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The preparation for schooling from an empowering construction perspective, between teachers and family members

Abstract

The present research shows how to achieve the preparation for schooling, by taking as a starting point, the empowering construction perspective between teachers and family members. It demonstrates the orientation of families' to attain the conditions for their special needs children, associated to intellectual disability, to enter nursery. This study proposes a system of workshops, through which families have a protagonic role and offer their experiences while teachers take advantage of this context to potentiate the learning process of basic elements and the affective environment that guarantee the successful acquisition of new contents at school.

Keywords: the preparation for schooling, the empowering construction, the orientation of families.

Introduction

In Cuba, close links between the school, the family and the community have been considered a prerequisite for achieving success in the educational influences that are developed with children. It is recognized that infants who are supported by their families make progress and develop satisfactorily in their learning. When families participate in their children's education, not only do they grow, but the entire family develops.

The recurrence and complexity of the study of the family has constituted the object of study of research carried out in the field of Psychology, Sociology and Pedagogy. In Cuba, the work of authors such as Arés, Núñez, Castro, Blanco, Castillo, Martínez, García and Padrón has been outstanding for several decades. These studies, allow to affirm the importance that takes the familiar problems approached from different edges of great importance, the pertinence and the humanist character.

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Society, human culture and scientific knowledge, in theory recognize diversity, but at the same time has established certain canons or models of the human being in which intelligence, beauty, harmony of the body structure, from the distribution of internal organs, external physical features, height and weight are weighted. The couple expects strong, well-formed, healthy, intelligent children, with an aspiration formed from the model that humanity has built, so it is very difficult to prepare oneself to expect a different descendant.

The family is the most important living cell in our society. If it is the family with special children, it is those relatives who most want their children to progress in life.^{1,2}

Research on the family in Cuba, from the point of view of the social sciences, had a boom from the 1980s onwards. Scientists from institutions such as the Center for Psychological and Sociological Research (CIPS), from faculties of the University of Havana such as Psychology, Philosophy, History and Sociology, and Law, or the Center for Demographic Studies, as well as from other academic centers and entities of Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of Education, have stood out.³

Also, it is a limitless source of experiences and knowledge, which allows the successful completion of the developmental achievements of children, as well as the objectives of the educational program. Therefore, it is necessary to guide parents on how to take advantage of different situations of daily life, as well as to create conditions at home that facilitate this work.

Similarly, different authors have dedicated themselves to the study of family orientation, highlighting the need to guide families to successfully fulfill their role as part of society, an issue which the author focuses her attention on due to the scope of the research.

It is necessary for the whole family to know what they should do, and how to do it, so that their children with special educational needs grow up in an environment rich in stimulation that favours the development of all aspects of their formation, in such a fundamental stage of life as early childhood; where the possibilities for their development are innumerable and where the foundations are laid for all their later growth and formation.

Several documentary sources were used to locate the bibliographic documents. The National Education System has achieved significant levels of performance in each of its subsystems. An example of this is Early Childhood Education, which in its two forms of educational care, the institutional: nursery schools and preschool classrooms, and the non-institutional: Educate

Your Child Program covers 99.5%, practically all children between 0 and 6 years of age, with the same aim: to achieve the maximum possible development in children and prepare them for school.⁴

Given the importance of adequate family orientation, preschool education gives priority to family preparation within its guidelines, both through institutional and non-institutional channels.⁵

The early childhood educator today faces one of the most limiting problems of pedagogical practice: the preparation of children for their families at this stage, which is why his or her objective is to develop the full potential of children from zero to six years of age, while at the same time taking family guidance as a fundamental pillar, which implies high levels of complexity in his or her professional work.⁶

The Cuban model of care for people with disabilities, intended to be intersectoral from early childhood, with advice and monitoring at the municipal level, is a reference at the regional and global level. Achieving a true inclusion of people with disabilities is our challenge as a society to guarantee the full enjoyment of their rights.

In this sense, joint activity is the main way of preparation. In relation to the orientation to the families of preschool children with special educational needs, the project Prevention and integral attention to children with special educational needs in these ages directed by specialists of the preschool education where a set of manuals of orientation to the family, teachers and specialists with theoretical and practical elements are proposed to educate the children with the help of their families, they are approached particularly elements for the orientation of the families with children with intellectual disability when facilitating the coherence and integrality in the educational process although the preparation for the school life is not intended.

Within the heterogeneity of the families of children with special educational needs, those whose children have intellectual disabilities are typified by lengthy care, pessimism in the child's progress and lack of motivation for curricular performance.

Research carried out in the 20th century by researchers such as Bozhovich; Venguer, López, Siverio, and Franco agree in asserting that preparation for school life is a very important educational task, essentially determined by the increasingly complex and high level of school demands.

For this reason, teachers are responsible for guiding families in order to guarantee the necessary conditions for their children to enter

school. They affirm the need for family participation in preparing their children for school.⁷

Specialists, both in Cuba and abroad, agree on the need for early diagnosis and care from the very conception, as an essential means of prevention and to achieve greater incorporation and social integration of these children from an early age.⁸

It is necessary then, to consider the premises for the preparation for school life of preschool children with Special Educational Needs associated with intellectual disability. Those presented below have been inferred from the psycho-pedagogical characteristics of these children, the achievements to be made at the end of the preparatory grade and the results of research carried out by Cuban specialists.

Therefore, the premises for the preparation for school life of children with Special Educational Needs associated with intellectual disability, where psychomotor development, sensory perception, memory, imagination and thinking are found, should be stimulated in the context of the family. It also stimulates the processes of attention, language, socialization, independence and self-validation.

All this allows the formation of feelings and emotions, of behavioral habits, correct nutrition habits and the development of the voluntary nature of psychic processes.

Materials and Methods

For the development of this work, several methods and empirical techniques were developed, such as participant observation, in order to verify the activities of orientation to families for the preparation for school life of preschool children with special educational needs associated with intellectual disability from a family context.

An in-depth interview was carried out as an important method in the collection of information from the meaning for each of the family members of their contribution to the preparation for school life of preschool children with special educational needs associated with intellectual disability.

The analysis of documents is used to check how the problems related to family orientation to contribute to school life preparation of preschool children with special educational needs associated to intellectual disability are reflected in the documents and to triangulate the data integrating the information collected in the search for regularities reflected in the investigated context.

Results and Discussion

The current analysis of the problem places us before the contradiction between the necessary preparation for school life of children with special educational needs associated with intellectual disability and the insufficient guidance to families to undertake work in this direction.

With the application of the instruments, results have been obtained that allow us to verify that the type of activity they use are educational talks and informative murals, a favorable climate is appreciated, the interchange between the participants and of these with the one who directs the activity was not limited either reflective processes were appreciated, the activities were directed to transmit knowledge and/or information on the topic and in smaller measure to the motivational-regulatory and communicative ones, the experiences of the family on the topic developed in the activity are taken advantage of to a lesser extent.

In the interview carried out with the family members about their contribution to the preparation for school life of their children, the scarce knowledge about the preparation for school life and the potential of the children for their successful passage through school is verified, they recognize the importance of their involvement in the process, the need to be guided and their protagonist from home.

In the analysis of the documents produced for the minutes of the meetings of the Executive of the Circle Collective and Cycle Collectives, the projection of family orientation activities can be seen, although they are not systemic in nature and are not directed towards preparation for school life.

Family is the name of the oldest institution since the emergence of the human species. It is recognized as a vital group in the socialization of the human being and of special value in the system of social relations. The initial experiences that take place in the home leave lasting marks and its role is extraordinarily important in shaping the conception of the world and personal projects throughout existence.

There is no consensus on unique criteria to define the family, where different positions are evident.

In studies about the family as a historical category, taking into account elements of different nature, it has a historical-cultural, socio-economic and individual expression. It is implicit in the conceptualization of the family, its projection as a social institution and evidence of its functions as a universally accepted organization. In addition, elements of the family as a system are justified.

For society, the family is an institution with a certain juridical status, with a determined material situation, with norms of social conscience that

regulate it. For its members, it is the human group in which they live, where they manifest important psychological motivations and carry them out in various activities. It is the closest group in which they identify and develop a strong sense of belonging, where they face and try to solve the problems of life together.¹

Today, the participation of the family in the education of children is a necessity, not only within the family, but also in other educational contexts, since they contribute to the acquisition of the bases for their conception of the world. It is responsible for transmitting knowledge, habits, and norms of behavior, educating character and instilling interest, motivations and positions in life, elements of their culture. The child receives from the family a social heritage, from language as a fundamental means of communication to ideology. All these elements are strengthened and expanded through the process of socialization, which begins with the family's participation and involvement in the child's life.

Parents must be aware that participation is not only about attending, but also about getting emotionally involved in the processes that the child experiences on a daily basis. In this respect, the involvement of the family implies consent, since they feel fully involved with the preparation of their children. However, the author of this research considers that in addition to the consent and approval of families, it is appropriate to point out some characteristics that should identify the relationship between teachers and families, as it means:

- A relationship of equality and mutual respect.
- Teachers who share and respect the individuality of each family.
- Teachers and families who take responsibility for the formation of their children, on.
- The basis of respect, discipline and love.
- Willingness to share knowledge, skills, experiences and decisions.

It is not making decisions for a person, but helping them to solve their problems. It means helping the individual to consciously mobilize his potential, face his limitations and decide the course of his life. It contemplates social and individual objectives, since at the same time that it results in the full development of man; it makes him capable of contributing more to society.

Family orientation in the educational context is a type of professional relationship of pedagogical help to the family, directed by the teacher or specialist to develop the personological resources of the family members that implies reflection and personal participation

of its members in the solution of family problems and tasks.⁷

Families must feel the need to clarify their doubts, to answer their questions; but at the same time they must be encouraged, sensitized to the need for effective family guidance, through relevant dialogue, attention to the individual characteristics of each family, accurate information on the benefits of guidance for family dynamics, by reducing or eliminating educational conflicts, with the unquestionable participation and responsibility of the guidance provider. These interrelated aspects make up a system. When this happens, it is possible to carry out an effective family orientation, which allows families to appropriate tools that help them to face problems in the sports context, family conflicts and give solutions at the right moments.

In the case of the work of family orientation, the above has a consequent application. It is vital not only that families know themselves, know how to use their intelligence and take advantage of their potentialities to make wise decisions that have a favorable impact on their functional dynamics, but also that they exercise systematic, consecutive and regulatory control, with the consequent satisfaction of the orientation needs that people always have.

Guidance should be seen as a long and necessary process for all people in order to prepare them for the efficient performance of age-specific tasks. It means help and not imposition of one person's point of view on another. It is not making decisions for someone, but helping them to solve their problems, to develop their criteria and to take responsibility for their decisions. It contemplates individual and social objectives, since at the same time it benefits the full development of man; it makes him capable of contributing more to society.^{8,13}

In preschool, one of the fundamental aspects to consider in guiding families is their contribution to preparing the child for learning in school.

The family and the child's circle have a common mission: to contribute to the maximum possible development of children from 0 to 6 years of age in preschool. The care of children from 3 to 6 years of age with intellectual disabilities is provided in preschool education institutions through the early stimulation consultations of the Diagnostic and Guidance Centre in which parents and the community participates.

It is important then, what characteristics have the children who are prepared for school life, in this case they present special educational needs associated with intellectual disability.

By virtue of the above, preparing children for school entry, when they begin to learn at school,

is at present a very important educational task, determined essentially by the increasingly complex and high level of demands of primary school and, on the other hand, by the awareness of the great possibilities that the preschool stage has for achieving greater development of children of these ages.⁹

In this order of analysis, intellectual disability is assumed to be that which is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which are expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability has its origin before the age of 18.¹⁰

It is important to keep in mind that not all areas of development are equally affected, and that there are strengths and potential for development in these children. This aspect is very important in the process of early stimulation, because these children are often as capable as other children of their age, and in some areas, they are sometimes more capable than they are. The important thing is that the people around the child and are responsible for their care and development, are able to discover which areas are less damaged in him and therefore stronger, to support them and enhance the overall development.

From the above, it can be deduced that the child with special educational needs associated with intellectual disability, when preparing for school life, must achieve adequate development and preparation for school learning. Based on the intellectual skills developed, on the volitional and moral qualities achieved in educational work, on the desire to know what has been formed in the children, the first grade teacher will be able to work successfully in their subsequent development and guarantee a high level of school achievement.

It can be concluded then, as a substantial element for the orientation of families with children with special educational needs associated to intellectual disability, the contribution of teachers based on theoretical knowledge and the protagonist of the family in their practical experiences to take advantage of daily situations according to the development of their children. The process is considered from the construction of powers where both entities are united by a common objective.

The analysis carried out allows us to specify the following in the orientation of the families to contribute to the preparation for school life of preschool children with special educational needs associated with intellectual disability:

- The need to create spaces for exchange and reflection among families and between families and teachers, in order to contribute to the

development of knowledge and habits that allow children to access school in adequate conditions.

- The need to take advantage of the family's experiences in order to strengthen, from the daily activities of the home, the preparation in the intellectual, motivational-regulatory and communicative order for school learning.

Family and school have different but complementary and necessary roles in this process towards this common objective and, certainly, it could be said that in a few years very significant progress has been seen in this direction, although it is true that -depending on the national context- the road to be travelled is still very long.¹¹

The results obtained allow us to reflect on the process of orienting families to contribute to the preparation for school life of preschool children with special educational needs associated with intellectual disability, as well as on the need to contribute to this issue through scientifically designed studies.

The family's educational role is fulfilled both spontaneously in the activities of everyday household life and through the conscious and voluntary intentions of parents and other family members or adults.^{12,14}

The professional research experience of the authors and empirical findings, through various sources, indicate the following as the main causes of the lack of guidance for the family to contribute to the preparation for school life of preschool children with special educational needs associated with intellectual disabilities:

- In the methodological work of the children's institutions, no activities have been considered for the theoretical deepening and the routes for the orientation to the families that contribute to the preparation for the school life of their children.

- In the design of activities for family orientation, the approach to contents related to preparation for school life has not been privileged.

- Families have limitations related to: the level of knowledge about school readiness, the potential of home activities to contribute to school readiness.

- There is not always a correspondence between the content set for family guidance and the needs for their contribution to school readiness of their children.

Conclusions

The review carried out about the theoretical-methodological aspects that support the topic allows to identify as relevant elements that the preparation of the families in terms of school readiness of their children, has presented

insuficiencias in the inclusion of distinctive elements for those parents whose children present special educational needs associated to intellectual disability.

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