RELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

SABER RELACIONAL DE DIRETORES ESCOLARES: COMPREENDENDO OS DESAFIOS NA AUSÊNCIA DA RELAÇÃO FAMÍLIA-ESCOLA

RELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT: The theory of the Relationship with Knowledge (RcS) describes that relational knowledge is effective in the relationship with the other. Therefore, it is through dialogue that the bond is established in any sphere, mainly in the educational sphere. From this, the objective of the study was defined as: to understand, from the perspective of the Relationship with Knowledge (RcS), the relational knowledge of school directors. This research was carried out in 2020 and consists of a broad study that investigated the challenges experienced by school principals and the search for possible solutions. The sample consisted of 1313 directors. The answers obtained were analyzed, and from the results found, it can be inferred the absence of establishing the relationship between family and school, the constant blaming of each of the parties/institutions involved, and the lack of knowledge about the spaces to be occupied by family members.

Introduction

Brazilian education has been presenting significant transformations over the last few decades, such as the guarantee of universal access, the process of school inclusion, the search for continued training of professionals, legal investments, among other aspects. However, there are still many challenges that Brazilian schools face on a daily basis.

It is not the place, here, in this study, to indicate the existing challenges, because the territorial extension of Brazil does not allow such inference, however, one can understand what has been carried out from the pre-existing facts, in which it is understood that – if there is a challenge, it is because a demand has been delimited, consequently, it is considered a fact to be investigated, understood and analyzed. Such challenges became more latent with the COVID-19 pandemic, in which everyone was required to reorganize in the most different aspects in order to continue the proposed educational segments. The 2019 school no longer includes the school experienced in the pandemic period and does not cover the students of 2023.

According to Campos and Blikstein (2019), there is currently an educational renewal movement. It questions the traditional model is based on a discourse of change, transformation and innovation. It becomes necessary, then, to redesign the school, in order to promote new perspectives, with different methodologies and based on student knowledge [individual and cognitive], in addition to social relationships. For this to be effective, it is necessary to understand the individualities, prior knowledge and their intrinsic variables. A feasible mechanism for complying with this proposal is the linear construction of a comprehensive dialogue with the family, in which the aim is to promote and sustain a relationship between the family and school institutions.

There is a legal discussion around the need and relevance of strengthening the relationship between family and school, however, no document effectively guarantees this action. This ends up compromising the articulation between institutions, which corroborates with different other elements, such as: the lack of dialogue and effective communication, the hierarchy of the relationship, the decreasing participation of family members as the children grow up, the presence of the family at school only at parent meetings and/or behavior problems, etc.

Taking it into account, it is understood that the family-school relationship is fundamental and, since the COVID-19 Pandemic, this has become more potent. However, a study carried out by Souza (2022) observed that the biggest challenge for school principals was the participation of the family in the educational scenario. Based on this, the present study aims to
understand, from the perspective of RcS, the relational knowledge of school directors, in order to consider the challenge mentioned above, the participation of the family.

The family-school relationship: intersections and divergences

The family is the first social institution into which the human being integrates. Therefore, it plays an important and crucial role in the development of the individual's personality, behavior, and way of acting. It is through family relationships that children will shape their values, their conception of the world, and their self-image (Santos; Oliveira, 2015). It is through the family that the child learns and establishes his first social relationships; from this, there is the establishment of new experiences, relationships, and the acquisition of culture.

This institution is also responsible for educating children and transmitting principles that will guide them throughout their lives, thus contributing to their formation as citizens. While the school is understood as a space for acquiring new skills, behavioral, social and cognitive skills. Described as the formal learning space, which is organized, systematized and directive (Alarcão, 2022).

Currently, the school is going through a crisis of legitimacy; it no longer matches the reality experienced until 2019 [pre-pandemic period] and does not suit the contemporary scenario “after” the COVID-19 pandemic. This real school, experienced in the year 2023, presents teachings from the pandemic process and contemplates anxious students and teachers sickened by the excessive workload, in addition to the glaring need to transform traditional teaching into something more dynamic, technological, and assertive. According to Kohan (2020), the pandemic offered us the possibility of reflecting the school in a new format, which until then seemed unbreakable, impossible.

It is clear, then, that the family reflects the child’s first social environment, while the school matches the second. For Jungles (2022), the individual repertoire learned, and the primary identifications that occur within the family will interact with the baggage and repertoires of other colleagues – which will sometimes be similar, sometimes different from what each child has learned in their family nucleus. It follows from this, the assumptions of Costa, Silva and Souza (2019), in which they state that the relationship between family and school directly corroborates the process of integral development of the student.

According to Caetano (2004), the need for a partnership between family and school stems from the challenge of defining roles. Added to this is the urgency to systematize initiatives
to engage the family in the educational scenario, providing space for voice, dialogue and discussions. The author also states that the teacher permeates the bridge between institutions. Therefore, the school, as an applicant for this partnership, has the challenge of promoting actions that provide space for such a relationship.

**The Relationship with Knowledge (RcS) and the interweaving in the face of the challenges of contemporary education**

Challenges are understood as the numerous issues that are experienced in the educational scenario on a daily basis, such as: poor learning, lack of financial, human, material and similar resources, as well as precarious physical structure, interpersonal relationships, violence, among other elements that permeate the school.

However, the objective is not to delimit the challenges per se, because we already have previous conceptions of the experienced scenario, but rather to analyze the knowledge of school principals in the face of everyday challenges. As previously mentioned, a survey designed by Souza (2022) investigated the challenges and solutions outlined by principals in order to minimize impacts on the school. Faced with this, it was found that the biggest challenge, from the perspective of school directors, is the participation of the family.

In the meantime, the theoretical framework of Bernard Charlot is used, specifically, the Relationship with Knowledge (RcS) to analyze more deeply the biggest challenge encountered by the researcher and, consequently, which inferences are possible to make from the analyses.

Bernard Charlot's research (2000), since 2006, originated in studies and definitions on the Relationship with Knowledge (RcS), based on investigations regarding school failure. Thus, it is understood that the RcS (Charlot, 2000) is based on the assertion that every human being learns, since, otherwise, he would not survive as a human being. This learning to be constituted is described through a triple process: “hominization” – the subject is born unprepared and fragile and becomes a man through learning; “singularization” – it is believed that each subject is unique and become a singular specimen; and, “socialization” – despite being unique, every subject becomes a member of a community, sharing the values that exist there and occupying a place.

Charlot (2000, p.78) declares that “the relationship with knowledge is a subject's relationship with the world, with himself and with others. It is a relationship with the world as a set of meanings, but also as a space for activities, and is inscribed in time”. When talking about the relationship with the world, a process of understanding is directly established with
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the present, the past and the future, in which the knowledge acquired, experienced, the luggage brought by each subject adds to the process of knowledge, of knowing.

The world is given to man only through what he perceives, imagines, thinks about this world, through what he desires, what he feels: the world offers itself to him as a set of meanings, shared with other men. Man only has a world because he has access to the universe of meanings, to the “symbolic”; and in this symbolic universe, relations between the subject and others, between the subject and himself are established (Charlot, 2000, p.78).

It is also understood that the relationship with the world and with knowledge are pre-established by man, and start from a symbology, with signs and their understanding from experiences. For Kanbach (2005), there is no subject that seeks to establish a direct relationship with knowledge without establishing a connection with the world, it is a mutual exchange. This pre-established relationship also considers the subject's individuality and sociability, that is, his connection with himself and with the world that permeates him.

The relationship with knowledge is also a relationship of identity with knowledge. Every “learning” process constitutes a construction of oneself, a construction of the subject's identity. The relationship of identity with knowledge is also built in the relationship with the other, which is the physically present other that helps you learn something or a virtual other that makes up the community of those who have a certain knowledge (Trópia; Caldeira, 2007, p .4).

Charlot (2000) understands that “the subject of knowledge develops an activity of his own: argumentation, verification, experimentation, willingness to demonstrate, prove, validate” (p.60). When exercising his function, the school principal uses object knowledge (academic), as well as two other types of knowledge, practical and relational, which are intertwined. Therefore, there is a need to reflect on tools that allow new knowledge and learning.

Charlot (2000) conceptualizes information, knowledge, and knowledge in a different way, as follows: information is something that is obtained without selection or meaning (something that is not always assimilated); knowledge is information that the subject appropriates, because it is significant, it becomes practical or relational knowledge; and, knowledge is the result of a personal experience that is linked to an activity of a subject, therefore, it is provided with affective-cognitive qualities, and as such it is non-transferable, and is “under the primacy of subjectivity” (Charlot, 2000, p. 61).

There is a difference between information and knowledge, and it is in the production of meaning that the subject establishes about this information, therefore, in this perspective, the
subject produces knowledge. By producing meaning, the subject seeks to fulfill his desires, his impulses to learn, and, consequently, to know. Charlot (2000) presents the concepts of mobilization, activity, and meaning due to the movement of the subject wanting to learn and wanting to know, and this is induced (driven) by the fact that we are incomplete human beings.

Methodological procedures

The research was characterized as qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive. According to Gerhardt and Silveira (2009), qualitative methods seek to explain why things are happening, thus expressing what should be done. The exploratory specificity, according to Gil (2008), seeks to help familiarization and knowledge on the subject without proposing a hypothesis for analysis. Finally, it is understood that the descriptive profile focuses on a population, phenomenon, or the establishment of relationships between variables.

The study starts from an excerpt from the doctoral thesis entitled “Desafios escolares na compreensão dos diretores brasileiros: evidências da relação com o saber”\textsuperscript{2}, defended in the year 2022, by the present author. The survey was carried out via email due to the Brazilian territorial extension and the impossibility of doing it in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An open questionnaire was sent to 150,000 school directors across the country. 1,372 managers responded to the instrument, and of these, only 1,313 were selected to participate in the survey, as the responses were complete.

Data collection was carried out using an open questionnaire, which at first allowed the characterization of the school, with a description of the administrative department, INEP code, municipality, and state of the school. Accordingly, there were two discursive questions, in which the school director should present the problems faced and the solutions given for them. Later, the director should indicate a challenge that he considers important to improve the quality of teaching.

With the applicability of the instrument and the answers obtained, different forms of analysis were used. In this sectioned study, the RcS – Theory proposed by Bernard Charlot will be presented, in which it is understood that “the subject of knowledge develops an activity that is his own: argumentation, verification, experimentation, willingness to demonstrate, prove, validate” (Charlot, 2000, p.60).

\textsuperscript{2} School challenges in the understanding of Brazilian principals: evidence of the relationship with knowledge.
In this way, when exercising his function, the school director uses the object-knowledge (academic), but also two other types of knowledge, the practical and the relational, which are intertwined. Therefore, there is a need to reflect on tools that allow new knowledge and learning. Faced with this, the discussion is guided by the main challenge presented by school directors - the lack of family participation in school.

**Results and discussion**

To arrive at the analysis in the theoretical perspective of Bernard Charlot RcS, two other forms of analysis were used – Iramuteq Software and Content Analysis. These previous steps made it possible to identify the main challenges faced by school directors, and thus establish a correlation with the French theory.

The Iramuteq software made it possible to quantitatively verify, through cloud and word class, the challenges that appeared the most. Faced with this, the need was felt to carry out content analysis, in order to understand the challenges that were closest and those that were most distant from the Brazilian regions.

Contradicting the hypotheses raised by the researcher, the most recurrent challenge in the five Brazilian regions was – the participation of the family. It is known that with the advent of family transformation, due to social, economic, cultural and similar changes, they make the school, its educators, rethink the educational demands of its students. The relationship between family and school is currently disassociated, since both have their characteristics and interdependencies.

It is known that family and school institutions are dependent, but they are encouraged individually; both are directed towards the integral development of subjects. For Poland and Dessen (2005) the participatory process of parents and/or guardians begins by calling them into the school. Making the subjects become an integral part of the institution does not need to be expository, controlling, and reverse, but with dialogue, listening to demands and needs, and allowing space for them to have a voice, from that, the relationship starts to have a design healthy and prosperous. Therefore, the family and the school emerge as two fundamental institutions that trigger people's evolutionary processes, acting as drivers or inhibitors of their physical, intellectual, and social growth.

Therefore, it is understood that the relational process is fundamental and the core of this discussion, since both the family and the school need to relate with a focus on the following objects – subject development and subsequent learning. In view of this, the RcS was used to
understand these relational assumptions more deeply. The lack of family participation leads school directors to point out, in their responses, as a major challenge for the school. It is so significant, to the point of being the category that had the most similarity among the five regions, that is, all regions indicated the absence of the family as a challenge.

First, it is important to reflect on what the school understands by family participation in school. According to Lima (1998), there are several factors that influence the involvement of school actors, such as: access to information, the degree of complexity of decisions, the dimensions of technology, among others. These factors were analyzed by the author (Lima, 1998), having as a theoretical point of view the participation practiced at the level of school organization, as there is one more question to think about: what are the purposes and/or benefits of the school in involving families?

This means rethinking policies on participation, because even though these are guaranteed by law, it is not common for either the school or the State to verify how participation is practiced in a school organizational context, or even how it is understood, that is, in the effectiveness of sharing in everyday action. A prominent point appears in this category, as it exists by law - the family's participation in the school, but not its effective monitoring, so why does the family have to participate? Do the school and its educators, or even the families, understand what their participation in the students' educational process would be? And more, does the school want this participation?

It is known that both institutions have affective ties and daily contact with students, but, based on Charlot's theoretical perspectives, relational knowledge comprises a relationship with the other, and in the aforementioned case, the relationship may not exist. Therefore, this analysis begins by indicating that perhaps there is no relational knowledge, that is, the lack of communication and closer relationship with the family, or even with the student, reveals a lack of knowledge on the part of educators and vice versa.

The absence of this relational knowledge is old (it is not characterized as something new in Brazilian schools, and perhaps it has negatively accentuated after the COVID-19 pandemic), complex (it involves power relations), and quite expressive in all regions of Brazil. The family-school relationship, for many years, has been marked by discovering culprits for students' learning problems, as, without wanting to generalize, educators (because they feel frustrated in their roles) seek to blame someone for this fact.

The absence of relational knowledge ends up generating stereotyped views that hinder or even prevent a possible dialogue for some problems related to the teaching and learning
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process. As mentioned in the previous section, the issue is complex and begins with the delimitation of functions, that is, with the understanding of what is incumbent on each subject responsible for the social, critical and reflective formation of students. By blaming families, especially when educators say that these families are, or are, unstructured, the distance is aggravated and reproduces attitudes contrary to the perspective of successful teaching and student learning.

This is a more complex challenge than it seems, as principals reveal how they have sought solutions to this problem: intentionally inviting family members to participate in activities and projects involving the school (anniversaries, lectures, etc.). In this context, there is a question of conception of what it is to participate for directors, in general, in which participation is understood as that essentially in which the person responsible for the student will respond to the school's requests.

According to Reali e Tancredi (2002), the view of families, in general, is that interactions occur at the school entrance and exit times (at the gate), at parent meetings called by the school or on commemorative dates, therefore, treating them a superficial relationship limited to “formal” situations, such as bimonthly meetings and celebrations, always organized by the school.

For Luiz (2021):

By looking at the relationship between family and school, with a more sociological focus, we realize that the determining functions are environmental and cultural. The relationship between education and social class shows a certain conflict between the socializing purposes of the school and the education of the family, that is, between the objectives of the school and the organization of the family. Families that do not fit the supposed model desired by the school are considered to be largely responsible for school disparities. The representation of a correct family model receives value and becomes natural, and the school institution itself disseminates the idea that some families act far from their objective. Due to this divergence, the school's concern becomes strategies for the socialization of families, and it expands its scope of action, with the intention of assuming or replacing the family in its socializing function (Luiz, 2021, p. 64 and 65).

Educators in schools were assigned the transmission of knowledge accumulated by society, and the family was responsible for teaching values and standards of behavior; in view of social changes, these roles have become confused. Even though it has been perceived by educators for some time, the knowledge to create interactions with neighbors – different from a relationship with exchanges of favors – is not an easy task, as it requires trust and the creation
of strategies. The fact that family members are physically present does not mean that they are participating; the qualifications for participation are still questionable.

It is a relational knowledge to be constituted, and perhaps the beginning of this path can be in the strengthening of the democratic management in the school, with a guarantee of the participation of the relatives in the constitution of the School Councils (SC), with a view to propitiating the representativeness and the parity in this collegiate. According to Polonia e Dessen (2005), the establishment of an open dialogue, prioritizing clear, simple, and understandable communication, enables the acceptance of responsibilities and facilitates understanding.

Relational knowledge becomes effective in the relationship with the other. Therefore, it is through dialogue that educators and the management team can explain to family members the objectives of the school, participation in the teaching and learning process, and the importance of the role of the teacher and the family.

Final considerations

The study aimed to understand, from the perspective of the Relationship with Knowledge (ReS), the relational knowledge of school principals, and the results made it possible to know that the non-existence of a relationship is also knowledge.

It is believed that the lack of establishment of the family-school relationship stems from the non-delimitation of institutional roles and, in addition, the resistance to promoting the bond, since the blame between both spheres persists, in the face of everyday challenges. Added to this, it is understood that the lack of participation of families is also directly related to the lack of understanding of the spaces in which these subjects may contribute to the school institution.

To this end, it is deemed necessary to transform the school culture, in which family members are only asked to demand learning and behavior, without establishing an effective and participatory dialogue. Therefore, relational knowledge demonstrated the existing lack in the educational scenario regarding listening, dialogue, the search for community belonging, as well as the promotion of a democratic management that encompasses the needs of the public served.
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