

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR TEACHING READING AND WRITING: ITEM CONSTRUCTION AND AGREEMENT AMONG JUDGES

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Abstract

Introduction: The number of students with literacy problems is growing in the Brazilian educational context, and one possible explanation for this exponential growth is the lack of literacy methods that emphasize teaching the alphabetic principle. **Aims:** describe the development of the Alfassilabando Educational Program to students from 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades of Elementary School and present the preliminar findings of validity. **Materials and methods:** This research was developed in two phases. Phase 1 focused on elaboration of items and criteria and Phase 2 focused validation by judgment of specialists. **Results:** The development of items and criteria for the Alfassilabando Educational Program for students with learning disabilities in grades 1-3 of Elementary School was possible through a review of national and international literature, which enabled the development of a program composed of five modules, with 18 activities distributed across four sessions. Content validation of the Alfassilabando Educational Program revealed moderate to poor agreement that only a pilot study could help in readjusting the instructions and the stimuli number in the program's activities. **Conclusion:** The Alfassilabando Educational Program can contribute to the development of reading and writing skills for students with learning disabilities of Elementary School.

Keywords: *Learning, syllabic approach, learning difficulties, literacy.*

1. Introduction

According to data released by INEP (Brazil, 2024), the results obtained by students demonstrated a serious and worrying situation regarding the performance of students in Basic Education, since more than 50% did not reach the expected level for the school year in relation to Portuguese Language and Mathematics skills, resulting in deficits in their development. More specifically, second-grade students in elementary school showed a lag in reading, implying a low level of text comprehension and difficulty decoding simple words. Another relevant finding was the comparison with previous editions, where the 2021 data demonstrated an accumulation of lag in reading fluency, reading comprehension, and logical-mathematical reasoning skills.

The data presented refers to the year 2021, because the data from the 2023 INEP report has not yet been released. However, it is important to emphasize that, although the context of the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the development of reading and writing skills, especially for knowledge of the alphabet, metaphonological skills, and reading and writing skills, the delay in acquiring these skills was already evident before the pandemic (Santana, Capellini & Germano, 2022). This means that the number of students with literacy problems is growing in the Brazilian educational context, and one possible explanation for this exponential growth is the lack of literacy methods that emphasize teaching the alphabetic principle.

The lack of use of literacy methods based on scientific evidence means that the gaps generated in literacy hinder the development of basic skills necessary for reading, which allow the recognition of words and the development of comprehension, and this will have a negative impact on the teaching-learning process (Oliveira, Santos & Capellini, 2023).

Among the literacy methods based on scientific evidence, the phonics method and the multisensory method stand out for teaching reading and writing (Bowers & Ramsdell, 2023; Goldstein et al., 2017; McArthur et al., 2018). However, it is important to emphasize that being guided by scientific evidence is not about choosing a method, but rather proposing that the strategies used for teaching reading and writing be based on consistent scientific findings, as described by Snowling and Hulme (2013). Therefore, considering the use of methods that utilize the syllable as the initial basis of the literacy process would be

very appropriate, especially in countries that have more transparency than opacity in their writing system, such as Brazilian Portuguese.

This is because the syllable constitutes a fundamental structure for phonological knowledge (Alves, 2017) and, therefore, is a grammatical unit that structures phonological knowledge (Freitas & Santos, 2001), that is, metaphonological ability fulfills the function of guiding the capacity to identify the segmentation of words into syllables and sound segments, and consequently the letter, for the establishment of the letter-sound relationship.

Based on the above, this work is justified by the need to develop supplementary educational material for literacy that includes multiple teaching strategies, organized in a way that promotes access and retention of different student profiles in the literacy process. Thus, the aim is to offer a pedagogical alternative that uses a syllabic, phonic, and multisensory approach for the systematic, instructional, and structured teaching of reading and writing.

2. Objective

The objective of this study was to describe the development of the Alfassilabando Educational Program to students from 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades of Elementary School and present the preliminar findings of validity.

3. Methods

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences of the São Paulo State University “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” - FFC/UNESP - Marília-SP, under number 88225625.0.0000.5406.

This research was developed in two phases, with phase 1 focused on constructing the items and criteria of the Alfassilabando Educational Program for students in the 1st to 3rd years of Elementary School I with learning difficulties, and phase 2 focused on validating the content of the Alfassilabando Educational Program through consultation with specialists.

Phase 1 of the study was developed based on the following question: "What are the most commonly used literacy strategies and methods?" The databases chosen for the search of scientific articles were PubMed and SciELO, initially using the combination of keywords in English, "Reading", "literacy" and "children", and in Portuguese “dificuldades de aprendizagem”, “alfabetização” e “crianças”. The data collection covered a period of ten years, from 2015 to 2025, as the objective was to identify articles that answered the guiding question and addressed the theme established by the keywords.

In the first stage of screening, 369 articles were identified. After reading the titles and abstracts, a significant portion was excluded for not meeting the research criteria. Subsequently, the full texts of the remaining articles were read, resulting in the final selection of only five studies that actually addressed the proposed topic.

Based on the reading of these five texts, the Alfassilabando Educational Program for teaching reading and writing was developed using metaphonological multisensory skills of syllabic and phonemic manipulation associated with segmentation and spelling tasks for the development of reading and writing in students from the 1st to the 3rd year of literacy with learning difficulties.

In phase 2 of the study, the content of the Alfassilabando Educational Program was validated. Ten judges were consulted for this purpose: three pedagogues and seven speech therapists. The judges' role was to critically analyze whether the program's items were sufficient to intervene in reading and writing skills.

To measure the statistical agreement between the judges, Fleiss' Kappa statistical analysis was used for each aspect of the program developed, adopting a significance level of 0.05 (5%).

4. Results and discussion

Based on the linking of strategies with the use of letters and syllables for the formation of words for reading and writing in phase 1 of this study, the Alfassilabando Educational Program was composed of 5 Modules, distributed according to the five oral vowels (A-E-I-O-U). Each module consisted of 18 activities distributed over 4 meetings, with the last meeting dedicated to carrying out the learning verification activity, through the use of writing under word dictation.

The results of phase 1 of this study demonstrated that despite the limited number of systematic investigations on the syllabic method, there is evidence that the use of syllabic strategies is important for the development of reading and writing, since these strategies are present in most studies with the phonics and multisensory approach. Therefore, the use of syllabic instruction is a promising and fundamental alternative for promoting effective literacy.

This disparity in the number of studies found when comparing syllabic instruction with phonics and multisensory instruction highlights the need to reformulate pedagogical practices, even if not based exclusively on syllabic methods, but rather on the union between phonics, multisensory, and syllabic approaches, encouraging the adoption of strategies supported by scientific evidence and consistent with the principles of reading science, as proposed by the Alfassilabando Educational Program.

The results of phase 2 of this study showed that the analysis of the judges' agreement revealed variability in responses regarding the items related to the composition of the objectives, description of the activities, composition of the instructions, order of activities, total number of activities in the modules, number of stimuli per meeting and per module, also indicating this same variability in responses for the clarity of the category statement and for the number of items that make up the category, resulting in poor agreement.

When analyzing this judges' agreement, it is possible to observe that perhaps the readjustment of these items can be carried out after the pilot study, since only with the study of applicability will it be possible to reorganize the program, as these items that proved inconsistent in the judges' analysis may or may not be restructured depending on the responses of students with learning difficulties from the 1st to the 3rd years of Elementary School I.

We conclude this study with the perspective that the limitations of this study may become nonexistent after the pilot study is carried out, since any possible doubts about the suitability of the Alfassilabando Program will be resolved through its applicability.

5. Conclusion

The development of items and criteria for the Alfassilabando Educational Program for students in grades 1 through 3 of Elementary School I with learning difficulties was made possible through a review of national and international literature, which allowed for the creation of a program composed of 5 modules, with 18 activities distributed across 4 meetings.

The content validation of the Alfassilabando Educational Program through consultation with experts revealed moderate to poor agreement, suggesting that only conducting a pilot study will help in readjusting the instructions and the number of stimuli in the program's activities.

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