’t handle it, the space favours the noise and there aren’t enough tables for them to eat at, they sit together cramped, another student will come running by and spill their milk and then the first student will hit him because “he spilt it all over me”. The school’s way to operate encourages violence. They then go up agitated and it’s your job to calm everything down. Not to mention everything in that room is an assault: the classroom is poorly lit, the blackboard... children cannot see it because it is horrible and then they yell at their colleagues: “hey, sit down. I can’t see anything.” There’s the student that thinks they have to sit in another place, because the light reflection interferes with their view. They sit down and are insulted. “You’re taking liberties”. The child is called a shirker because they sat in front of another child... And then (slaps in the air, as if someone’s head in front).

2) Work organization

2.1. Intensification/ Overload of the workload:

(P3) [...] if a patient at a hospital is sick, and that disease doesn’t have a cure, or the patient dies, no one goes to the doctor, or the nurse and tells them “You must heal them, you need to make him live”. However in schools it’s the case: you need to be disciplined in class, you need to dominate your class, you must alphabetize your students, and so forth...

2.2. Depreciation of the profession:

(P2) [...] as a professional, teachers are not recognized by society. That’s why they do this to us, all of this within the school vicinity, [...] a specific policy for special needs children
is elaborated, but it’s often not put into action, so they send the students to classes without the necessary infrastructure. The impression this gives off is that: “Ah, anyone can give him/her classes” and that’s just not true. It demands specific competences, we need to study and be trained.

(P6) The famous question: do we work or do we just give class?

2.3. Management problems in the classroom:

(P5) [...] he has to take care of everything, if he fails he is incompetent. A teacher that requests the help of a supervisor to solve things, or asks for the assistance of an inspector, is deemed as incompetent in managing his classroom. [...] So, the teacher cracks and sends the child out of the room, then: “he has already sent one out of the room... you see: he can’t deal with them”

(P2) [...] If you have a student that looks for trouble, who is aggressive, then it’s your fault. You’re not doing your job properly.

2.4. Work relationships:

(P4) [...] (As a result of a leave of absence due to medical treatment) I was threatened... I arrived at the secretaries’ office where she told me “I’ve already sent a copy of your punching in slip to the head office”, [...]. I’ve already sent a copy of your punching in slip to human resources. [...] “because you have a class of 1º years and you’re hindering the students”. Here again because the school was very problematic and the headmaster was never around. And she really sent it, It wasn’t just a threat [...].

Expressions such as “talk a lot” and “talk so much” were recurrently present within the opinions given by the participants, and as such were related to learning activities such as calling the attention of children. To put it in a nutshell, the extensive use of their voice was mainly used to work with unacceptable behavior or attitudes within a class, as well as maintaining discipline and control. The participants highlighted the need to resolve conflicts that occur in the classroom on a daily basis, especially after breaks. Furthermore, these altercations could take up to fifteen minutes of class time.

In this research, the “speaking loudly”, “screaming” and “shouting” were associated with the number of students in the classroom, for 35-40 students significantly increase noise and indiscipline. It can be observed that, for these and other events, class time is reduced. However, the delivery of content needs to be guaranteed, expressing therefore the intensification of teachers’ work and use of his voice.

For the participants of this study, there is a need to talk excessively to achieve their roles as educators. Often, propelled by work situations, teachers overlap tasks while giving class, maintaining discipline, attending students individually and worrying about the children of the school inclusion program, indicating the intensification of labor, which may explain the physical, vocal and mental fatigue of teachers. Virtually, there is no vocal rest between activities.

We could observe in this study that even maintaining the intensity lower voice in the classroom has a cost, a wear, because the teacher’s attempt to keep calm, slow voice - to exemplify non-violence - is very difficult, although one of them noticed that in educational terms, you get better results.

As teachers realize the difficulties they are having with their voice, they try to control themselves: to not speak up, not to talk too much, not to shout... but they invariably push the boundaries and shout to hold the attention of the class. They were unanimous in stating that the instrument used when teachers have to exercise immediate control in critical situations is the use of a loud voice or to shout.

The negative bodily – thus also vocal – outcomes that emerge from extreme, critical situations, such as when a chair is thrown against the wall, were told with agony. They have reported difficulty to catch their breath, and assume a rhythm, coordination and reasoning after this kind of episode. Every time there is a need of intense vocal effort, soon after, comes the need to adjust breathing and voice. Teachers must find calm and to resume teaching. All this happens very fast, because they need to dominate the room and continue the lesson somehow.

One aspect that stood out, as it intensifies the need to speak loudly in stressful conditions and often attaches itself to undisciplined continuous classes, was the impossibility of organizing a routine. This is due to the constant interruptions such as reprimands, interference due to fights, guidance in situations of bullying, the need to include all students within the task, among other events.

Due to the fact that they have to use voice continuously with overlapping intentions and voice adjustments, teachers feel powerless in the face of adversity from the precarious environment and the way their work is organized. An example of this, is when a teacher needs to get the attention of a student, the class and seek to control someone. Teachers are burdened not only by tasks, but responsibilities such as restoring order, security and rights of children in front of an institution that does not provide what is necessary.

It was found that there is a lack of staff in schools, including teachers, generating a series of administrative and organizational situations, which make teachers feel responsible for their students and for all that relates to them: progress or failure, good or bad behaviors, accidents, have class or not, among other aspects.

The difficulties reported by teachers of the present research, with regard to being absent from the classroom for treatment appear to be directly related to that sense of responsibility. They often have worked voiceless, not missing class, as they are worried about their students. It was observed, during their speech, a feeling of guilt from being absent from school, apparently feeling as if they are letting down their students, the parents of these students and the school.
It was noted that there is a process of naturalization of the sickening process: every teacher accepts that they’ll get hoarse for a day, for two days a week and so progressively.

The teachers commented on the existence of many people in schools with voice issues that have never sought treatment. Others who were treated and had improved, gone back to work, had got sick again and did not want further treatment. Some with bad voices, according to them, but there is the fear of going to the doctor and be asked to rethink their functions. The readaptation is a source of great shame and suffering for the teachers.

The participants of the focus group, included in this study, have worked for many years in the public education system of the city of São Paulo and have already worked in several schools. Therefore, the discussions covered the conditions and work organization in locations much larger than the schools where they were currently working at.

When talking about the physical structure, material and human resources of schools, these conversations exposed the feeling of abandonment and despair felt in their workplaces.

The participants also mentioned that the lack of staff, support staff and teachers, significantly interferes with the functioning of schools, as well as the relations between people from the school environment and the community. Thus, primarily affecting the teaching work.

They reported that, when faced with unexpected events, or when there are overlapping tasks, i.e., in emergency situations, the teachers answer is to find the quickest solution. This condition is unfavorable to the development of strategies that protect their own health, for example, avoid vocal abuse.

The emotion surfaced regularly in their statements as if the teachers were still carrying those feelings and sensations experienced in moments of strong emotional intensity. Sometimes their speeches gave the impression that there was no border to the work of teachers.

Despite all the efforts made to account for their multiple responsibilities, the devaluation of the teaching profession by society, the school management, parents and students, leads to situations of disrespect, threats to teachers by parents, beatings and other verbal aggressions.

The teachers of this research developed various strategies to deal with situations of everyday life, for example, “to know how to speak with more aggressive parents”, “know when to stop the conversation before being attacked”; hold the children at a distance by their clothes, in order to separate fights; ignore certain provocative attitudes, among others.

In all reported cases, the responsibility always lies with the teacher; either because he did not give advice before and they feel he should have done so or because he did interfere in time or had a weak attitude.

The guilt seemed rooted in participant teachers. Their speeches reveal a state of constant attention, as if they were constantly on alert, waiting for the unusual so they should be able to restore order at any time.

When the groups discussed the theme of violence, the issue inclusion of children with special needs frequently came up; a subject that arouses mixed feelings in these teachers. Although they accept these issues as a challenge, as an opportunity to grow as a teacher, they are hampered by the lack of all kinds of resources. The schools offer no courses, no auxiliary or preparation and yet teachers have to absorb many responsibilities and account for the service / education of these children.

There were several statements made on the subject and the general impression was that school inclusion in its current state, is a violence towards teachers and their work. It generates intense suffering, overload, fear and distress, all because of behaviors which the teachers are not prepared to address, neither have chosen, have been consulted nor have been given the chance to decide about. In sum, we discovered, that the teachers surveyed need to reinvent themselves every day, trying to mold their trade all the while holding themselves in a delicate balance between health and illness, including voice disorders.

DISCUSSION

The participants of this study reported using their voice intensively to “scream”, or “speak” in a loud manner. They use their voice in this fashion as: a long-term resource, to ensure learning; as a medium-term resource, to work procedures and attitudes they want to change, as indiscipline, bullying, prejudice and aggressive attitudes among other things. Teachers must use their voice in these ways, in a short-term resource, to account for situations that require immediate control or urgent interference, such as fights or some sort of danger.

In the 2010 study(13), a multiple regression analysis, correlation was made between hoarseness and lack of intake of water, screaming/loud talking, mandibular opening and sleeping, equaling an average of six hours per night. The authors also verified the association between vocal fatigue and shouting/speaking loudly, talking excessively, the difficulty to open the mouth to chew, sleeping less than six hours per night.

The amount of speech and high vocal intensity are related to benign lesion of the mucosa, such as polyps, nodules, ecstasias and bleedings. These lesions are usually found in voice professionals. It is important to understand how these two aspects relate to the professional use of voice and in everyday use, while taking into consideration the individual variations. In studies with accompanied by voice professionals, it was noted that there was a far greater use of their voice in a professional setting than outside work(14).

Early childhood education and Elementary School teachers have a greater involvement with students. They have a tendency to talk loudly more often, resulting in excessive increase in muscle tension in the neck as well as a greater number of vocal symptoms that lead to voice disorder(15).

A study on vocal hyper requirement - a set of strategies with specific vocal adjustments, as emphasize some sounds,
changes in usual vocal quality, repetitions and singing voice - shows that are a set of vocal behaviors deleterious, potentially related to disease and relapse frame of voice disorder, although considered teaching resources\textsuperscript{(16)}. These use of their voice is associated with understanding and reinforcing content, control discipline, transferring and fixing content, among other resources in the classroom.

The classroom suffers multiple and complex interference, characterized by “multidimensionality, simultaneity of events, unpredictability, immediacy and uniqueness” (p.64)\textsuperscript{(17)}, requiring that the teacher, make decisions, facing demands and interests that compete and contradict. It is a dynamic process that requires a balance between costs and multiple benefits because, in general, the teacher has to respond immediately to situations.

Studies indicated higher prevalence of hoarseness in teachers who have been teaching for less than 15 years. Also, the number of students in the classroom has proved to be a potential risk factor for vocal health\textsuperscript{(18)}.

In schools across the City, we can observe noise levels above the threshold of acoustic comfort by the standards stated by the noise control act\textsuperscript{(19)} and it is well known that the teacher is left to make himself heard over the noise, which has strenuous effects on their voice. The impact of continuous ambient noise on teachers’ voices, can cause wear, producing vocal disorder. Never the less, we are unable to establish a direct correlation between the occurrence of excessive raised voices and the level of background noise\textsuperscript{(20)}.

Scholars who have analyzed teachers in the classroom, describe that after several attempts to separate fights between students in order to establish the necessary climate for teaching, seem to give up and “switch off”, ignoring indiscipline: “the apparent shutdown is a manifestation of suffering they are caused, in a situation that would exhaust their energy”\textsuperscript{(21)}.

The intensification of the teacher’s workload has requires them to multi-task that compete and interfere in the core of their profession, i.e. teaching\textsuperscript{(22)}.

As for being absent from work to get treatment, teachers are reluctant because, they seem to be afraid that the doctor will suggest procedures, and/or recommendations to reduce the use of their voice at work. He might even ask them to stop working altogether, or even to change occupancy\textsuperscript{(23)}.

The voice is a powerful instrument of the educator. Without it, your job is cut short, limited or even prevented, not to mention the voice, through its inflection, provides brightness, color, and gives life to emissions. It seems illogical to conceive that a teacher can work in a classroom with their students without a voice - common complaint among teachers - reinforced by the difficulties and every kind of hindrance that comes with being absent from school.

Hoarseness, voice failure, aphony and difficulty to speak louder are vocal alterations that interfere with teachers’ satisfaction, in their performance and in their attendance, which cause 20% of absenteeism\textsuperscript{(23)}.

An individual is represented physically, emotionally by the sound of his or her voice. A person’s voice can also demonstrate the socio-cultural background of that person. Accordingly, the participants in the focus groups, reported that various emotions and feelings such as fear, frustration, insecurity, stress, constant alertness, anger, need for control and powerlessness were common in interpersonal communication established in school.

An investigation into the early childhood education and Elementary School teachers’ voices and psychosocial conditions of work, with 282 subjects, held in 2010 in Spain, found that the individuals of the group who presented voice disorders were exposed to worse psychosocial conditions, then those who did not had a voice disorder\textsuperscript{(15)}.

In this study, twenty-one of dimensions were studied and out of these twenty-one dimension, the group with voice disorders was affected by twenty of them: necessity to pay constant attention at work; requirement to hide emotions, do not take problems home; realize how emotionally draining work is, the sensation that situations are emotionally exhausting, incapacity to leave the workplace momentarily, have no influence on their work – no right to give an opinion; tasks are ambiguous or contradictory, not knowing exactly their role at work, have no predictability at work, do not rely on colleagues to hear them, do not rely on supervisors to listen to them, not noticing the assistance of supervisors; judge that supervisors never solve problems appropriately, little or no evolution in wages, not feel recognized for leadership and not be upheld in controversial situations\textsuperscript{(15)}. It is noteworthy that the teachers in this research have also reported these adverse conditions.

Teachers with voice disorders have more than twice expressed dissatisfaction with working conditions and the working environment than those who have no voice disorder\textsuperscript{(15)}.

Education has suffered the consequences of a new regulation of educational policies in Latin America. This has in turn, restructured teaching via significant changes in school management and the conditions in which teaching takes place. This can be observed by the centrality attributed to the school administration reform programs. In other words, the school is seen as the core of planning and management, the per capita funding, the regularity and expansion of national examinations, as well as, the evaluation and the institutional mechanisms for managing school, with community participation. Furthermore, predicate adjustments according to criteria of productivity, efficiency and excellence. It had greatly interfered in relations of work within the school, in procedures for career development and the evolution in teachers’ remuneration\textsuperscript{(24)}.

In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All put forward a guide for the poorest and most populous countries in the world. Within this proposal, they strived for education with social equity, which resulted in creating strategies to increase the level of public service, but with little investment\textsuperscript{(25)}. As a consequence, the minimalist of public investment on education, was precarious to Elementary School\textsuperscript{(26)}.
In this reform, two orientations are essential: financial decentralization and educational decentralization. The educational decentralization results in the collective development of the pedagogical project by the educational establishment. From a teacher’s viewpoint, work overload caused by the restructuring of educational system, has led to greater teacher accountability and greater community involvement[25-27].

It creates the illusion that it is necessary to reform education and attaches itself to the teacher a decisive role in achieving the quality of public education, blaming him for the endless amount of educational problems and, finally, by condemning the precarious conditions of public education that we face especially drastic in poor countries[26]

Teachers are “considered to be primarily responsible for student performance, the school and the system,” and with the different functions that the school takes, “they often find themselves faced with the need to respond to the demands that are beyond their training”[24,27].

Thus, it is possible to understand the discourse led by the teachers participating in this research, when they claim that “everything is the teacher” in the school, he barely arrives at the school and is already working, it seems that the school only works through the labor of the teaching staff. It is because of this and the lack of sufficient staff – under hiring and leave of absence due to illness - that the teachers find it difficult to be absent. Other important aspect is that the social inclusion without any preparation is not feasible in this context.

The discussion of the low salaries of teachers as a general global trend of precarious employment should also be considered[25]. It is evidence of the precarious nature of teaching and another factor being the high number of students per teacher at all levels of schooling. Together, these factors increase the rate of exploitation of our educators, especially in view of the intensification of work to be done in the same time[26]; joined with negligible investments in different levels of education; loss of rights; financial resources for schools and teachers linked to results obtained in the evaluation of their students[28].

You can assess the precariousness of work through health workers, and studies on Latin America, this is especially true in the teaching profession[24,25].

There are a number of situations, concealed in this new attitude taken by the school towards the community. One of these is the feeling of deprofessionalization and loss of professional identity of the educator. The latter finds himself assuming functions that do not comply to his qualifications, such as organizing sports competitions, or meeting the need for recreation in the region where the school is located, among others[28].

The school management - new assignment to teachers[24-28] - is far from the democratization of work organization and restricted to a work overload[25,27], to the extent that teachers have no autonomy and no interference in the design and organization of work[28].

In sum, we may conclude that “Versatility, voluntarism, de-professionalization, disqualification, creativity in a precarious context, these words refer to a phenomenon that is not unique to education. This reveals that although teaching cannot be truly submitted to a capitalist organization of labor, changes in general labor (productive labor) affect the activity of teachers. [...] ongoing a real restructuring of the work of the category, whose main brand is the labor precarization and employment relations in teaching [...]”[28].

It has been observed in various situations described in the focus groups, that “teachers feel obliged to perform duties that are beyond their technical and human capabilities [...] teachers are embarrassed into seeking answers to these demands” (p.213)[28].

The intensification of work load assumes characteristics of Latin American reality today, namely: the expansion of working hours within the school where he or she works; the considerable increase in responsibilities; frequent dislocations, not find time to study or prepare classes. Teachers are forced to take work home and meet community requirements. They feel forced to master new practices, acquire new knowledge and new skills, taking them as new natural and indispensable[28,29] thereby losing their autonomy and the control of their own work process[29].

One of the participants of this research, named the reform that occurred in education and its consequences, as a silent violence towards teachers. The other participants readily agreed. They believe that, in his utterance, are all behaviors and requests to teachers by society, students, parents’ students, staff and administration of the schools and that make them no personality and disqualified[28,29] in their roles as educators.

In their comment, the teachers expressed all aspects previously presented in very clear ways, pointing out various situations as oppressive, restrictive, invasive and very distressing. There was an overflow in the legal stature of teaching. The teacher’s work is no longer confined to classroom, but now extends to the community, school management, educational planning, among other functions. These assignments promote deleterious health effects in teachers, because this model of mass education, deregulation and redefinition of tasks, makes educators lose track of what a “good job” is[27].

There are contradictions between global assistance to the students versus the lack of means, as this process requires that the teacher work more, mobilizing extra resources in order to be aware of two concurrent tasks[28]. Here again, teachers are required to develop relational skills to deal with parents, students, and the community with the objective to mediate situations of violence in schools and those that affect the school[27].

Teachers deal with overlapping tasks, pushing their bodies over the limit - including their voice disorders[21] - exposure to various sources of noise; not having control over their work[29]; do a job against his or her will, constantly, and tasks that require effort; doubled workload - recalling that, concomitantly, the number of teachers has decreased - are just some of the indicators of the process of work intensification and risks to physical and mental health[27].
CONCLUSION

The new regulation of the educational policies restructured the teacher’s labor, leading to an overload and hardening of the classroom work, undermining working conditions and interfering in your organization. Teacher is asked daily to an intense voice use to solve various situations - in addition to delivering the lesson - without possibility of resting and in adverse conditions that cause body and mind illness.

REFERENCES