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STUDYING - ANALYSIS OF SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION IN BRAZILIAN JOURNALS

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ABSTRACT

Studying is an essential behavior for all students, as it potentially allows them to learn any content. This study aimed to analyze the production of the scientific community, published in Brazilian journals, about studying. Search words were inserted in the SciELO and PePSIC databases, which resulted in 82 selected studies. The information obtained concerns the authors, institutions, area of knowledge, theoretical approach, and type of research. Among the results, the following stand out: an increase in the number of publications since 2004; predominance of few research groups; little participation from the Education area; predominance of Cognitive Psychology; predominance of descriptive research; use of standardized instruments; predominance of Higher Education and the use of the classroom as a setting. It discusses the need for more intervention research, in addition to the greater participation of teachers who should be the main participants involved in the research.

Keywords: study habits; learning strategies; self-regulation

Estudiar – Análisis de la producción científica en periódicos brasileños

RESUMEN

Estudiar es un comportamiento esencial a todos los alumnos, pues, potencialmente, permite aprender cualquier contenido. En el presente estudio se tuvo como objetivo analizar la producción de la comunidad científica, relatada en periódicos brasileños, sobre el estudiar. Se utilizaron palabras de búsqueda, que se insirió en los bancos de datos de SciELO y PePSIC, se seleccionaron 82 estudios. Se obtuvo, entre otras, informaciones sobre autores, instituciones, área de conocimiento, abordaje teórico, tipo de investigación. Entre los resultados, se destacan: crecimiento de las publicaciones a partir de 2004; predominio de pocos grupos de investigación; poca participación del área de la Educación; dominancia de la Psicología Cognitiva; predominio de investigaciones descriptivas; utilización de instrumentos normatizados; predominio de la Enseñanza Universitaria y utilización de la sala de clase como *setting*. Se discute sobre la necesidad de más intervención, además de más participación de los profesores que deberían ser los principales participantes involucrados en las investigaciones.

Palabras clave: hábitos de estudio; estrategias de aprendizaje; autorregulación

Estudar – análise da produção científica em periódicos brasileiros

RESUMO

Estudar é um comportamento essencial para todos os alunos, pois, potencialmente, permite aprender qualquer conteúdo. O presente estudo teve como objetivo analisar a produção da comunidade científica, divulgada em periódicos brasileiros, sobre o estudar. Nas bases de dados SciELO e PePSIC foram inseridas palavras de busca, que resultou em 82 estudos selecionados. As informações obtidas dizem respeito aos autores, instituições, área de conhecimento, abordagem teórica e tipo de pesquisa. Dentre os resultados, destacam-se: crescimento das publicações a partir de 2004; predomínio de poucos grupos de pesquisa; pouca participação da área da Educação; dominância da Psicologia Cognitiva; predomínio de pesquisas descritivas; utilização de instrumentos padronizados; predomínio do Ensino Superior e utilização da sala de aula como *setting*. Discute-se sobre a necessidade de mais pesquisas de intervenção, além da maior participação dos professores que deveriam ser os principais participantes envolvidos nas pesquisas.

Palavras-chave: hábitos de estudos; estratégias da aprendizagem; autorregulação

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INTRODUCTION

The typical academic context in most Brazilian schools is made up of a cycle containing three moments: (1) the lessons, in which teachers usually present content; (2) individual study; (3) testing (usually involving written examinations). In this context, it is assumed that the student is able to study individually – as a requirement by some of the teachers, parents, or legal guardians – to access, obtain information from, or work on academic materials (books, publications, and notebooks) containing texts and exercises). Thus, it is possible to emphasize how important the role played by the school is in this context.

The acquisition of study skills is a valuable accomplishment. Students who actually know to study by themselves end up becoming their own teachers and possess the potential to learn any content (Velasco, 2016). However, despite its obvious importance in the means of communications and books available at bookstores (e.g., Castro, 2015), studying has been systematically ignored at schools, and in formal education. Such fact has multiple causes and that is what we will discuss in the following lines (Pergher, Colombini, Chamati, Figueiredo, & Camargo, 2012; Velasco, 2016).

Here is a summary of some of the causes, according to Cortegoso and Botomé (2002), and Velasco (2016): (a) the teachers are usually trained to merely pass along content and check out what was learned from their lessons, by offering exercises, texts, slide shows, videos, and other resources. In other words, they were not taught to study. There was no training concerning the offered materials; (b) in the formal curriculum, no discipline focuses on teaching how to study; (c) lack of preparation by the schools themselves; (d) mistakes related to the very nature of studying, such as: the belief that the way each student studies is an intrinsic (or innate) characteristic of each person. Such characteristics are not connected to environmental influences and that schools should limit themselves to providing students with opportunities to exercise their skills and that is all.

Based on the authors' position, it is possible to verify that studying for its own sake is not the target of formal education. Figueiral (2015) provides a critical complement by focusing on the perceptions of the meaning of studying throughout Brazilian formal education. The author explains that students go through three stages of school education. The first stage goes from the acquisition of literacy to the end of the fifth year of elementary school. The second one goes from the sixth year until the end of the ninth year. The last stage is high school.

In the first stage, the students are regarded as young apprentices who need constant, close monitoring by teachers, tutors, or assistant teachers planning and monitoring the accomplishment of tasks (focus on the acquisition and consolidation of reading, writing, and math skills). From the sixth year on, most teachers expect students to be already able to minimally organize themselves and conduct their own studies without the need for supervision, or protection by tutors or assistant teachers. At this level, the teacher is no longer supposed to approach the students in order to provide guidance. Rather, the students are expected to require answers from teachers whenever they have questions. In the third stage, students are expected to play an active role. They are also supposed to know how to study autonomously and process a considerable amount of content for university entrance tests without any external support whatsoever. According to Figueiral (2015), studying is only approached, if ever, in the beginning of the school process, and is scarcely emphasized later on.

Thus, it is possible to consider that some students might have learned how to study by means of this school process, by other means, or by themselves. However, a considerable segment of the students does not learn how to study. That is a factor that increases their risk of becoming marginalized in the formal schooling process. In the best-case scenario, part of these students gets referred to extra-curricular assistance with a focus on this kind of learning (out-of-office service, office therapy, psycho-pedagogy, hearing-and speech therapy, and other services), according to the prescriptions of literature on the great number of children and adolescents with complaints related to difficulty when it comes to study (cf. Marçal & Silva, 2006; Velasco, 2016).

Considering the importance of studying in the students' academic life, we ask the following question: what are the characteristics of Brazilian scientific production when it comes to studying?

The studies that assess the scientific production of one area are important because they might hint at aspects that need to be developed or, at least, reviewed. Such aspects include, for example, demonstrating how a discipline has evolved and what its future holds, solving dilemmas by pointing out the way to go, describing cultural, political, economic, intellectual, social, and personal aspects that might influence the methodology, conceptions, and values of a discipline. They also include validating and defending modern practices by demonstrating its consistencies regarding the discipline, and assessing current practices with a critical eye (Coleman, 1995; Botelho, Cunha, & Macedo, 2011).

Concerning the importance of review studies, we sought to find studies that focused on the assessment of scientific production on the act of studying. In an international journal, we found the study by Rosário et al. (2014), which approached the concept self-regulation in learning.

Rosário et al. (2014) realized a literature review between the years 2001 and 2011. They gathered 28 abstracts from Brazilian and international studies. The authors verified that there was an increase in the number of publications the theme after 2006. They also observed that 38% of the publications regarded the review on the concept of self-regulation by means of diverse theoretical approaches. 36% focused on the promotion of self-regulation (learning strategies and techniques – conceptual maps, for example; the effects of applied self-regulation programs – changes in motivation, observation of efficacy, faculty members' perceptions, and amplification of educational programs). 14% dealt with the evolution of self-regulation processes but provided little clarification of the concept, while the most common definition regarded self-regulation as "the activity of individuals who are agents of their own learning" (p. 793). No experimental study was found. The quasi-experimental studies featured non-validated tools and little solid psychometric data.

The authors demonstrated the need for more works in the educational field with a focus on the teaching of study skills by means of classroom interventions, for working on perceptions regarding the learned strategies, and for producing studies with more complex methodologies (i.e., repeated measurements, multi-level studies, transcultural studies) while assessing the effectiveness of different educational strategies for the classroom.

Once we have verified the scarcity of reviews in the scientific productions regarding the act of studying, with an absence of studies focusing on articles published in Brazilian journals, and considering the relevance of such repertoire for the academic life of students at different levels of education, we realized the present research work in order to assess national productions on studying.

METHOD

Selection of documents

The selected documents were abstracts from articles published in online national journals. Our selection was based on consultations the home pages of the following database portals: SciELO and PePSIC, regarded as the representative bases of Brazilian publications. The search in these portals for the indexation of national publications was started on May 08th, 2016, and finished on March 17th, 2017. No time limit was established for selecting material. The objective was to find the greatest possible amount of documents on studying.

The used terms were: "studying", "study behavior", "study habits", "the studying habit", "academic behavior", "academic repertoire", "study repertoire", "repertoire for studying", "self-government", "intellectual self-government", "study method", "method for studying", "study skills", "skills for studying", "academic skills", "study techniques", "techniques for studying" – in addition to all variations related to the plural forms of each word. Besides this strategy, intersections were realized: "self-government" X "studying", "self-government" X "study", "learning" X "learning", "learning" X "studying", "learning" X "study", "teaching" X "studying", "teaching" X "study", "attitude" X "studying", "attitude" X "study" – in addition to all variations related to the plural forms of each word.

The titles of all obtained publications were read. The reading included publications whose titles were in accordance with the objectives of the selected research works and their respective keywords. After a reading of the keywords from the selected publications, new terms were incorporated: "study strategy", "strategy for studying", "learning strategy", "strategy for learning", "learning techniques", "techniques for learning", "learning habit", "learning behavior", "learning method", "learning skill", "self-regulated learning", "self-regulation for learning" – in addition to all variations of the plural forms for each word. Oher intersections were realized: "behavior" X "learning", "self-government" X "learning", "self-government" X "learn", "method" X "learning", "learn" X "learning", "teaching" X "learning", "teaching" X "learn", "attitude" X "learn", "attitude" X "learning" – in addition to all variations of the plural forms of each word. With the use of these new terms, the search in the SciELO and PePSIC databases was completed.

A total sum of 872 abstracts from publications of the article type were obtained in PDF format. Repeated abstracts were excluded and 412 remained. The titles, summaries, and keywords from the 412 works were read in order to select the documents for assessment in the present study.

We excluded abstracts that did not focus on the act of studying itself, although it was mentioned, because their priority lied on other themes such as academic performance, motivational and emotional aspects, faculty formation, literacy, and so on. Others mentioned learning strategies for the workplace, by researchers, for example. The selection of abstracts that approached the studying activity, that is, the ones that theorized, described characteristics, provided instructions, or details on the act of studying, reached a total sum of 82 publications.

After reading the abstracts, we obtained the following information: year, author, affiliation, publication, area of study, theorical approach, and types of research. Regarding the types of research, based on the studies by Andery, Micheletto and Sério (2000), Gianfaldoni and Moroz (2002), Luna (2002), and Andery (2010), we identified research works that were descriptive (producing knowledge on events,

procedures, and techniques without the manipulation of variables), correlational (with a focus on identifying/measuring the relation between variables by using statistical parameters, and there is no intervention by researchers), experimental (with a focus on the study of the relation between variables, with the manipulation of 6 of them by the researchers, with control over group or single individual), non-experimental intervention (with a focus on intervention in order to produce changes in individuals, groups, and institutions, with no experimental control), conceptual (research works that presented reflections on studying; with three distinct classifications: theoretical conceptual, when it approaches concepts and theoretical assumptions; methodological conceptual, when it focuses on methodological procedures; and historical conceptual, when it deals with the evolution/development of concepts and theoretical assumptions). In addition, it was possible to identify the instruments for gathering data, the participants and their level of school education, and the setting.

RESULTADOS E DISCUSSÃO

Considering the 10 first Years (1993 to 2003) since the first Brazilian publication, it is possible to conclude that there was a scarcity of publications (a total sum of six). This fact might be linked to the very outline of the study. Its focus was on the location of articles from online portals, with the possibility for the existence of offline scientific productions, especially referring to the 1990s and before.

It was possible to verify, after 2004, an increase in the number of publications (average sum of 6.33 publications per year), which hints at the fact that studying became the systematic focus of the scientific community. By comparing the results of 2001 to 2011 with ones obtained by Rosário et al. (2014), it is possible to verify that the production found in the present study is more numerous. Rosário et al. (2014), in this period of 11 years, found 28 articles, whereas the present study located 53. Such results might be connected to the greater variation in search words (i.e., studying, study, studying behavior, in addition to terms related to learning self-regulation), because in the study by Rosário et al. (2014), the objective was to realize a review on learning self-regulation, a concept that was connected to studying in the present study, based on Coser (2009; 2013).

Concerning the authors that produced the most, Evely Boruchovitch was the greatest contributor, with 19 publications on studying (with and without co-authors). Two authors – Elis Regina da Costa (guided by Boruchovitch) and Leandro da Silva Almeida – presented five publications (with and without co-authors), and three authors – Sílvia Regina de Souza, Ana Lúcia Cortegoso and Acácia Aparecida Angeli dos Santos – presented four publications.

Below, Table 1 displays a synthesis of the results from other assessed aspects.

As we can observe in Table 1, the State University of Campinas produced the greatest number of publications (27%), followed by the State University of Londrina, with 17% of the publications. It is interesting to observe the participation of foreigners in the publications in national journals, with the presence of the University of Minho

Table 1. *Synthesis of results.*

Categories	Results
Universities	State University of Campinas (27%); State University of Londrina (17%); Minho University (11%); São Francisco University (8%); Others (37%).
Journals	Psicologia Escolar e Educacional (16%); Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica (8%); Avaliação Psicológica (8%); Psicologia: Ciência e Profissão (5%); Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa (5%); Revista Brasileira de TCC (4%); Psicologia da Educação (4%); Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto) (4%); Other publications [1](46%).
Study areas	Psychology (84%); Education (8,4%); Others (7,6%).
Psychology Approaches	Cognitive Psychology (80,5%); Behaviorism (14,6%); Cognitive Behavioral (4,9%)
Types of research	Conceptual (34%); Descriptive (23%); Correlational (23%); Intervention (20%).
Data gathering tools	Standardized Tools (43%); Questionnaires (16%); Documents (14%); Observation (13%); Others (14%).
Participants	Students (78,9%); Teachers (10,5%); Others (10,6%).
Schooling	Higher Education (48,7%); Elementary (23,7%); Not informed (21%).

[1] Journals that published only one or two articles.

(11%). Thus, it is possible to verify that, in productions on the studying theme, six authors and two universities stand out. Almost one third of the production on the study theme had the contribution of one researcher and the student she was supervising. That is evidence of the predominant presence of one specific group of researchers, the one from the State University of Campinas.

When it comes to the most prolific journals, it was observed that the articles were well distributed over a considerable number of journals (16 journals were identified). The journals with the greatest number of publications were the psychology ones: Revista Psicologia Escolar e Educacional, or School Education Journal (16%), Revista Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica, or Psychology Journal: reflection and criticism (8%), and Revista Avaliação Psicológica, or Psychological Assessment Journal (8%).

Concerning the mentioned study areas, it was possible to observe a predominance by the Psychology area (84%), while education represented only 8,4% of the approached areas.

Studies show that, consequently, there is greater emphasis by Psychology than by Education, which seems to contradict Pergher et al. (2012) and Velasco (2016): Studying has been ignored by schools as well as by the very researchers on the Education area. In other words, although there are books referring to studying, there is a scarcity of research works, in the Education area with a focus on studying itself.

Although we take into consideration the interconnection between Psychology and Education, it is important to consider that the teachers might not have access to Psychology journals, which hinders the advertising and dissemination of obtained knowledge, based on the research works, for daily practice at Brazilian schools. As a result, we still have to deal with mass unawareness regarding studying, which reinforces practices and mistakes related to the very nature of studying (Cortegoso & Botomé, 2002; Velasco, 2016).

Concerning the Psychology approaches, it was observed that there is a predominance of Cognitive Psychology (80,5% of the works); followed by the Radical Behaviorist Approach, as a theoretical basis for the works, with little production though (14,6%).

Focusing on the types of research, on Table 1, it is possible to verify the strong presence of conceptual research works (34% of the productions). They were theoretical (19%) and methodological (15%), descriptive (23%) and correlational (23%), and together they represent 80% of the publications. The little participation of experimental and non-experimental research works with intervention became evident. They represent 20% of the production. Therefore, it was observed that most of the publications refer to studies that do not intend to intervene in the task to teach participants to study.

It is considered that theoretical studies are important, since the lack of methodological-conceptual-theoretical consistency might generate a lack of precision in the other types of research, particularly in the intervention research works, according to Fidalgo (2016). Besides that, the studies that focused on the elaboration/adaptation of standardized tools are important for better standardization of measurements, and the accumulation of evidence of results from the intervention research works. Once we have emphasized the importance of these studies, the obtained data is worthy of preoccupation because it was verified that there is more discussion/reflection over studying than its actual application, in the Psychology area and, particularly, in the area of education.

The risk inherent to discussing issues merely theoretically, without applying/teaching, might be linked to turning Education into an area that is especially reflexive/theoretical, that has little to offer in terms of intervention evidence and of models so that faculty members will be able to teach the studying behavior in the classroom or so that parents and other professionals will be able to help, respectively, their children and patients (Zanotto, 2000; Henklain & Carmo, 2013). One of the possible consequences might be the propagation of misconceptions and wrong notions regarding the act of studying (Cortegoso & Botomé, 2002; Velasco, 2016).

We must consider, also, that the application/intervention itself might be able to contribute to answering questions and raising issues for theoretical discussions and a better definition of the studying behavior, while seeking a more intense articulation among the different types of research, according to Fidalgo (2016).

Among the research works that declared the use of tools for gathering data, a total sum of 111 references were made to such tools. It was possible to observe that almost half the references were for standardized tools (43%), formed by scales, tests, and inventories. Other tools were less often used, such as questionnaires (16%), documents (14%), and observation (13%).

Observing more closely the standardized tools, it was possible to verify the predominance of the Scales for Learning Strategies. However, other instruments were mentioned from once to three times (Inventory of Strategies for Studying and Learning, Scale for Study Competences, Scale for Assessing the Strategy for Asking for Help in The School Context, Scale for School Engagement, and so on), which indicates the diversity in the use of standardized instruments.

Considering the variety of used tools, probably related to the adopted conception, it is evident that studying is being measured, inferred, and related to a set of variables (i.e., emotional aspects, the asking-for-help

behavior, motivation, cognitive processes, academic performance, and so on).

Based on research works that had participants, it was verified that the most frequently mentioned (78,9% of the references) were the students, it did not matter if they were children, adolescents, or adults. There was a small number of references to teachers (10,5%), and to other participants. Concerning school education (not always reported), the most frequent ones were the participants from higher education (48,7%), while participants from elementary school were less frequent (23,7%). Concerning the setting, there is a predominance of research works realized in the classroom (68,4%).

The proximity of the school context was evident by focusing on the setting. Despite the predominance of the Psychology area, the research works were realized in the natural environment for formal education, with the introduction of researchers in this context. However, the scarce realization of research works with participation in elementary school is a serious problem because, according to Figueiral (2015), the students need more assistance regarding the studying behavior especially until the fifth year. According to the author, these students will be expected to show autonomy and proficiency in their study skills after the sixth year of junior high and, particularly, in high school.

The predominance of students (children, adolescents, and adults), despite parents and teachers can be participants, might indicate that the focus lies on the students themselves, regarded as responsible for studying and frequently for difficulties or the absence of this complex behavior, while important agents for teaching this repertoire are ignored.

We wish to share the statement by Gonçalves (2017) according to which the teachers should be the most important actors engaged in the research works, since they realize the application of all teaching and assessment of study skills in the classroom. As we have mentioned before, the teachers are usually trained to pass content and check what was learned by means of demonstrations, exercises, texts, slideshows, videos, and so on (Cortegoso & Botomé, 2002; Figueiral, 2015; Velasco, 2016), without teaching students how to study.

Besides the importance of the teachers, parents would also play a pivotal role as participants in the study. According to Hübner (1999), Cooper, Lindsay and Nye (2000), Ferreira and Marturano (2002) and Sampaio, Souza and Costa (2004), the involvement of parents has a positive, direct effect on the time the children spend doing academic tasks/studying at home and, consequently, in success or failure at school.

Hübner (1999) emphasizes that the role played by the teachers over the studying behavior of their children is one of the factors that leads to academic success or failure. In the case of families with the predominance of standards we have denominated "pro-knowledge" (resources, support, and tools for studying), the influence is positive. In the case of families with the predominance of standards denominated as "anti-knowledge" (with the excessive use of coercive control in order to handle the children's studying behavior), contrarily, the influence is negative.

In accordance with this double possibility, Cooper, Lindsay and Nye (2000) conclude that not all participation by parents, or by teachers, is enough to produce a positive effect on studying. Sometimes it is necessary to employ practices based on non-aversive procedures.

CONCLUSION

Research works on studying are still concentrated into a few groups of researchers. Such researchers, in their majority, are based on the Cognitive Psychology approach, with the need for greater approach plurality, which would further promote debate on the theme. Regarding the journals, the predominance of the Psychology area hints at the need for further studies published in the area of Education, which would facilitate access for teachers and professionals that operate directly on teaching/interventions on studying at Brazilian schools.

The Brazilian scientific community realized different types of study – conceptual, descriptive, and correlational – on studying, and there is little emphasis on interventions that teach participants to study; there is, consequently, the possibility for researchers to use, in a prolific way, the results and discussions already realized including the already validated tools, in the realization of new studies, especially with a focus on the teaching of studying.

Furthermore, we suggest that such interventions take teachers as a priority. They should be the most important agents and actors in the teaching of studying since elementary school, which would lead to the teachers' enhancement in their study skills. Thus, they would be able to teach their students as well as the students parents how to develop/keep study behaviors at home.

The greater number of research works on studying, especially experimental interventions for teaching/interventions, will draw attention to one of the most discussed and required behaviors in the teachers', parents', and legal guardians' view in the area of Education. These studies will also sharpen the perception of educators not only for self-help books and/or reports but also for studies qualified by science and that might be the basis and provide the guidelines for Brazilian educational policies.

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