

CARING AND EDUCATING: THE SUBJECT IN CONSTITUTION AND THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to get to know how aware educators are of their role in Child Education. A multiple-case study was realized by means of interviews and observations on five educators. Special attention was paid to matters related to child care and education. Data were analyzed in accordance with the theoretical axes of the IRDI methodology: Subject Supposition, Establishment of Demand, Presence/Absence Alternation and Paternal Function. Results showed how scientific discourse cross these conceptions and attitudes. What became also evident was the importance of the instructions provided by the management teams. Therefore, it becomes necessary to better adjust the relation between nurture and education in order to produce subjectivizing practices in Child Education.

Keywords: early childhood education; psychic constitution; babies.

Cuidar y educar: el sujeto en constitución y el papel del educador

RESUMEN

En esta investigación se tuvo por objetivo conocer la concepción de educadoras sobre su papel en la Educación Infantil. Se realizó estudio de casos múltiples a partir de entrevistas y observaciones con cinco educadoras, considerando cuestiones sobre el cuidar y el educar. Se analizaron los datos conforme los ejes teóricos de la metodología IRDI: Suposición de Sujeto, Establecimiento de Demanda, Alternancia Presencia/Ausencia y Función Paterna. Los resultados apuntaron como el discurso científico atraviesa las concepciones y actitudes de las participantes y la importancia de las orientaciones realizadas por los equipos directivos. Se consideró relevante ajustar la relación entre cuidar y educar para sustentarse una buena práctica en el espacio escolar infantil.

Palabras clave: educación infantil; constitución psíquica; bebés.

Cuidar e educar: o sujeito em constituição e o papel do educador

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa objetivou conhecer a concepção de educadoras sobre seu papel na Educação Infantil. Foi realizado estudo de casos múltiplos a partir de entrevistas e observações com cinco educadoras, considerando questões sobre o cuidar e educar. Os dados foram analisados conforme os eixos teóricos da metodologia IRDI: Suposição de Sujeito, Estabelecimento de Demanda, Alternância Presença/Ausência e Função Paterna. Os resultados mostraram como o discurso científico atravessa as concepções e atitudes das participantes e a importância das orientações realizadas pelas equipes diretivas. Considerou-se relevante afinar a relação entre cuidar e educar para se sustentar uma prática subjetivante no espaço escolar infantil.

Palavras-chave: educação infantil; constituição psíquica; bebês.

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, nurseries used to be institutions that took care of the children of mothers who were engaged in professional activities. Today, the so-called Child Education Schools or Centers work from a different perspective due to changes in the conceptions of childhood and education (Mariotto, 2009).

In Brazil, Child Education officially became a right in the Constitution of 1988. Only in 1996, with the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases (LDB/96; Law nº 9.394, December 20th, 1996)*, was Child Education officially established as part of the basic education system (Becker, Bernardi, & Martins, 2013). Changes in the field resulted in the necessity to improve the formation of professionals and, since 2007, all institutions of Child Education must have their staff exclusively composed of professionals that went through at least one basic course on Child Education skills (Velasco, 2012).

When nurseries became education institutions, functions and professional profiles became issues for discussion. Feitosa (2009) produced a report on the Law for Child Education, which resulted in Resolution nº5 (Resolution nº 5, of December 17th, 2009). He questions the segregation underlying the service provided to children. In addition to focusing on physiological matters (hygiene, nutrition etc.), nurseries had a limited conception of child care and provided assistance exclusively to poor children. Private institutions catered to the educational needs of more affluent children. Thus, by giving nurseries the status of education institutions, nurture and education gained more relevance in discussions on the field. Also, according to this author, the role of child education has been made so clear that, with the change in legislation, it has become impossible to separate the concepts of nurturing and educating. However, according to Mariotto (2009), the role of Child Education at nurseries is not so clear yet. Therefore, it still needs to be thought over. Since the establishment of the new laws and resolutions concerning children's rights to education in the context of Child Education, discussions have been happening. This is especially due to the vital role played by Child Education for the benefit of child development in modern society. Besides, Child Education is becoming a part of children's care at increasingly early stages of their lives, which implies the problematization of the practice of educators.

The nurture/educate relation is also problematized by Becker et al. (2013). They affirm that there is a difference between what is deemed as nurturing and what is deemed as pedagogical. The latter is more appreciated by educators as well as by society in general. The authors have approached the nurture-education issue at schools and centers for Child Education. They are theoretically supported by the Winnicottian psychoanalysis concepts

of *holding, handling and object-presenting* (Becker et al., 2013, p.553). It was verified that educators mention the practice of holding quite often in their discourse. However, they show deeper appreciation for aspects related to pedagogical practices such as cognitive stimulation. The authors also emphasize the importance of cognitive development to parents and modern society. They have reached the conclusion that observation and research are necessary in order to get better acquainted with the practice of educators. Also, there must be investment on the formation of nursery home professionals in Child Education.

The perception that professionals in education have regarding nurture and education directly influences their relationships with the children. Considering the importance of such relationships, Sommerhalder and Alves (2012) argue that education professionals have humans as the object of their work. Therefore, it is important to consider that teachers and children are beings unconsciously driven by desire who react to each other's actions.

In this article, the authors regard education in early childhood as something that does not fit into current educational models. At the moment, there is an overrating of educational techniques propelled by capitalistic competitiveness and productivity. At this stage, it is necessary to become aware of unconscious processes in order to gain more freedom for teachers and students to be able to collaborate in the construction of learning processes in accordance to their own desire.

Concerning the psychological constitution of children, the authors take the concept of Other as a condition for the creation of a subject. As a result, they believe it is extremely important to invest in this relationship, which must not be restricted to pedagogical practices.

It is important to clarify the concept of Otherness in Lacan and its relevance for discussing the present study. The Absolute Other is the one that inserts an individual into language, and into the laws. It is the one that carries culture. There is also the other, the neighbor, with whom the baby will imaginarily identify and will establish a mirror relation. It is important to emphasize that these two registers of psychic constitution, the imaginary and the symbolic, intertwine rather than resemble each other. They are both made possible by the relation with the other (Bernardino, 2010; Mariotto, 2009).

In order to complement this concept, Maia (2011) argues that it is up to the Other to "regulate the baby's functions by symbolic means in order to repress the baby's animal condition and insert the child into a symbolic order, or a language order. During this task, the Other organizes the implied times in the condition of subject" (Maia, 2011, p.21). Therefore, besides

the physical nurture on which human babies depend in order to survive, they also need a symbolic place where they can develop as individuals. This is the most important role played by the family, especially the maternal and paternal functions.

In this same discussion, Brandão and Kupfer (2014) approach the subjectivizing role played by educators and all other people responsible for nurturing and educating young children in their article "The construction of the educator-baby connection by means of the IRDI Methodology".

IRDI is a Portuguese-language abbreviation for the phrase, Risk Indicators for Child Development, or "Indicadores de Risco para o Desenvolvimento Infantil". This methodology was developed by means of a multi-centered research on clinical risk indicators for child development from 2000 to 2008. The research was conducted by a group of psychoanalysts invited by Professor Maria Cristina Machado Kupfer, a doctor at the USP psychology department. It was a nationwide research that helped detect, in children up to 18 months of age, development indicators pointing at some crucial issues in the mother-child relation that might benefit the psychic constitution of an individual. The indicators were created by means of four theoretical axes.

The first axis, named Subject Supposition, refers to the anticipation present in maternal desire or in the caretaker that there is a blooming individual in the baby. The mother or caretaker translates crying, for example, as a manifestation of some desire of the baby, which implies that there is an individual in there. The child's pleasure is boosted by the feelings of contentment expressed by the mother and her cajoling language. Therefore, it is a supposition that there is an individual of desire in that body.

The second axis, Establishment of Demand, happens when a mother attributes meaning to an action by the baby as if the action were a message addressed to the mother. That happens, for example, when the child produces a signal and the mother interprets it as a sign that the child is hungry and it is time for breastfeeding.

The third axis, Presence/Absence Alternation, concerns the discontinuity of the baby's satisfaction. It is important that the baby can symbolically evoke its mother when she is not actually present, which points at the human condition of being alone. Here, there is a break between the child's request and the mother's response. During this break, the child might symbolically evoke the mother and autonomously produce a response to the discontinuity of satisfaction.

The last axis, Paternal Function, presents to the child a framework that "does not depend on the mom although such framework might be produced by her" (Brandão & Kupfer, 2014, p.11). It is a third element

interfering in the dual relation of a baby and its mother and establishing the "no", which blocks this relation. It is an interference of culture through the mother, who also suffered such blockage in the past. It allows for a separation between the maternal desire and the baby's desire as an individual (Kupfer et al., 2010).

Brandão and Kupfer (2014) discuss the hypothesis that the caretaker-baby connection is not natural. Unconscious availability and libidinal investment in both parts are necessary elements in that connection. The authors conclude that interventions by a psychoanalysis professional will facilitate the connection between educator and baby. The educator will be in collaboration with the maternal function. The authors employ the term motherly function, or "função maternante" in order to set it apart from the maternal function. It is assumed that the baby is an individual of desire and, as a result, will be able to connect.

The maternal and paternal functions are the most important factors in the introduction of an individual to language. However, according to Mariotto (2009), other agents such as educators might give continuity to these symbolic introductions without having to assume a position of maternal function. Thus, it becomes important to pay attention to the development of the practice by educators in Child Education, especially regarding the subjectivizing possibility present in the discourse that supports their practice.

In order to amplify these discussions, Mariotto (2009) started considering nurseries as places for nurture, education and prevention. The author sees the nursery as a third element, that is, a paternal function element in addition to co-maternal functions giving continuity to the work of signifying. The author uses the term fatherly function, or "função paternante", in order to describe the role played by the nursery regarding its subjectivizing function. She proposes the issue of nurture and education as inseparable and presenting prevention as a nursery function, in a Mobius-strip way, that is, in a seamless circuit without a beginning or an end, where functions coexist at the same level. She emphasizes that prevention does not refer to anticipating issues concerning the development of babies. Rather, it refers to ensuring that subjectivizing conditions be present in the nursery for the baby's benefit. It is necessary to recognize the baby's condition as an individual under construction, who is going through the stages of alienation and separation. Thus, the nursery provides prevention against mental health issues.

Therefore, Child Education goes way beyond pedagogical practices limited to educational techniques that disregard subjectivities in their processes. Neither is it merely a solution for mothers who have nowhere

to leave their children in order to go to work. Child Education is a system in which nurture and education are interconnected. This discussion is made even more relevant by the fact that Child Education works as an actor in the psychic constitution of children, who start attending these institutions in their first months of life. The issues raised here reveal that there are propositions, discussions, researches, and interventions waiting to be developed on this theme. This article intends to contribute to the construction of knowledge on these themes. Thus, the objective of this research was to get to know the conceptions of Child Education professionals regarding their role as agents influencing the psychic constitution of babies by means of discourse and practice.

METHOD

General design and participants

According to the objective of this project – which is a result of the Graduation Assignment of the first author, with co-orientation by the second author and orientation by the third author – a qualitative/exploratory approach was chosen with the general design of a Multiple Case Study (Yin, 2015). Five nursery professionals took part in the research. They provided assistance to children who were from eighteen to twenty-one months old at the time of the research in three public schools for Child Education in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre. Three of those professionals were teachers and two of them were Child Education assistants. The criteria for selecting the professionals were availability and willingness to participate. Availability was made possible by the coincidence of available time in the schedules of the professionals and the researcher, who was already engaged in an internship in psychology practice at schools. The researcher was already acquainted with the Political-Pedagogical Plans of the schools and with the orientations given to the teachers. After all, she had already taken part in all that routine in her internship.

The teachers worked 30 hours a week and

were responsible for planning the activities and examinations. The assistants worked 40 hours a week and also contributed to the planning of activities and examinations. The schools requested that everyday tasks, such as changing diapers, were equally distributed among educators. Box 1 displays the other characteristics of the participants.

Instruments and Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were realized with each one of the participants. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. There were also observations of everyday activities. The interviews presented the following questions: 1. What made you choose this profession? 2. How are activities planned in the nurseries? 3. How do you see yourself in the work realized by the nursery? 4. In your opinion, what is the importance of Child Education for babies? 5. What is a fundamental element in the everyday life of nurseries? The intention was to check out the way educators understood their own role in Child Education and how they regarded their own participation in the process of psychological development in children. The observations lasted approximately 40 minutes and intended to reveal details of the interaction between educators and children.

In this stage, special attention was paid to the way educators addressed the children and their responses. Was there a relationship being established? How? Did educators insert spoken language in their procedures? What was the playing like? What was it like when it was time to feed the baby? How did things happen in general concerning the educator-baby relationship? The schools agreed with the research and allowed educators to make their own decisions to participate or not. This scientific production approached an important theme and the anonymity of all participants was guaranteed.

After authorization by the University Ethics Committee with Resolution nº 161/2015, informed consent forms were signed by parents and educators in accordance to research guidelines.

Box 1 - Participants.

| | Isabel | Cristina | Júlia | Nice | Daniela |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Formation | Pedagogue | Teaching Technician, pedagogy student | Teaching technician, pedagogy student | Pedagogy student | Teaching technician, pedagogy student |
| Function | Teacher | Child Education Assistant | Teacher | Child Education Assistant | Teacher |
| Type of contract | Simplified Selection Process | Simplified Selection Process | Simplified Selection Process | Simplified Selection Process | Simplified Selection Process |

Source: produced by the authors.

Data in this research were submitted to theoretically grounded analysis with a psychoanalytical focus. This type of data analysis, according to Gil (2009), allows for the discussion of collected data based on what the theory says about the researched topic. The analysis of interviews and observations was based on psychoanalytical assumptions approached by Kupfer et al. (2010), who point at four axes as fundamental in the process of psychic development that babies go through: 1. Subject supposition; 2. Establishment of demand; 3. Presence/absence alternation; and 4. Paternal function. Thus, it was possible to establish a comparison between the data obtained in observations and in interviews. By means of the theory proposed by the IRDI methodology, the four axes were used as analysis categories, which allowed for the verification of each case individually and a search for particularities. It was possible to produce a synthesis of the cases by means of their common aspects. In this article, only a synthesis of the cases will be presented. It is organized into the same axes proposed for the organization of each case individually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concerning the axis of subject supposition, a constant element in the interviews was the conception of what is relevant for the babies and that the educator must comprehend the necessities of every child, which is a way to appreciate singularity. During the observations, it was perceived that at least three educators made themselves available to listen to the children's requests, which implies the supposition of a subject/individual sending out signs to be interpreted and acted upon. In addition, they established singular modes of communication with the children, which denotes a relationship between individuals.

However, there was a moment when it was possible to observe an educator's attitude in which she showed she was not regarding the child as an individual. She did not understand the behavior of one of the children in the cafeteria because of the way the child was eating a piece of cake. In the situation, the child did not use the hands to eat the cake that was on the table and the educator's response was to repress the child's behavior by comparing the child to a dog. The supposition of a subject means awareness that there is a blooming individual in the baby and intentions must be considered (Kupfer et al., 2010; Mariotto, 2009).

According to box 2, in the observations there was the predominant presence of subject supposition in attitudes such as speaking to the child in a singular way and interpreting what the child wanted to say. However, there were moments in which no supposition was displayed. In the interviews, all educators considered it important to get to know each child and be able to interpret their messages and intentions.

Curiously, subject supposition is the axis that appears the most in interviews, according to the information provided by the tables. Also, it is the one least related to the pedagogical coordination guidelines. It tells of the place occupied by children in the discourse of educators, genuinely. According to Mariotto (2009), discourse, to Lacan, is "the means by which subjects produce their social connections through language, and consequently in accordance with unconscious laws" (Mariotto, 2009, p. 80). Thus, it makes sense that the educators' most singular questions appear in this analysis axis.

Concerning the establishment of demand, some of the educators understood the children's requests for attention as a message from child to adult. They understood that there are days when the children need more human touch and this is fundamental at this stage of their lives. It is really important for the baby that people in the nursery be able to play a motherly role. Just as Maia (2011) speaks of the difference between the roles of teachers and parents, Brandão and Kupfer (2014) argue that another caretaker can play the role of parents without any trouble. The child can stay several hours of the day under the care of teachers. The motherly function gives continuity to the symbolic inscriptions started by the mother. It shows the teacher's capacity to really pay attention, to really see the children (Brandão & Kupfer, 2014, p. 276). Thus, teachers will be able to really connect with the children.

Isabel¹ understands that nursery educators need to know how to interpret children's requests expressed by means of crying or some sort of agitation. In other words, they need to perceive these manifestations as messages from the babies, who really need their attention. She considers it indispensable to have time and availability to really care. She says that despite all the difficulties to work with several children at the same time, she feels gratified most of the time. This subjectivizing work is essential in the promotion of symbolic inscriptions, which are fundamental for the development of children. Aware of their role, educators benefit the development of individuals who appreciate culture and also appreciate their right to education.

During the interview, two educators mentioned that they plan their lessons based on the children's needs. Thus, they seem to show awareness that, in their profession, they need to understand some types of behavior as messages from the children to the educators in which the children express their necessities. It is also important to emphasize that educators base their work on this assumption. Besides, it is a guideline from the pedagogical department. They understand that the realized activities must be planned in accordance with the children's interests, which is a direct reflection of

¹ All names are fictitious.

Box 2. Subject Supposition.

| Educator | Observation | Interview |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Isabel | Speaks to the children in a singular way. She is good at guessing what the children want. | It is necessary to know the characteristics of each one, and to respect the rhythm of each one. It is necessary to have respect for the moment when they need to be cuddled. Sometimes it is more important than the activities themselves; the feeling of motherly touch. |
| Cristina | A child was eating cake directly from the table without using the hands. The educator told him that he looked like a little dog. (no subject supposition). | In the nursery, it is necessary to do a certain amount of guesswork when it comes to responding to children's requests. It is necessary to find ways to interpret what the children are trying to say. Child Education is the beginning of literacy. |
| Júlia | Júlia understood a child's gesture in the cafeteria. She interpreted that the child was making room for a classmate to sit next to him. | It is necessary to understand what the children are trying to say. Child Education goes beyond nurturing. It must be based on solid pedagogy. Even spontaneous playing must be mediated by the teacher so that the teacher can learn how to understand the child's language. |
| Nice | Singular language with the children | Children show problem-solving intentions in their play. Maternal approach to children's necessities. Affection is very important in the nursery. Children are not always willing to take part in planned activities. |
| Daniela | She changed a baby's diaper while mindlessly chatting with another educator in the room. (No subject supposition). | Learns with the children. Maternal affection. |

Source: produced by the authors.

Box 3. Establishment of Demand.

| Educator | Observation | Interview |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Isabel | One of the children picked up a box which was too heavy for him to carry. The teacher understood it as a means to get some attention. She invites the child to put away a blanket but the child does not want to do it. She respects the child's wish. | She understands that the children misbehave in order to draw the teachers' attention. Teachers must be always present and close. She understands that children need the emotional support of transitional things or objects. Each child takes their own time to let these objects go. |
| Cristina | She defines it as jealousy when a child pushes another one and attributes such jealousy to the child's necessity to address the teacher. | The children really need the teachers even they interact with each other. That demands a lot of attention from the teachers. |
| Júlia | She understands that, during playtime, kids address the teacher with requests, which demands the teacher's attention. | The planning of activities based on the needs expressed by the children. |
| Nice | She understands the crying and anguished looks by the children in situations of conflict as a request for the teacher's attention due to the connection created between teacher and children. | It is necessary to be acquainted with the children's needs in order to plan activities. |
| Daniela | She told a child off when she called the child to change diapers. The child did not respond to her calling as she expected. (No establishment of demand) | |

Source: Produced by the authors

their needs.

However, schools expect activities to be planned. Maybe the amount of planned activities could be discussed among managing and operating teams since there are complaints about time-consuming procedures in addition to the planned activities. One educator mentions that babies demand a lot of attention from adults.

That, in combination with the whole school routine, makes everyday life exhausting. It is important to plan activities rather than merely respond to children's demands. After all, there is the evaluation issue. It is a common belief among educators that children are there to learn. That becomes even more evident when schools have to provide families with periodical reports on the children's development. In addition, institutions are subordinate to a larger education system, which makes a few bureaucratic requests such as reports on the realized activities and on the interactions with children during the planned activities. These accounts are presented in Box 3.

Concerning presence/absence alternation, as we can see in Box 4, during the observations the most interesting scenes happened during meals and playtime, when educators interacted with the children and waited for their responses. In one situation, for example, the educator offered some food to a child, asked whether the child wanted the food or not, and waited for the child's response. In two other situations, the educator asked a question or invited the child to take part in some collective play. Thus, as the educator waited for the child's response, she could insert words in order to reinforce the interplay of educators, children and actions. According to Kupfer et al. (2010, p. 11):

this discontinuity, characterized by the presence/absence alternation, is the structural foundation of language. The word will not exist without breaking the connection between the "cause object" and satisfaction. The word must have the power to evoke satisfaction despite the absence of the object.

By means of the interval between request and response there is the discontinuity of the child's satisfaction, which allows the child to symbolically evoke the object in its absence. In other words, the child acts as the author of a demand since there is no affectation on the child when the child realizes that the mother is not completely available. That shows how "pulse" objects insert themselves in the presence/absence alternation in the connection with the Other" (Jerusalinsky, 2014, p. 146).

It is important to comment that schools pass instructions about waiting for the child's response.

Educators are expected to have this attitude, especially at meals. That is probably the reason why this axis is frequently mentioned in all cases, especially during observations.

Autonomy was placed in this axis because it is a process that requires the absence of the mother/educator so that the child can make personal decisions. However, issues are raised concerning the teaching of autonomy. According to Dolto (1999, p.4) "education means autonomy", in the sense that it is necessary to trust the child and allow the child to do things without external help. It is important for children to know that adults trust them. It is a method of transmission, rather than of teaching, according to Jerusalinsky (2010).

The paternal function axis was represented especially by the introduction of children to a collective environment and its inherent rules, according to Box 5. One example is a situation in which the educator was putting away boxes that had been used in a previous activity. Meanwhile, she kept talking to some children nearby who wanted attention. However, the educator was not able to respond to all requests or do everything they wanted. Here we can see that the paternal function is related to the function of those who must take care of the baby. There is a third element in the relationship between baby and caretaker. That prevents complete satisfaction because the educator is not supposed to satisfy the child all the time. In addition to this scene, in the interview as well as in the observation, it was observed that educators intend, by means of dialogue, to insert some sense of order in the collective environments in the everyday lives of children. That is their way to assume the position of the Other in addition to their action as the third element in the mother-baby relationship as a representative of the school. According to Mariotto (2009), that is a father-like function.

During the observations, the collectiveness dimension was made quite clear. Educators helped children to learn how to wait for their turn to do things and respect other people's spaces. In other words, children learn that there are other people with similar necessities and desires. They also learn how to establish agreements with other children. That is something that was mentioned in the interviews.

Concerning what was observed in this axis, it is important to emphasize our perception of the guidelines supplied by the schools as to how to stimulate agreements and negotiations so that children will be able to coexist in a collective environment with mutual respect. However, what educators generally understand to be limits to the babies is a reflection of prophylactic thought on bad behavior. It is assumed that children will learn to be obedient by means of imposed rules. It is important to problematize this

issue since the introduction of rules is an indicator of difference. Nonetheless, it is not possible to be sure that the children will respond to limitation the way they are expected to.

Thus, it is observed that sometimes discourse does not apply to practice and there are matters of practice that are not recognized as important although they

are fundamental to babies. It has become evident that scientific knowledge underlies discourse and that has repercussions on the everyday work of the educators concerning ways to interpret children's manifestations and how to establish priorities for this moment in the lives of babies.

All educators consider it important – after all, it is

Box 4. Presence/Absence alternation.

| Educator | Observation | Interview |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Isabel | She waited for children to choose what they wanted to eat at meals. | |
| Cristina | She offered each child pieces of mango on a fork and waited for the children to grab the pieces or not. | It is important to teach kids to have autonomy. Children need to do things by themselves. The teacher must learn how to watch without much interference. |
| Júlia | During a storytelling activity, the educator expected each child to react to the toy animals every time these animals were mentioned in the story. | It is important to let the child explore. |
| Nice | In an activity in which everyone would sing along, the teacher asked each one to suggest songs and waited for their responses. | They stimulate the development of language by asking questions about a certain topic. For example, animals, which was a theme explored in one of the projects. |
| Daniela | | She thinks it is important to encourage the children to choose their toys, to take off their own shoes. The teacher is supposed to provide guidance instead of doing things for the children. |

Source: Produced by the authors.

Box 5. Paternal Function.

| Educators | Observation | Interview |
|------------------|---|---|
| Isabel | She helps in the negotiation for toys and explains the established rules. | She says it is important set limits and explains to the children what they can and cannot do. |
| Cristina | In the cafeteria, she asked one of the girls to sit just like her classmates. | Child Education amplifies the world of children so that they will have references other than the ones provided by their own families. Child Education introduces children to collective environments with limits/rules which are different from the ones they have at home. |
| Júlia | | Parents need help in order to set limits and explain to the children what they are allowed to do. |
| Nice | In a situation in which the children were playing, rules were established and reinforced. She helped settle down a dispute for toys by reminding the children of their agreement. | |
| Daniela | In a situation in which the children were fighting over a toy, she reminded them of the fact that the toys were for collective use. | |

Source: Produced by the authors.

a request by the schools – to observe the individual interests of every baby in order to plan activities. Some of them say it takes time to get to know each baby. It is also observed that the routine at nurseries is rather intense and there are lots of tasks to be accomplished. The children wear diapers and depend on the educators to eat, especially in the beginning when they are just a few months old. Although the routines are not so strict concerning the realization of activities, it is important to remember that educators still struggle in order to keep up with their tasks and responsibilities.

In this context, nurture and education seem disconnected. For example, sometimes educators need to remember that all the playing and affection with the children have a pedagogical purpose and that the educator needs to pay careful attention in order to better understand the development of babies and be able to stimulate them. The setting of limits and autonomy were frequently mentioned in the interviews and observations. The importance of playing in the lives of the children was not mentioned very often. When it was mentioned, playing was described as a means to learn and express. Educators consider it necessary to link all actions on behalf of a pedagogical objective and “merely playing and taking care” would be an underappreciation of the work of educators.

The fact that one of the researchers already knew the routines and political-pedagogical projects of the schools contributed to the comprehension that some of the procedures by the educators were directly related to guidelines provided by the managing team and, especially the pedagogical department. That shows how important it is to schools and educators to have a clear understanding of the children’s necessities according to their ages. Flexibility was also a very important element in this space in order to promote an environment capable of offering nurture and education. Also, it was noticed that the place children occupy in the discourse of educators is extremely important. In addition to supplying guidelines, it is necessary to listen to educators about what they think of their work in order to better explain their role.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The intention of the present research was to get to know the perception of educators concerning their role as agents in the psychic development of babies by means of discourse and practice. There was an observation of the routines of the school regarding the subjective work of educators, where nurture and education are interconnected. Our objective was reached because some observations showed very important practices, which were not mentioned, and some conceptions mentioned during the interviews not always correspond

to the reality of practice.

Lots of attitudes and positions by the educators are conducive to a subjectivizing relation with the children. For example, planning activities based on the children’s interests, wait for each child to produce their response, recognizing singularity, interpreting their speeches, establishing otherness and serving a motherly function. However, there are issues that need to be explored. For example, the scientific discourse by means of which many educators describe their attitudes when they do not seem in accordance with IRDI axes. Another example is when they refuse to try to get the message behind some manifestations by the children.

After all, if the school is a place for nurture and education, what should be prioritized when it comes to everyday activities? Child Education is the meeting point of nurture and education where children can be considered individuals of desire and not only individuals with a right to education. Thus, children will not be subject to vertical knowledge intended to teach and not to transmit. It is important to align these points so that nurture and education derive from subjectivizing attitudes that permeate the relations between individuals. Therefore, promoting reflection over practices is a means to contribute to the strengthening and development of professionals who work with children, especially babies. That would be conducive to critical thinking and creativeness. The problematization of working at schools makes that possible.

In this sense, the authors consider that psychology must be at the service of Child Education and provide support and clarifications for the development of small children as a facilitator for the educator-baby relationship. It is necessary to listen to educators in order to answer their questions and respond to their attitudes and complaints. It is a crescent demand by educators in interviews. Another interesting point to be considered by Psychology and Child Education is the support to managing teams and to educators. In order to do that, psychologists need to be present at school.

One of the limitations of this study is the fact Political-Pedagogical Plans (PPPs) were not considered sources of data although they were used to support the discussion. Another factor was the small size of the municipality and the more restricted characteristics of this population.

It is interesting to think of the possibility of more studies approaching the theme of Child Education for babies while questioning whether pedagogical practices are really for the benefit of the psychic development of babies. That would be an invaluable contribution to this moment of their lives. We hope we have truly contributed to Psychology and Pedagogy in Child Education.

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