

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE: INTERVENTIONS WITH PROFESSIONALS ON SEX EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to report a practical experience in School Psychology at a public school in the city of João Pessoa. It is anchored in the assumptions of Vigotski's Historical-Cultural approach, considering the psychologist as a mediator of relationships and knowledge. In a perspective of preventive and institutional action, the intervention was carried out by Psychology professionals together with teachers, tutors, and school teachers, and the focus was sex education, aiming to give them other possibilities on the theme in order to enable an adequate approach to the demands of the students. Experience has shown that training with school professionals has the potential to promote new reflections and possibilities for action in the classroom. In addition, it corroborated the perspective of the role of the psychology professional as a mediator of reflections, training processes, and changes in methodologies, even though there are obstacles and difficulties in this process.

Keywords: School Psychology; teacher training; sex education

Actuación en Psicología Escolar: Intervenciones con profesionales sobre Educación Sexual

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es relatar una experiencia de actuación en Psicología Escolar en una escuela pública de la ciudad de João Pessoa. Se ancla en los presupuestos del abordaje Histórico-Cultural de Vygotsky, considerando al psicólogo como mediador de relaciones y conocimientos. En una perspectiva de actuación preventiva e institucional, la intervención se realizó por profesionales de la Psicología junto a profesores, tutores y ministrantes de talleres de la escuela, y el enfoque fue la educación sexual, visando instrumentalizarlos sobre el tema para posibilitarlos a abordar adecuadamente las demandas de los niños. La experiencia apuntó que la formación con los profesionales de la escuela presenta un potencial de promover nuevas reflexiones y posibilidades de actuación en sala de clase. Además de eso, corroboró la perspectiva del papel del profesional de Psicología como mediador de las reflexiones, de los procesos formativos y de cambios en las metodologías, aunque en ese proceso haya barreras y dificultades.

Palabras clave: Psicología Escolar; formación de profesores; educación sexual

Atuação em psicologia escolar: intervenções com profissionais sobre educação sexual

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é relatar uma experiência da atuação em Psicologia Escolar em uma escola pública da cidade de João Pessoa. Ancora-se nos pressupostos da abordagem Histórico-Cultural de Vigotski, considerando o psicólogo como mediador das relações e dos conhecimentos. Em uma perspectiva de atuação preventiva e institucional, a intervenção foi realizada por profissionais da Psicologia junto a professores, tutores e oficineiros da escola, e o foco foi a educação sexual, visando instrumentalizá-los sobre o tema para possibilitar uma abordagem adequada às demandas das crianças. A experiência mostrou que a formação com os profissionais da escola tem o potencial de promover novas reflexões e possibilidades de atuação em sala de aula. Além disso, corroborou a perspectiva do papel do profissional de Psicologia como mediador das reflexões, dos processos formativos e de mudanças nas metodologias, ainda que nesse processo haja obstáculos e dificuldades.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Escolar; formação de professores; educação sexual

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INTRODUCTION

This is a report on an experience of educational psychology practice on the theme of sex education at a school of the municipal public education system in the city of João Pessoa, Paraíba. The kindergarten/elementary school operates full time. Such experience was a result of the necessity to approach the theme of sexuality with the school community, a demand which was observed in the everyday life activities of the school, since the children displayed behaviors, vocabulary, and produced drawings of sexual nature, regarding which most of the professionals working in the institution adopted a punishing attitude, while discriminating, stigmatizing, and approaching the issue from a religious point of view.

Sexuality is one of the transversal themes pointed out by the “Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais” (PCNs), or National Curriculum Parameters, to be approached at school, through all levels of education. According to the PCNs, the issues raised by the students must be approached by the school in a critical, reflexive, and educational way. Sexuality must be tackled in the pedagogical program by diverse areas of knowledge, not only regarding biological matters, but most importantly, regarding economic, political, cultural, social, and affection-related aspects (Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais [PCNs], 1997).

Furlanetto, Laueremann, Costa and Marin (2018) argue that the discriminating behavior of educational professionals regarding manifestations of sexuality by the students might be connected to a lack of professional qualification in order to deal with such issues. This scenario leads to the dissemination of pedagogical proposals based on heteronormative, hygienist, and religious conceptions. These authors also identified the predominance of studies with medical/informative approach, related exclusively to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, and no sex education activities for children in elementary school years (1st the 4th year) were identified. As a response to the demand observed in the school under assessment, two psychologists from the institution produced a proposal for action with the professionals in teaching activities (teachers, tutors, and workshop instructors). The objective was to work such issues from an institutional perspective, while shifting the focus away from the problem of the children and engaging other actors and the educational process.

Based on this practice, the psychologists adopted the premises of Vigotski’s cultural-historical approach, which privileges “a vision of man and society dialectically constituted in their historical and cultural relations” (Marinho-Araújo, 2010, p. 27) and considers the psychological mediation of social relations to be a tool

for promoting development (Vigotski, 2000). According to Petroni and Sousa (2014), this approach makes it possible to consider the psychologist as a mediator of relations, of possibilities of transformation and change, thanks to more self-awareness as a professional and awareness of others.

In accordance with this perspective, in the technical references for the practice of psychologists in elementary education, the “Conselho Federal de Psicologia” (CFP, 2013), or Federal Psychology Council, promotes contextualized and critical educational psychology in order to face negative situations which have become natural in the school context, while overcoming explanations that tend to blame students, family members, and teachers. The council highlights the contribution by psychologists as mediators in the strengthening of the role played by teachers as important agents in the teaching-learning process (CFP, 2013). Thus, literature in the field of educational psychology points at the necessity to work with diverse actors, and evolving from a clinical, healing-oriented focus towards a more preventive perspective, which aims to promote the development of all actors in the educational process (Dias, Patias, & Abaid, 2014; Marinho-Araújo, 2010; Valle, 2003).

In this context, the proposal of activities on sex education was executed in phases. The first phase was the discussion of the proposal with its target audience in the school’s general pedagogical meeting (once a month). This step was realized in order to discuss the actions, listen to contributions, and answer questions. Also, it was the moment to reach an agreement on the nature of activities and the timetable. Another objective was to get the professionals engaged in a process of reflection on the theme, considering the demand observed in the institution. Initially, there was resistance by a few members of the group, who seemed to be focused on the necessity to approach the theme only with the children and their families. In fact, that was a clear sign of resistance to approach the theme by educational professionals, and that is due to a lack of formation, according to Furlanetto et al. (2018).

The second phase was the realization of teacher training, conducted by the psychologists. Two meetings were realized one meeting with the kindergarten and first-year teachers, and another one with the teachers of the second and third years (classes in which the demand presented itself more intensely). In the third phase, a formation was realized with the tutors, also by means of two meetings: the first one, with the teachers of the kindergarten and the first year; and another one with the tutors for the second and third years. The fourth phase consisted of formation with the workshop instructors, and it also took place by means of two meetings. In the end, 6 meetings were realized, each

one lasting one hour.

In the other meetings, there was visual material, with slides and images, which was researched and produced by the psychologists themselves. This material dealt with the psychosexual development of children, with the presentation on the phases of development according to this approach. There was also a discussion concerning typical and atypical behaviors for each phase, and it was emphasized that some behaviors observed at the school were typical of development whereas others were not. There was a reflection on the possibilities for approaching sexuality themes with the students, acting therefore in a more preventive way (Marinho-Araújo, 2010).

There was also a discussion on the meaning of sexuality, in which it was understood as something that manifests itself from birth to death, by means of the incessant search for pleasure, of different forms at every phase of development. Thus, sexuality is interconnected with history, culture, affection, and the emotions of each individual. With this approach, the intention was to denaturalize the negative connotation attributed to the manifestations of sexuality by the children, while showing that it is a process for their whole lives, and it goes way beyond biological matters (PCNs, 1997). Concerning childhood, the process needs adequate approach by adults, not merely repression, thus overcoming the tendency to put the blame on students and their families (CFP, 2013).

At the end of every meeting, the participants shared their feelings concerning the importance of getting to know the aspects of child development in order to make the right decisions when it comes to mediating everyday-life situations at school. Some teachers considered the possibility of inserting into their pedagogical planning activities that made it possible for children to get to know and name parts of the body, which could be opportunities for discussing themes such as respect, consent, and affection. Concerning the difficulties and the realization of the activity, there seemed to be a consensus by the participants regarding the issue of time limitations as a real hindrance to a deeper debate. The meetings were realized during the work shifts of the professionals¹ and, due to the complexity of the school environment, it was not always possible to be on time

¹ So that the teachers could leave the classroom at the time the class and participate in the meetings, the tutors replaced the teachers in their respective classes before the general meeting (at a time when they would normally be at school but in contact with the team of specialists for planning and the class teacher for the time transition). the workshop instructors engaged in the Programa Mais Educação arrived before the normal time in order to participate in the two meetings. Search logistics was necessary, due to the impossibility to realize such activities at another time because most professionals worked for other institutions.

or extend the training sessions.

An assessment of the experience makes it evident that the meetings with the professionals, in addition to being a space for formation, also constituted a space for dialogue, collective action, and reflection towards a more preventive action that engages diverse actors of the educational process, as highlighted by the literature adopted in this study (Dias et al., 2014; Marinho-Araújo, 2010; Valle, 2003). It was possible to observe the construction of new meanings and guidelines for the situations experienced, according to what was discussed by Petroni and Sousa (2014). It was also possible to promote a perspective for reflection on the theme as prescribed by the PCNs (1997).

Such denaturalization, even though initial, of the issue of sexuality with educators provoked a few changes in previous concepts, and resulted in new directions for the comprehension of sexuality expressions as social and historical matters, while considering the subjectivity of the students and the premises of cultural historical psychology (Vigotski, 2000).

It is also important to emphasize the expression verbalized by the educators of the possibility for new forms or methodologies for approaching the theme, which shows that access to new information, to reflection, and to mediation brought on by the intervention of the psychologists had an impact on the ways to see other forms of action. That demonstrates the importance of mediation by psychology professionals, when it comes to providing students with a voice, promoting debate, and reconsidering everyday life matters from the point of view of reflection within a social and historical context that can produce an impact on institutional practices (Marinho-Araújo, 2010).

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