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# Adoption in the school context: Exploring perspectives

## *Adoção no Contexto Escolar: explorando olhares*

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### Abstract

#### Objective

This article sought to analyze the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the school trajectory of adopted children. For this, Elementary School (3rd to 7th grade) teachers and adoptive parents were interviewed, investigating how they perceive adopted children's possible successes and difficulties in school, and if there is a relationship between adoption and school performance.

#### Method

The theoretical-methodological perspective of the “Rede de Significações” [Network of Meanings] was employed, seeking to understand and investigate the perceptions of the interviewees in a contextualized and articulated way. It was understood that it is important to go beyond the analysis of the child's individual components (as a biological or adopted child), considering the interactional network and the context in which he/she is inserted.

#### Results

As results, teachers attributed a direct influence on learning to the “family structure”, while parents focused their representations on individual issues of their children.

#### Conclusion

The children's school difficulties and successes, therefore, were not directly related to adoption, but to previous experiences and the current family context.

**Keywords:** Adoption; Learning; School context.

### Resumo

#### Objetivo

Este artigo buscou analisar as percepções de pais e professores a respeito da trajetória escolar de crianças adotadas. Para isto, entrevistamos professores do Ensino Fundamental (3º ao 7º ano) e pais adotivos, investigando como compreendem a existência de possíveis sucessos e dificuldades escolares nas crianças adotadas, e se há relação entre adoção e atuação escolar.

**Método**

Utilizamos a perspectiva teórico-metodológica da Rede de Significações, buscando compreender e investigar as percepções dos entrevistados de forma contextualizada e articulada. Entendemos ser importante ir além da análise de componentes individuais da criança (como filho biológico ou adotivo), considerando a rede interacional e o contexto em que ela está inserida.

**Resultados**

Como resultados, os professores atribuíram à “estrutura familiar” influência direta na aprendizagem, enquanto os pais focalizaram suas representações em questões individuais dos filhos.

**Conclusão**

As dificuldades e os sucessos escolares das crianças, portanto, não foram diretamente relacionados à adoção, mas às vivências anteriores e ao contexto familiar atual.

**Palavras-chave:** Adoção; Aprendizagem; Contexto escolar.

To discuss the issue of adoption, it is necessary to understand that the search for guarantees of children's and adolescents' rights, has been consolidating as a highly relevant point in research, in current legislation, as well as in guiding documents that deal with conceptions of childhood and family. Adoption, as an action among other possible ones, seeks to ensure that the needs of the child/adolescent are a priority. According to the current regulations – the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (ECA, Child and Adolescent Statute) (Presidência da República, 1990; Frente Parlamentar Mista da Criança e do Adolescente, 2020), the National Adoption Law n.º. 12,010 (Presidência da República, 2009), the Adoption Law n.º. 13,509 (Presidência da República, 2017), and the *Plano Nacional de Promoção, Proteção e Defesa do Direito de Crianças e Adolescentes à Convivência Familiar e Comunitária* (National Plan for the Promotion, Protection, and Defense of the Right of Children and Adolescents to Family and Community Living) (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente & Conselho Nacional de Assistência Social, 2006) – adoption has an essential obligation to benefit the child with the establishment of bonds and family ties, offering more than a solution to one's loss of family or social exclusion, providing them with a healthy human development amidst harmonious and familiar living (Rossetti-Ferreira, 2008).

According to the current conceptions of childhood and family, adoption has been presented as an important way to promote and ensure the protection, development, and welfare of children. However, it should be understood as one of the last resources, provided other possibilities that favor the strengthening of bonds of the child or adolescent with the biological family have already been exhausted.

In this sense, Cláudia Fonseca, an interview in the magazine *Desidades*, Electronic magazine for scientific dissemination of children, when talking about the *circulation of children* (term used by the author to denominate the transfer of a child between one family and another, whether in the form of temporary custody or adoption itself), comments that, currently, there is a great debate about the removal of children from their families (Desidades, 2020). The author points out that in the search for the guarantee of children's rights it is necessary that they be removed as soon as possible from the situation of risk in which they find themselves, at the expense of a possible “fast-tracking” of the usual processes originally foreseen by the ECA. This “expedition” of the adoption process is understood by the author as a complex point, which needs to be carefully thought through.

It is understood that the issue of adoption needs to be constantly studied and discussed both in its legal character and in its psychological, social, and cultural aspects. Weber (2003) points out that studies involving adoption have been growing at a sluggish pace, despite the significance of the subject. The author states that adoption is a subject of high relevance, both socially and

scientifically, and it is essential to value research as a tool for discovery and production of knowledge on the subject, since it is through studies that it becomes possible to clarify the points where there is need for intervention and changes.

According to Weber (2005), among the several points about adoption that deserve more research and studies is the prejudice that exists in relation to the adopted child. The author highlights that most psychological studies around adoption deal with the theme of adoption in a fatalistic manner, considering the adopted child as an individual who will forever carry the image of abandonment and who at some point in life will face problems in relational spheres. In this sense, she believes that the way in which families deal with the issue is what makes the difference, that is, the way family members understand and deal with adoption reflects directly on the relationships established in the family dynamics.

Despite the changes in laws that place adoption as an important protective measure and one of the options of family constitution, according to Weber (2003), there are some obstacles regarding the conceptions and practices of adoption which deserve more attention and scientific studies, thus avoiding the propagation of prejudice that may accompany the life of the adopted child/adolescent.

It is known that in Brazil the adoption of children is still associated to practices grounded in ideological legacies based on the attempt to reproduce a biological family model.

Such ideologies tend to place greater value on blood relations than on adoption, and are not in line with current conceptions of family. They prioritize biological bonds over emotional ones and promote a particular model of family organization as the ideal, while disregarding others that could also provide a healthy environment for a child's development.

According to Veloso, Zamora, and Rocha-Coutinho (2016), from a psychic point of view, families are always constructed and children are always adopted, regardless of consanguineous ties, since it is the affective ties that will organize the signifier "family".

In studies found during the literature review, we found, among the different perspectives on adoption, visions that drive the circulation of prejudices and myths, both around the adopted child and the family, adoptive and biological. The stigmas that permeate adoption focus, among other aspects, on the breakdown of the initial attachment and bonds as the main targets of discussions about traumas and possible pathologies that the adopted child may face. Among these difficulties are those related to emotional development, behavior, sociability, learning, and school trajectory as a whole (Piccini, 1986; Sousa et al., 2020; Woiler, 1997).

In this direction, Sousa et al. (2020) points out that the mother/child separation, the breaking of the bond, and affective deprivation can introduce difficulties to the child's life, arguing that emotional factors can hinder learning, since the processes triggered by deprivation affect development.

Reflecting on this view, Morelli et al. (2015) present data from studies that, by attributing great importance to biological factors, place a high value on consanguineous ties, which helps in the formation of prejudices of filiation, since, according to the authors, it is more convenient to justify conducts by genetics than to reflect on the relationships and the family environment. The authors also highlight that, when analyzing the formation of a family, it is necessary to think about the environment in which the relationships take place, regardless of whether the family constitution occurs by adoption or not.

Noteworthy, the Brazilian literature about adoption, when it comes to the learning and schooling trajectory of adopted children, is quite scarce. When looking for research on this theme, it was noticed that there are few references. Studies on the subject point to adoption as a central

factor for the emergence of possible difficulties in the development of children (Pitombo, 2005; Suardi, 2007; Teixeira Rocha & Athaide, 2009). In these studies, low school performance is linked to possible traumas and ruptures experienced by the adopted child.

Besides these, other studies, when considering adoption and learning, direct the discussion to the psychological and emotional characteristics of the child itself and/or to supposed destructuring and lack of personal resources of the family members, seen as necessary for school learning (Berthoud, 1997; Piccini, 1986; Rossi and Rossi, 2017; Sousa et al., 2020; Woiler, 1997).

Rossi and Rossi (2017, p. 2) present some reflections on how the adopted child is perceived in the school environment, pointing out the existence of a “process of creation of a new category that demands inclusive education: the adopted child”. The authors discuss the insertion of adopted children in school dynamics and how being adopted constitutes sufficient condition to justify school problems, presenting criticism of the educational system and emphasizing that the school, by incorporating such ideology, promotes value judgments on adoption and adoptive motherhood/fatherhood as drivers of difficulties in school.

For Rossetti-Ferreira (2006), such conceptions hardly consider the dynamism in family relationships, the other interactors, the meanings, and practices present in all other contexts, marked by culture, in which adopted children are inserted, as well as the plasticity of the child for development in multiple situations. As per Dutra and Gomes (2022, p. 43):

To analyze the life situation of the adopted individual in a multifaceted and contextual manner may be the best way to deconstruct generalizing views about late adoption. These myths can lead to a fear regarding possibly irreversible marks on children and adolescents who are adopted late and contribute to the maintenance of the belief that every child with this type of history will inevitably develop some disorder.

In line with this perspective, within the context of school, it was noticed that the international literature presents greater advances in research and studies on adoption. Among these studies, we identified some articles that place the theme of adoption as central to discuss issues about homoaffective parenting and school experiences of adoptive parents – by the Rudd Adoption Research Program (<https://www.umass.edu/ruddchair>, retrieved on May 2, 2021) – bringing important discussions on the subject and reflecting in a contextual way the issues of adopted children’s learning and the relationship of adoptive families with their children’s schools.

Among the articles that relate such studies, Goldberg and McCormick (2021), when discussing adopted children’s school trajectory from their parents’ perspective, point out that adoptive parents are usually potentially involved in their children’s education and that such a stance has a strong influence on how their children will deal with school challenges. The authors highlight that adopted youth tend to ‘struggle’ more academically those who aren’t, and that this is directly related to the views of parents, who often recognize the positive contributions of the biological family and minimize their own role as adoptive parents. Thus, they conclude that parents, by perceiving and making sense of their children’s academic performance, create expectations for the future, which values the importance of this trajectory and supports their children in their school paths.

In this direction, by exposing a different view on the adoption and learning theme, and emphasizing that adoption may not be, by itself, the responsible factor for the emergence of possible difficulties at school, this discussion broadens the focus of the subject to other factors. Thus, it can be said that this is a dynamic, discontinuous course, subject to transformations, and constant adaptations and re-arrangements (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2004), which demonstrates that we are always learning, building, and helping to construct new stories.

Therefore, research that understands learning, as well as all human development, from a system of interrelationships that are established in the different contexts of life, removes the focus from the individual and extends its analysis to a broader context in which he or she is inserted. Consequently, they consider the current factors in the person's life, the interdependent relationship between several variables, as well as the individual as a subject in and of his history, and it is in this direction that this work will dialogue.

Corroborating this perspective and reinforcing the need to broaden our gaze to diverse contexts, authors such as Patto (1990, 2005), Souza (2002), Collares and Moysés (1996, 2011), and Cohen (2006, 2013), when discussing the influence of school in the context of failure in school, showed, from studies on the real conditions of Brazilian public school institutions, how many difficulties attributed to children are actually a product of the education system. They refer, thus, to the influences of school institutions in the production of the so-called "learning difficulties".

Considering such questions, this article will present the results obtained by field research that involved interviews with parents and teachers of children who had been adopted in different periods and situations. By analyzing the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding adopted children's school trajectory, it was investigated how they understand the existence of possible successes and difficulties in school for these children, seeking to understand, specifically, if, for the participants, adoption plays a role in school performance. Thus, it was possible to understand how the participants understand the role of adoption, and other possible circumscribers (limits and possibilities) in the school trajectory of children who went through the adoptive processes.

The theoretical-methodological perspective that supported the construction and analysis of the research *corpus* was the *Rede de Significações* (RedSig, Network of Meanings) (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, Silva & Carvalho, 2004; Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2007). This is a tool for understanding and investigating the processes of human development and seeks to understand such processes in their semiotic, discursive, and dialogic nature, through the multiple interactions established in socially and culturally organized contexts.

## Method

The construction of the research *corpus* used for the reflection of this article brings an investigation conducted by Castro (2011), in which 12 teachers were interviewed – based on scripts with open-ended guiding questions pertaining the research topic –, being six teachers from two municipal schools and six teachers from two private schools.

In addition to the teachers, the parents of the adopted students suggested by the schools also participated. The study aimed to ensure contact with at least one of them – father or mother<sup>3</sup>. Only one school did not authorize contact with the parents. In a total of nine adopted children, it was possible to contact the parents of five. Finally, the parents of three children (a couple and two mothers) agreed to participate in the research.

To contextualize the clippings that will be presented, below are the descriptions of the central children (who had parents and teachers participating in the research) from the interviews with the participants<sup>4</sup> (Table 1). It is worth mentioning that all the teachers agreed to participate in the research<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> It was noticed that although the fathers were involved in the interviews, the mothers were more talkative.

<sup>4</sup> All names cited in the research are fictitious, thus preserving the identity of the participants.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to the interview, both teachers and parents of the children signed an informed consent form, as regulated by resolution 196/96, which deals with ethics in research with human beings.

**Table 1***Information about central participants*

Central children	Identification	School characteristics presented	Participating parents	Participating Teachers
Gabriel	Black, 8 years old, adopted at the age of 1. 3rd grade - private school	School and behavioral difficulties, neurological and psychological issues – based on medical evaluations	Leila	Sabrina
Vitor	White, 9 years old, adopted at the age of 3. 3rd grade - municipal school	Motor difficulties. Malnutrition from birth to adoption	Marisa e César	Julia
Mariana	Brown, 12 years old, adopted as a baby. 4th grade - municipal school	School difficulties, relationship problems	Tânia	Clarice

## Instruments

The corpus was composed using the perceptions presented in the speech of the interviewed subjects, pertaining the selected axes, based on the theoretical-methodological assumptions of the RedSig (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2004).

Semi-structured scripts were used for the interviews. The interviews with parents and teachers were intended to provide a moment for conversation and reflection, consisting of questions that are far from a merely interrogative content. It is worth highlighting that we understand the construction of the narratives in the interviews as produced and presented through the interaction between interviewee and interviewer. Thus, depending on the place from which one speaks and to whom one speaks, specific meanings are constructed.

## Procedures

The study was conducted in two public schools of the municipal elementary school system, and two private elementary schools, all located in a large city in the State of São Paulo. The information was built from interviews, based on scripts with open questions about the research themes.

For the analysis, the interviews with the teachers of the three children whose parents also participated were selected. This was due to the possibility of reflection around information that involves both family and school context perspectives (Description in the previous table). Excerpts from other interviews, about the other children (who are not central), will be used to reference what is being presented.

A selection of clippings that emphasized the presence of themes related to the objectives of the study were also carried out. In view of this, some central themes, which are also points of intersection between the questions of both scripts (of teachers and parents), were selected, allowing a counterpoint between the perspectives of the participants and an articulated understanding of the speeches presented.

The main axes selected for analysis were: Conception of adoption; Conception of success and failure in school (only with teachers); Adopted child's school trajectory; Family-school relationship; Relationship between adoption and learning.

After the constitution of the *corpus*, these axes were analyzed based on the theoretical and methodological assumptions of RedSig, seeking to reflect on the relationships established in the school context, as well as on the perceptions presented in the interviewed subjects' speech about the selected axes.

It is worth mentioning that, by placing adoption as a possible circumscriber in the relationship with learning, this study sought to reflect on how the interviewees understand the child's learning and perceive adoption in this relationship, remembering that "one must always consider the relationships and circumscriptions in networks, hence differentiating the power of the circumscribers according to the context, the social partners, the situated interactions, thus characterizing a non-deterministic movement" (Silva, Rossetti-Ferreira, Carvalho, 2004, p. 103).

In this way, analyzing the parents and teachers' speeches about the same child makes it possible to understand the multiple perspectives about the person, since it is believed that different identities are possible for the same person, given that interactions and contexts emphasize specificities.

Presented below are some of the clippings considered most illustrative, which were interpreted from the theoretical aspects that guided the research. The results and discussions will be evidenced from the following items: (a) Adoption and learning: The focus on the individual and his family and (b) Rethinking approaches, roles, and scenarios: school and family.

## Results and Discussion

Seeking a concise analysis of the multiple meanings constructed on adoption and learning, the results of this research were constructed through a careful look at the perceptions presented by teachers and the family in an articulated manner.

Amid the interaction between the different contexts – family, individual, and school – we tried to verify how the adopted child is perceived – in relation to his/her school trajectory – in the opinion of his/her teachers and parents. The interviews were intended to provide a moment for dialogue and reflection.

### Adoption and learning: The focus on the individual and his family

(...) he doesn't mean any harm, he doesn't do it because he's rude, he doesn't do it because he wants to be defiant, he doesn't do it... he doesn't do it because he can't handle it, his head is a mess inside, he can't organize that thing!. (Excerpt from the interview with Gabriel's mother Leila in response to the question about what she believed was interfering with Gabriel's school performance)

The excerpt makes it clear that Leila – the mother of Gabriel (an 8 years old adopted boy) – tries to justify the boy's difficulties within the school context. In a tone of a distressing excuse, the mother says that the internal world of her son, "(...) is a mess (...)", relating the difficulties presented in the school context to internal and individual issues of her son.

It is very common to hear speeches like Leila's (also by parents or health/education professionals) that focus on the child and his/her cognitive-psychological functioning when trying to give a "diagnosis", looking for causes and blame for some deficit in the school performance of children and adolescents.

It is noticed in Leila's speech a certain influence of the diagnoses and reports Gabriel has already received throughout his schooling. It is worth mentioning that, according to information from his adoptive mother, Gabriel has some difficulties in social integration, concentration, and behavior. He has been evaluated by several professionals since the first year of life (Psychopedagogue, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, and Neurologist), with multiple diagnoses. The medical reports received can be understood as a form of seeking to understand the difficulties that, according to the mother,

Gabriel presents at school. However, we cannot help but notice that so many diagnoses lead to an exacerbation, sometimes contradictory, of medical reports, culminating in a pathologization and possible labeling in Gabriel's school and social life.

In this regard, Collares and Moysés (1996), when discussing school failure as produced inside the school institutions, use the term "Pathologization of the teaching-learning process", pointing out how a diagnosis, or even the assumptions of a professional outside the school, especially in the health area, can produce strong meanings about the teaching work, reproducing discourses inside the school that justify the difficulties presented by the students.

Noteworthy is that, many times, the diagnoses and reports offered by health professionals do not include information about the school daily life, which is valuable for the understanding the children's difficulties in school, since such difficulties were presented in the school space and many times produced there.

Souza (2002) states that, in the case of evaluations done by professionals outside the school, a fragmentation often occurs, in which the child is analyzed outside the learning context. A school complaint, according to the author, is a fragment of a complex network of social relations that, a priori, the professional who receives it is unaware of, due to the complexity of the phenomenon and the restricted and fragmented training he/she receives. Even if a child may in fact present neurological, psychological, or psychiatric dysfunctions, one must not disregard the contexts in which this child is a part of and the environments in which the difficulties present themselves.

In another of Leila's statements, it is noticed how medical diagnoses exert a strong power in her view on the subject.

I don't have an opinion, I have a doctor's report that I got today! (...) In this diagnosis that he has now, he has this hyperactivity that is called Mixed Developmental Disorder, I even have the certificate if you want to see it! (...) It really is a neurological disorder. Not intellectual, it is only organizational, it seems that he has organizational, but everyone says: he is very intelligent. (Excerpt from the interview with Gabriel's mother – Leila – in response to the question about what she believed was interfering with Gabriel's school performance)

Leila positions herself in relation to her son based on the interpretations of the diagnoses that Gabriel received from health professionals. Thus, she suggests that his behavior should be understood as a strictly particular characteristic of her son, since he would have neurological and mental reasons, as per the reports that explain his agitation.

In this excerpt, a vision of learning can be noted, that seeks in medical and scientific explanations, absolute truths that can comfort and give explanations for a behavior presented by a child at school. The status and power that a medical report exerts on the veracity of school issues can influence both the constitution of relationships in different contexts, as well as the constitution of the person.

Although Leila does not point out at any moment that these difficulties are related to adoption, she demonstrates a relentless battle to "know" what is happening to her son, failing to understand him in a broader development context, focusing on the child without considering the intervening and contextual factors that are part of Gabriel's daily life.

In the speech of Vitor's mother, Marisa, one can notice a position similar to Leila's, who seeks to defend the efficiency of her role as a mother who educates and commits herself.

It's the upbringing that dictates the rules! And there are... they say that adopted children are all... so... very... they're... children who're laid back, don't respect anyone, don't obey anyone... Rebelliousness and all that, and I... I see it, I think it's not like that! Because I can... I can educate them, they can go somewhere

and know that they have to sit... . (Excerpt from the interview with Vitor's mother – Marisa – in response to the question about how she understands her son's learning or school difficulties)

It can be noticed that Marisa positions herself as a mother who really believes that a path can be remapped and reconfigured according to the new relationships that are established. However, she puts more emphasis on the fact that this depends almost exclusively on her, as family, since for her "it is the upbringing that dictates the rules", emphasizing a one-way street in the educational process – from the mother (family) to the child – leaving little room for a mutual learning relationship between both or to question the role of the school in this process.

Castro and Piotto (2007), in a study about learning disabilities, discuss research data that – when considering difficulties or successes at school – focus on the comparison between particular characteristics of individuals and standards of normality, which are legitimized with the use of intelligence tests and decontextualized reports of the school life in which the difficulties were presented. The authors also point out that the family environment, which differs from what's considered the normal standard, is often blamed for possible difficulties that the child may present at school.

In this sense, what is noticed is that the speeches of Marisa and Leila are supported by perspectives, legitimized both in specific studies on difficulties in school learning and in research on the learning of the adopted child, that see the child's development as dependent on the family structure in which he or she is or was inserted – classified as structured or unstructured from imposed models and standards – disregarding the other intervening factors in the life of an individual.

Reflecting on the topics highlighted through the excerpts, it can be noticed that the people interviewed sometimes place the child, sometimes the family, in the spotlight, alternating the blame for the school difficulties encountered.

In this same scenario, Rossi and Rossi (2017, p. 4), when discussing the view of adoption as "charity" brought the perspective that "all adopted children, without exception, have some 'manufacturing defect' that expresses physical infirmity, gender specificities, ethnicity or race, emotional commitment (abused, neglected, abandoned), child of drug addicts, prostitutes, or delinquents", further strengthening the prejudices and myths about the adopted child and his family.

Seeking to deepen the discussions, by rethinking the focus and reflecting on such positions, when looking at other data collected, it is noticed that to abandon this blaming view and to broaden the perspectives on schooling and development of adopted children and adolescents is a possible movement.

In another interview, Flávia, Paulo, and André's teacher, when thinking about the relationship between adoption and learning, put family conduct into focus and say:

I think it depends a lot on who adopted and how this adoption occurred, right? If it was without issues, for example, in the case of Paulo and André, I think it was a smooth process and well worked out by the family who adopted, because they know, this was not kept from them (...) so I think that depending on how this adoption occurred, if it was without issues, if the family that adopted knows how to deal with this issue, and it also depends a lot on the child, right? I think, I think it's not...let's put it like this, a difficult issue, maybe it doesn't interfere if the family is present, I think that like any family, both the biological and the adoptive one, the biological one too, not being present, the child will not do well either, so I think it depends on the family. (Excerpt from the interview with Paulo and André's teacher – Flávia – in response to the question about the relationship between adoption and learning)

By saying that "it depends a lot on who adopted and how the adoption occurred", Flávia refers precisely to the fact that this is an attitude that can involve difficulties if the adoption is not

treated by the family naturally, truthfully, and with respect, which she believes is not the case with Paulo and André.

She makes a very interesting observation about adoption, establishing a comparison between the biological and the adoptive family, pointing out that regardless of how they were constituted, both should ensure a good development of the child. And this will occur as the family is present in the lives of the children. It is noticed that she also points out the existence of individual factors of the adopted child as determinants but emphasizes that the primordial is linked to the family.

It is understood that the interviewee corroborates with the perspective presented by Sousa et al. (2020), who state that adoption should be seen, from the “adoptive parents’ ability to care for these children, conforming to their needs, promoting an environment of trust and providing special care, not ignoring the traumas experienced by them” (p.90). As such, adoption goes beyond a means of genealogical continuity, but as a place to build bonds and ties of affection, bringing greater chances of reconfiguration to the lives of adopted children.

### **Rethinking approaches, roles, and scenarios: School and family**

The school’s role in the production of difficulties in school is not something evidenced by the investigated teachers. Most of them attributed the children’s possible school difficulties to family practices, either adoptive or biological, and to the children’s individual characteristics.

Some of the factors most mentioned by the teachers were: The lack or presence of family stimulation (from the adopting family), motor difficulty, neurological and psychological problems, and past events (from the biological family). Besides these factors, issues related to learning were also presented, such as behavioral difficulties, family poverty, and separation from the biological parents.

The teachers participating in the research presented statements that attributed almost exclusively to the family the responsibility for possible success or difficulties at school.

The problem is all in the family, in my opinion! I think that the school problem is nowadays in the change of life, the mother is out of the house, she works, she doesn’t have... when she gets home she doesn’t have time to take care of her child, the children are very tossed aside (...) The child that generally succeeds is the child that has family support (...) Last year, I had a class that I couldn’t wait for the year to finish. I swear, with a lot of family problems, children abandoned by mothers, these children who’re abandoned by mothers... oh god!!! I had five cases of mother abandonment, so these children abandoned by mothers, there was one who Grandma looked after, and the Grandma was a person who could more or less read, had the ability to guide the child, but there were some that had... geez! Full of bad habits, poorly educated. (Excerpt from the interview with Mariana’s teacher – Clarice – in response to a question about the concept of school failure and success)

Analyzing the discourse above it is noticed that it reflects meanings available in the socio-historical matrix that circulates around the adopted subject. When asked to talk about the subject, the presence of pre-existing dominant senses is noted, which influences their discursive position on this subject, attributing meanings and senses to the student’s difficulties.

It is worth mentioning that, in searching for the reason for difficulties at school, frequently, in the national literature on the subject, teachers cite out-of-school factors as the main, if not the only, responsible for the school difficulties, thus not considering the school and its relations as a primordial context for the understanding of such difficulties.

In this way, the discussion held here refers to the idea that:

Centering the causes of school failure on any element who, in fact, is a victim, be it the child, the family, or the teacher, builds nothing, changes nothing. It is immobilizing and constitutes an obstacle to the advancement of discussions, the search for possible proposals, both immediate and long term, for transformations in the school institution and in pedagogical practice. (Collares & Moysés, 1996, p. 217)

Accordingly, we can say that both in the theme of learning, as in the theme of adoption, the family context is sometimes often cited, with a negativist tenor, placing the family within an ideology that attributes inherent difficulties to individuals who are part of family configurations that are different from traditional ones.

In this sense, Moreno et al. (2019, p. 9) reinforce how important it is that the school knows and considers the diversity of family constitution, and state that “the teacher does not need to have a fostered or adopted student to talk about adoption in school, because, the intention is to develop an adoptive culture of respect for this form of filiation, so that adoption ceases to be seen as a taboo, as a less legitimate way to constitute a family”.

Furthermore, from a RedSig perspective, it is necessary to consider not only the individual components of the child, such as his or her status as a biological or adopted child, but the other components of the interactional network of which the child is part of. In analyzing the full context of a situation of school difficulties we must map the different elements that may exist in this situation, which may or may not be contributing to the existence of difficulties. For this, it is of utmost importance to reflect to what extent the experiences of adoption may or may not be responsible for the supposed difficulties presented by the adopted subject.

Along these lines, Kummer (2020, p. 2), when commenting on adoption and the strategies used by school professionals for pedagogical monitoring, points out that it is necessary to incorporate in teacher training, knowledge about the influences that experiences play on cognitive ability, so that the work at school can “consider that good experiences and good memories can be built from the moment that student arrived in your classroom. And make adoption a transversal theme, a theme that goes through several areas of knowledge”.

Thus, adoption can be understood as just one situation among many others experienced by the child, not assuming the character of total importance or determination for the construction of difficulties and damage to the individual’s life.

The teacher Sabrina, when talking about the possibility of adoption influencing her student’s learning tells us:

No. Not adoption. It’s like this... a psychological process, I don’t know if it’s only neurological, you know... it’s not a child that has only... (...) It doesn’t depend on adoption, no... Because he is very well accepted by the family, very well stimulated by the family. (Excerpt from the interview with Gabriel’s teacher – Sabrina – in response to the question about to what extent she believed adoption interferes with Gabriel’s school performance).

It is noticed that the teacher establishes a relationship between the student’s school performance and possible psychological dysfunctions. By pointing out that some psychological issue is reflecting negatively on the child, and that it is not related to the family dynamics – the adoptive family – she shows a certain insecurity and uncertainty in her opinion.

One notices a certain dubiety in her speech, for although she exempts the adoption from responsibility, and does not exemplify the reasons for such psychological dysfunctions, she comments that some conflict may exist in this child, not only of neurological order nor of the family relationship.

Wolier (1987), when discussing the learning of adopted subjects, states that adopted children present supposed “learning problems” due to the a priori difficulty that the individual has

in dealing with research and learning, arguing that both are related to the ruptures experienced and the process of not knowing their biological origins, which is often forbidden by the adoptive parents.

Within this view that predetermines a difficulty to a rupture, Gabriel's teacher – Sabrina – says that:

(...) In their unconscious they carry the history of rejection, 'I've already been rejected'. So I believe that any reprehension from a mother to an adopted child, he/she understands it as being rejected once again, they will abandon me again, I will be alone (...) I believe that regardless of the moment [that the adoption happened], that the child feels, I believe that the child feels "as of" the time that he/she is in the mother's womb, if he/she is wanted, if he/she is loved, if he/she is rejected. (Excerpt from the interview with Gabriel's teacher – Sabrina – in response to a question about her conception on adoption)

In this speech, Sabrina presents a discourse related to a question about the adopted child and supposed rejection traumas, suggesting that the adoptive family will always have to face the trauma of rejection to prevent the child from feeling abandoned again.

Challenging such postures, Weber (2005), when talking about the effects of abandonment and institutionalization, emphasizes that we should not think of such issues as insurmountable traumas for the children's lives. For the author, these experiences are susceptible to change as the encounter of affective ties is a sufficiently powerful situation to make one aware of oneself and of the world, reinventing new models for the functioning of life.

In this direction, as Silva et al. (2004, p. 97) state: "The reorganization of positions assumed by people is always possible, since we conceive that human beings are constituted in a process of semiotically mediated social interactions, where the person dialectically transforms the environment that constitutes him/her".

In this sense, throughout life, subjects can reconfigure their trajectories, being that encounters play a fundamental role, and can both collaborate to the crystallization of some circumscriptions and trajectories and can introduce new relationships between different people and contexts. In this way, at every moment, the creation of new places and positions can be assumed by the individuals/subjects.

## Conclusion

From the speeches presented, it was possible to perceive how much most people who live with adopted children demonstrate little knowledge about the diversity of facets involved in adoption.

As we have seen, many scientific studies, by basing themselves on a pathologizing model of learning, legitimize prejudices that, constituted of principles of scientific neutrality, end up blaming the child – or his family – without considering other elements of the context in which the difficulty may be inserted.

Based on the discussed clippings, it is noted that adoption in itself does not appear as a determinant event in adoptees' school difficulties. However, family relationships are frequently evoked when talking about the difficulties or successes of adopted children at school – both from the perspective of teachers and parents.

Thus, from a broader view regarding the issue of adoption and learning, a single isolated factor, such as being adopted, cannot be responsible for the construction of supposed school difficulties. Along these lines, the difficulties are perceived as a product of several relationships and

meanings of the individual with the contexts of which he is part of and his interaction partners, not considering, therefore, any factor in isolation, but the relationship among them.

According to the results and discussions presented here, an expansion in the field of studies and research on the theme of adoption in relation to school/learning is required, thus fostering reflections and practices that assist in the deconstruction of myths and prejudices about adoption, adopted people, and their families.

In this same path, we highlight the importance and need for a program or project that can provide training and capacity building for professionals working in the school (teachers, principals, coordinators, and employees) to understand issues related to adoption and the adoptive family.

The effective development of projects that deal with this issue will allow children who have been through situations of risk/neglect, violence, and ruptures to have their development guaranteed, preventing exclusion from circumscribing their learning relations inside and outside of school.

Besides continuing education projects, some didactic and pedagogical possibilities that involve the several family configurations (Family-centered rounds, storytelling with readings of children's books/literature that deal with the theme of adoption and different family configurations) must be incorporated into the school routine, treating the subject as a transversal part of the curriculum.

We suggest the proposal the contribution of children's literature to promote the culture of adoption in schools, present and discuss book titles with very rich plots for the development of practices that contemplate the different family configurations, the challenges of adoption, the experience in shelters, as well as the physical and cultural differences between families.

Thus, we consider it necessary that the whole society can mobilize itself for the realization of new reflections, practices, questionings, senses, and meanings around the theme presented.

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## Contributors

L. F. R. FERREIRA DE CASTRO carried out the research (constitution and analysis) and wrote the article, under the supervision and review of M. C. ROSSETTI-FERREIRA. The authors contributed substantially to the production of the article. During the entire construction process (data collection, analysis, and writing) both authors contributed and were actively present.



