

INTERFACES BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY, EDUCATION AND HEALTH – A REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This is a report of the professional practice of the school and educational psychologist in the health area. It is a field of activity little known or recognized and this article aims to collaborate to give visibility to it. The work presented here is developed at the Goiânia Municipal School of Public Health, in the state of Goiás, and is based on Permanent Health Education. The school psychologist is the professional who offers contributions of this science to the processes of teaching, learning and education as well as one all. Public health Psychology has several fronts and health education is one of them. The school and educational psychologist can act in the educational processes for health professionals, seeking ultimately to improve the quality of service provided by them. In addition, it can collaborate with formal education institutions in training future professionals. Finally, the school psychologist inside the health system has much to contribute to the improvement of care to the population and the search for quality health that meets the real needs of the user.

Keywords: School psychology; public health services; continuing education.

Interfaces entre Psicologia, Educação y Salud – un relato de práctica profesional

RESUMEN

Este es un relato de práctica profesional del psicólogo escolar y educacional en el área de la salud. Se trata de un campo de actuación poco divulgado o reconocido y este artículo tiene por objetivo colaborar para dar visibilidad a ellos. El estudio aquí presentado fue desarrollado en la Escuela Municipal de Salud Pública de Goiânia, en el estado de Goiás, y se fundamenta en la Educación Permanente en Salud. El psicólogo escolar es el profesional que ofrece contribuciones de esta ciencia para los procesos de enseñanza aprendizaje y de la educación como un todo. La Psicología en la salud pública tiene varias frentes de actuación y la educación en la salud es una de ellas. El psicólogo escolar y educacional puede actuar en los procesos educativos para profesionales de salud, buscando como fin último perfeccionar la calidad del servicio prestado por ellos. Además de eso, puede colaborar con las instituciones de enseñanza formales en la formación de futuros profesionales. En suma, el psicólogo escolar en la salud tiene mucho a contribuir en la mejora de la atención a la población y en la búsqueda por una salud de calidad que cumpla a las necesidades reales del usuario.

Palabras clave: Psicología escolar; servicios de salud pública; educación continua.

Interfaces entre Psicologia, Educação e Saúde – um relato de prática profissional

RESUMO

Este é um relato de prática profissional do psicólogo escolar e educacional na área da saúde. Trata-se de um campo de atuação pouco divulgado ou reconhecido e este artigo visa colaborar para dar visibilidade a ele. O trabalho aqui apresentado é desenvolvido na Escola Municipal de Saúde Pública de Goiânia, no estado de Goiás, e se fundamenta na Educação Permanente em Saúde. O psicólogo escolar é o profissional que oferece contribuições dessa ciência para os processos de ensino aprendizagem e da educação como um todo. A Psicologia na saúde pública tem várias frentes de atuação e a educação na saúde é uma delas. O psicólogo escolar e educacional pode atuar nos processos educativos para profissionais de saúde, buscando como fim último aprimorar a qualidade do serviço prestado por eles. Além disso, pode colaborar com as instituições de ensino formais na formação de futuros profissionais. Enfim, o psicólogo escolar na saúde tem muito a contribuir na melhoria do atendimento à população e na busca por uma saúde de qualidade que atenda às necessidades reais do usuário.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia escolar; serviços de saúde pública; educação permanente.

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INTRODUCTION

Psychology, as a profession, seeks to improve human quality of life. For that purpose, it focuses its powers on different areas. Its theoretical and practical framework underlies the work of psychologists wherever they are, even in areas little recognized by society such as School/Education Psychology.

This is an area that has changed along the history of psychology, with studies and research works intended to challenge already constituted paradigms. However, the social function of such professionals is still misunderstood by many. The school psychologist is not the professional that clinically assists students at school or administers therapy to teachers. Rather, this professional offers contributions from psychology in order to enhance the processes of teaching and learning and of education as a whole. Historically, we know that such clinical practice has happened at the school but after all the scientific framework built in the area, that is no longer the best way. It has not contributed effectively to the improvement of educational reality and the development of its actors (Andaló, 1984; Antunes, 2008; Martinez, 2009).

Psychology has contributed to education by improving its quality. Thus, the working spaces of school psychologists must be amplified and appreciated so that the benefits go beyond education institutions. The Brazilian Association of School Psychology, or "Associação Brasileira de Psicologia Escolar" [ABRAPEE] (s.d.), in a few words, states that psychologists in this area can study, research and operate on the following themes: 1) teaching learning processes, 2) human development, 3) schooling in all its levels, 4) inclusion of people with special necessities, 5) public educational policies, 6) psycho-educational management at institutions, 7) continuous formation of teachers, and so on.

There are also specific aspects of the school psychologist's practice that are not familiar even to professionals of the area. For example, the work presented here belongs to the field of public health and tackles the relationship between psychology, education and health. Souza (2009), by bringing out new perspectives for school psychology, referred to the amplification of traditional professional areas and spoke of emerging areas, which also included health. However, the author did not produce many elements that demonstrate this situation, and that is what we are going to do.

THE EXPERIENCE

Psychology is a health profession and it has a lot to contribute for the formation and development of professionals for this area. The work presented here

subscribes to that opinion. Most psychologists working in the health area provide clinical assistance (Spink, 2006) but it is important to emphasize that there are other necessary actions/activities to be developed. Health education is one of them.

The described experience happened at the Municipal Health Bureau of the City of Goiânia, or "Secretaria Municipal de Saúde da cidade de Goiânia – Goiás". More specifically, it was at the Municipal school of Public Health, or "Escola Municipal de Saúde Pública" (EMSP). The institution is in charge of the formation of professionals to work in the bureau. It is also responsible for the development of future health professionals for the formal education institutions, including higher learning.

In this scenario, the education psychologist becomes an agent of change. According to Andaló (1984), "the education psychologist is a catalytic element for reflection and for raising awareness of the roles played by the diverse groups that compose the institution" (p.4). The ultimate goal is to transform institutional reality, and specifically for this case, to provide healthcare for the population.

The EMSP presents itself to the municipality as a transforming agent in the process of health education, and the school psychologist operates mostly in three professional fronts:

1 - Incentive, articulation, coordination and support to educational actions for health professionals

The developed actions are based on the National Policy for Permanent Health Education, or "Política Nacional de Educação Permanente em Saúde" – PNEPS (Brasil, 2009). This policy standardizes teaching-learning processes related to everyday work in order to make it relevant to professionals. Another objective is to realize transformations on the reality experienced by these professionals by means of reflections, studies, dialogues, questions, problematizations, and experiences in the practice. In an active and autonomous way, these learning experiences do not happen necessarily in a formal classroom. Rather, they take place in environments conducive to the participative observation of reality, to reflections on work processes, and to interventions when necessary (Brasil, 2009).

Permanent Health Education, or "Educação Permanente em Saúde" (EPS) or a proposal by the Ministry of Education in order to consolidate sanitary reform, which presupposes steps such as: organization in the formation of human resources, formulation and execution of guiding politics towards the formation of workers for the sector with an underlying pedagogical concept for the benefit of a critical reflection on work, clinical

resolution, and the promotion of collective health (Pires & Braga, 2009, p. 160).

In the context presented here, the psychologist as a transformation agent, has a vast work field. Some of the activities developed by the psychologist that demonstrate practical results are: facilitation of permanent education processes in health; preparation of other professionals for such facilitation; administration of projects and educational processes that will stimulate reflection, autonomy and the transformation of the reality of services; methodological/pedagogical support for educational activities involving staff and administration; and assessment and support for educational processes taking place in the Bureau.

The school psychologist at the EMSP might put into practice what Lessa and Facci (2008) discuss about the importance of using psychological knowledge in a critical way and for the benefit of collectiveness. When referring to education, these authors conclude that: “the greatest objective is to develop strategies conducive to concrete actions with contextualized proposals and a commitment to the construction of an education process based on the appropriation of scientific knowledge by all individuals that go to school”. (Lessa & Facci, 2008, p. 95).

Concerning Permanent Health Education, the objective is the same one that the authors mention. It is to develop professionals by means of scientific knowledge in a contextualized, practical, and reflexive way in order to stimulate autonomy.

2 - Articulation and execution of the integration of learning, service, and community.

Another important part of the work that happens at the EMSP, which is also part of the PNEPS, is the partnership with formal learning institutions (technical, graduation, and post-graduation courses). It is a relationship of collaborative exchange with the ultimate objective to improve teaching for courses in the health area. The actions are based on incentive and support for curricular and pedagogical changes so that professionals will truly be prepared for the reality of public health service. The goal is a more critical and reflexive education in order to find solutions for everyday problems and change reality.

Besides that, the EMSP manages all practical activities of the students from formal learning institutions in the Health Bureau Units. This is the so-called integration of teaching-service-community, which is also included in the National Curricular Guidelines, or “Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais”, for graduation courses in the health area. That emphasizes the importance of practice and service in professional formation (Decree CNE/CES n. 1133, 2001).

The focus of the EPS is to catalyze changes in public health while seeking for improvement in the assistance provided to society. This objective is in accordance with Patto (2000) and the emphasized importance of critical reflection by the school psychologist in order to produce some change in reality.

3 - Production of knowledge in order to improve the developed work

The EMSP team manages the scientific research realized at the Municipal Health Bureau. In addition, the team develops studies in order to subsidize and improve the executed work. Currently, this research is related to the evaluation process of the EPS, which needs to be instituted in the municipality. It is also important to stimulate the publication and advertisement of the developed actions, so that they can help other professionals seeking for subsidies for their work all over the country.

There are several examples of actions and projects realized by the school psychologist in collaboration with the whole team: formation of facilitators in the processes of Permanent Health Education, developed in order to provide foundation for the implementation of the EPS in the municipality (Souza, Albuquerque, & Ramos, 2016; Albuquerque, Souza, Nasser, & Ramos, 2016); the project named Mental Health for All, or “Saúde Mental na Roda”, which is an EPS process in order to handle the growing healthcare system (Amorim et al., 2015); the EPS project in a health unit of Goiânia, which intends to improve the working processes of the team in the unit (Souza, Varizo, & Rocha, 2018); and integration with the formation schools for health professionals in order to improve the quality of service (Souza, Albuquerque, & Ramos, 2013).

THE EMSP TEAM PSYCHOLOGIST

School-Educational Psychology benefits from collectiveness and adds value to the team. The intersection between psychology and education is the focus of the psychologist, who by no means interferes with the work of other professionals and gets along well with other sciences. After all, the PNEPS promotes intersectoriality and inter-professional collaborations in health education (Brasil, 2009).

The experience described here appreciates multi-professional, teamwork because when we multiply our ways of looking at reality, we better understand the possibilities for handling issues and we also diversify our strategies for intervention as well as the possible changes in health services. In addition to psychologists, sociologists and nurses are all participants in the EMSP team.

However, working inter-professionally has its own

complexities and the integration of different types of knowledge happens in everyday life by means of discussions and mediations with active participation of the school psychologist.

The psychological practice facilitates the working process with health education. It contributes to the comprehension of human development, of teaching-learning processes and their influences, of an integral vision of health and man, of the relations between people, affection, human individuality, group processes, and collectiveness, and of human communication processes.

Not all EMSP psychologists have graduated in School Psychology. However, it has been noticed that studies in this area might contribute to more professional effectiveness. The school psychologist participating in the team seeks to bring such elements out in order to study and discuss them, which allows for a permanent education for the school team.

CONCLUSION

School-Education Psychology has a lot to contribute to public health, especially concerning health education, which is a field that deserves attention and appreciation. Knowledge on this area of psychology and the critical/reflexive practice of the school psychologist might contribute to the formation of health professionals and to the EPS, whose ultimate goal is to provide important subsidy in order to improve the quality of health services in our country. Although the reality of public health is complex and challenging, it is possible to open spaces for discussions in order to think of new ways to face difficulties and change reality.

Public health schools all over the country play an important role in the construction of a quality SUS for the population. Thus, they become a space where school psychologists will be able to play their role as major agents in the process. The work of school psychologists might prove a catalyst for positive change when it is developed with efficiency, and ethics. Also, it must be based on scientific evidence in order to critically comprehend reality.

We hope that by advertising this experience and other professional practices, in addition to incentive to research and studies in the area, we might be able to improve and expand the work of school-educational psychologists all over the country.

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