

School Psychology in Student Assistance: Case Study at Cefet - MG Araxá

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Abstract

This research aims to know and analyze the performance of the school psychologist in Student Assistance at the Federal Center of Technological Education of Minas Gerais (Cefet-MG) in the light of Critical School Psychology. We conducted a documentary survey and semi-structured interviews with managers, technicians, teachers, a mother and students. After transcribing the interviews, we performed content analysis, and organized three thematic axes: 1) The constitution of Student Assistance in Cefet-MG Araxá; 2) Student Assistance according to some professionals of the institution and 3) About the school psychologist at Cefet-MG Araxá. Student Assistance is associated with student care and, still, little is known about the possibilities of action for the benefit of teachers and technicians. By giving educational actors the opportunity to participate, reflect and become more aware of educational processes, institutions outline a promising reality for Student Assistance and School Psychology.

Keywords: School Psychology; students; higher education.

Psicología Escolar en la Asistencia Estudiantil: estudio de caso en el Cefet – MG Araxá

Resumen

En esta investigación se tiene el objetivo conocer y analizar la actuación del psicólogo escolar en la Asistencia Estudiantil en el Centro Federal de Enseñanza Tecnológico de Minas Gerais (Cefet-MG) a la luz de la Psicología Escolar Crítica. Realizamos levantamiento documental y entrevistas semi-estructuradas con gestores, técnicos, profesores, una madre y estudiantes. Tras la transcripción de las entrevistas, efectuamos análisis de contenido, siendo organizados tres ejes temáticos: 1) La constitución de la Asistencia Estudiantil en el Cefet-MG Araxá; 2) A Asistencia Estudiantil según algunos actores de la institución y 3) Sobre la psicóloga escolar en el Cefet-MG Araxá. La Asistencia Estudiantil está asociada a la atención al estudiante y poco se percibe, aún, la posibilidad de una actuación volcada a los docentes y técnicos. Al dar oportunidad a los actores educacionales la participación, reflexión y concientización cuanto al proceso educativo, una realidad promisoriosa se delineará para la institución, la Asistencia Estudiantil y la Psicología Escolar.

Palabras clave: Psicología Escolar; estudiantes; enseñanza universitaria.

Psicologia Escolar na Assistência Estudantil: estudo de caso no Cefet – MG Araxá

Resumo

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo conhecer e analisar a atuação do psicólogo escolar na Assistência Estudantil no Centro Federal de Ensino Tecnológico de Minas Gerais (Cefet-MG) à luz da Psicologia Escolar Crítica. Realizamos levantamento documental e entrevistas semiestruturadas com gestores, técnicos, professores, uma mãe e estudantes. Após a transcrição das entrevistas, efetuamos análise de conteúdo, sendo organizados três eixos temáticos: 1) A constituição da Assistência Estudantil no Cefet-MG Araxá; 2) A Assistência Estudantil segundo alguns atores da instituição e 3) Sobre a psicóloga escolar no Cefet-MG Araxá. A Assistência Estudantil está associada ao atendimento ao estudante e pouco se percebe, ainda, a possibilidade de uma atuação voltada aos docentes e técnicos. Ao oportunizar aos atores educacionais a participação, reflexão e conscientização quanto ao processo educativo, uma realidade promissora delinear-se-á para a instituição, a Assistência Estudantil e a Psicologia Escolar.

Palavras-Chave: Psicologia Escolar; estudantes; ensino superior.

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Introduction

School Psychology based on a critical aspect proposes that education should be understood as an instrument for social transformation and that practices in this field gravitate towards activities that prioritize “the institutional collective while searching for critical and political engagement by individuals in subjective and socio-cultural transformations.” (Marinho-Araújo, 2016, p. 202). According to Bisinoto and Marinho-Araújo (2010), Marinho-Araújo (2009, 2010, 2016), in the past decade Psychology has been playing an increasingly expressive role in nurseries, language schools, socio-cultural associations, public services of health and education, consulting, and so on. That presupposes more conscientious positions concerning the important role psychologists play. The new reality that presents itself propels school professionals to search for new fields for action and innovation. Higher learning institutions become evidently a fertile territory in that sense.

The present research conforms with such reality. Its objective is to get to know and analyze the practice of a school psychologist in Student Assistance (SA) at the Cefet-MG. There is a contradiction nonetheless. Our research problem is the practice of a school psychologist, whose presence in the school is possible by means of SA. In other words, her job specifically concerns the students. On the other hand, the methodological/theoretical approach of the study is based on a social and institutional comprehension of issues concerning educational institutions. Thus, we have attempted to build a documental *corpus* by means of records kept by the institution and that tell the history of SA and of the work of school psychologists. In order to produce empirical material for our research, we realized semi-structured interviews with major actors in the educational process engaged in Student Assistance (SA) at the institution.

Cefet-MG and Student Assistance: histories that complement each other

The historical trajectory of the Cefet-MG resembles the history of professional education in Brazil. The institution was initially created as a school for craft apprentices, or “Escola de Aprendizes Artífices de Minas Gerais”, in 1909 (Decree nº 7.566/1909, 1909). These schools offered State-funded industrial courses. There was a strong moralist, assistance-providing orientation and the schools promoted the ideals of labor, character formation and prevention of criminality.

In its trajectory, the Cefet-MG received different names. In 1978, it was named “Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica de Minas Gerais (Cefet – MG)”, or Federal Center of Technological Education. The center became a federal institution of higher learning, or “Instituição Federal de Ensino Superior” (IFES). It is a *multicampi* institution operating all over the State of Minas Gerais. It is the largest institution of technological learning in the State and operates in profes-

sional education for high school, graduation, and post-graduation *lato* and *stricto sensu*. Headquartered in Belo Horizonte, the institution is equipped with ten *campi*. Two are located in Belo Horizonte, one in Contagem, and seven are distributed over other regions in the state.

It is a public institution historically recognized among others in Brazil. It integrates the federal network of professional, technological, and scientific education, or “Rede Federal de Educação Tecnológica, Profissional, e Científica (RFET)”, connected to the Ministry of Education (Decreto nº 7566, 1909). The Cefet- MG Araxá was inaugurated in 1992 in order to provide the city with qualified professionals, especially for the segment of mining operations and metalwork, the two most important economic activities in the municipality. Nowadays, the institution offers 4 technical courses during the day. In the evening, four courses and higher education. It is the only federal institution in the city that offers graduation and technical courses (IBGE, 2015).

The creation of the Cefet in Araxá had a huge impact in the city. Gradually, the institution created the sector of Student Assistance (SA). The service has existed for ten years, which can be considered a short time. In its current configuration, the institution is provided with a constituted team for Student Assistance, a student restaurant fully operating, and scholarships are being distributed among low-income students. Although the numbers are reduced, they are promising data that could produce a dangerous false feeling of mission accomplished. We would like to highlight the dynamic character of SA. Necessities change and multiply. Every student brings a fresh perspective. Besides that, the guarantee of material permanence is not enough; it is necessary that the institution also take care of symbolic permanence concerning the students’ possibility to feel like they belong. Those are the conditions for “entrance and survival in the education system” (Santos, 2009, p. 79). Besides that, we cannot forget the inherently dynamic nature of SA.

In order to start a discussion on Student Assistance¹, understood as a combination of actions within a learning institution, where access to and permanence in quality, free education is the goal, we need to emphasize its socio-political character. According to Kowalski (2012), there are distinct phases in the trajectory of SA, each one with their peculiar political, social and economic contexts. The first one goes from the foundation of the Brazilian Student House, or “Casa do Estudante Brasileiro” in Paris, until the period of political democratization with the creation of the Department of Student Assistance (DSA) (1928 to 1970). The second phase corresponds to the moment when there was a new political configuration of Student Assistance in the universities with the creation of the Fonaprace, and the establishment of the ProUni (1987 to 2004). The third phase comprehends the expansion

1 Student Assistance: Fonaprace’s 25th anniversary. “A set of principles and guidelines for the implantation of actions in order to guarantee access, and conditions for permanence and conclusion of graduation courses by students of IFES, from the perspective of social inclusion, amplified formation, production of knowledge, and the improvement of academic performance and quality of life”(FONAPRACE/ANDIFES; PROEX/UFU, 2012, p. 63).

and re-structuring of federal universities (IFES), as well as the creation of the REUNI Program, until the present moment.

Student Assistance (SA) in Brazil started at a time when access to higher education was a privilege. These federal institutions of higher education (IFES) had SA infrastructure in order to provide assistance for students from elite families. This was due to the fact that they were the only ones with access to higher education at the time.

In 1930, when Vargas became president, there was an improvement to matters related to education, and the first regulation of higher education and the reformulation of Student Assistance took place (Kowalski, 2012). In 1937, there was the creation of the national student union, or “União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE)”. It was a national entity of student representation initially connected to the Casa do Estudante do Brasil and responsible for promoting legal assistance, scholarships, Jobs, access to the library, health services and residence facilities for students (UNE, 2017).

In the 1940s, SA started consolidating itself in the Brazilian legislation as mandatory for all levels of education. During the military dictatorship, student movements promoted several meetings in order to discuss university reform and students’ rights. However, it was a period of social and political repression. The students got little attention and had their rights sabotaged (Fernandes, 1979).

In the 1980s, moment of transition from dictatorship to democracy, in which the country went through severe recession, education also entered a new historical phase. The consolidation of law projects and debates resulted in a new configuration of Student Assistance policies, which became more mature regarding student rights and positions towards reformulations and the protection of rights. These results were always the driving force behind student movements (Kowalski, 2012).

Education inequalities became evident by the problems concerning access and permanence issues that, in the post-dictatorship era, gained space for discussion in national encounters of pro-rectors for community and student affairs and in the meetings organized by the national association of directors of federal institutions of higher education, or “Associação Nacional dos Dirigentes das Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior (Andifes)”. These spaces for discussion led to the institution, in 1987, of the National Forum of Pro-rectors for Community and Student Affairs, or “Fórum Nacional de Pró-Reitores de Assuntos Comunitários e Estudantil” (Fonaprace).

The trajectories of Student Assistance (AS) and of Fonaprace complement each other in their deep interconnection (Fonaprace, 1993). The forum is a collective of representatives from Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES) with participation in five regions: north, northeast, mid-west, southwest, and south. It promotes the fight for SA as a students’ right in Brazilian institutions of higher education and, along with the Andifes, it also promotes the discussion of educational policies.

The scenario at the IFES concerning Student Assistance until the late 1980s included inefficient scholarships,

and the existence of a few restaurants and student residences. Most of the IFES lacked policies or programs of Student Assistance and the Fonaprace defined, as a priority goal, the systematization of a proposal for “policies of Student Assistance that guaranteed access and permanence, as well as the necessary means for full academic performance” (Fonaprace, 2012, p. 55). In the period from 1993 to 1996, the forum realized researches in order to get to the socio-economic and cultural profile of IFES students, which proved an indispensable tool when it was time to formulate parameters to build a proposal for SA policies. The intention was to measure the assistance provided at the time and produce a prospect of potential demand.

After 1999, the national encounters of Fonaprace took place in Brasília; the forum consolidated itself and the strengthened SA as an important tool in the process of teaching and learning in higher education. Another important advancement happened in 2000, when the federal government was preparing the National Education Plan, or “Plano Nacional de Educação” – PNE. By means of intense negotiation it was possible to include Student Assistance in the PNE/2001, which resulted in the elaboration of the National Plan of Student Assistance. This plan established the basic guidelines for all actions related to the theme and one of its objectives was to include subsidies specifically for Student Assistance in the education ministry budget for each IFES. Despite all the political influence of the Fonaprace in the ministry of education, it was not possible at the time to get subsidies from the administration of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Fonaprace, 2012).

In this context, the Fonaprace perceived the necessity to update data on student profiles. Thus, the Second Research on the Socio-Economic and Cultural Profile of Students of Brazilian IFES, or “Segunda Pesquisa do Perfil Socioeconômico e Cultural dos Estudantes de Graduação das IFES Brasileiras” was realized. It confirmed the data from the first one, and ratifies the importance of subsidies for SA at the IFES. In addition, there was also a new perspective of fresh challenges concerning the new scenario. The Program of Support to Plans of Re-structuring and Expansion of Federal Universities – REUNI (Decree n. 6096, 2007), implemented by the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in the period from 2003 to 2010, benefitted universities and intensified the importance of SA (Fonaprace, 2012).

In 2007, the National Program of Student Assistance, or the “Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil” (PNSAS), was updated and approved by the Andifes, which triggered a process of discussions with the ministry of education towards the implantation of the program. By means of decree n° 39 of December 12 2007, the ministry instituted the PNSAS, which supports the permanence of low-income students enrolled in on-site graduation courses at federal institutions of higher education (IFES). The objective was to guarantee equal opportunities for all students and contribute to an improvement in academic performance. Also, it was an act of prevention against situations of academic failure and evasion due to precarious financial conditions.

In the subsequent meetings of the Fonaprace, one of the most important topics was the urgent need to consolidate the PNSAS by means of its transformation into federal law. SA had an increasing demand for resources due to the new Brazilian official college entrance examination, the "Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio" (Enem)², which caused a significant change in the socio-economic profile of public university students. The social and economic transformation produced by the programs of affirmative action, and the presence of universities in rural zones, demanded an urgent redefinition of investments in SA. In other words, changes in the budget for resource distribution at the PNSAS. After that, there was a period of effervescent negotiations and procedures, which resulted in the historically important signing, by President Lula in 2010, of Decree n° 7234 (Fonaprace, 2012). Also, it was vital for the forum to obtain from the federal government the publication of a decree that regulates the National Program of Student Assistance (PNSAS). In its first article, the decree expresses clearly its intention to "amplify the conditions for permanence of young people in federal higher education." (Decree n° 7234/10, 2010, p. 1). **This decree provided Student Assistance with the status of law.**

Then there were numerous movements and articulations in order to reach a single objective: turn the PNSAS into federal law. However, the process of consolidation still has a long way to go. It consists of a continuous process that involves political will and the changing of mindsets all over federal institutions.

The Cefet-MG, in its quest for students' right to permanence at school and full formation, plays an important role in federal institutions of higher education. Since the 1990s, the Cefet-MG Student Assistance has been present at the Fonaprace meetings.

The aforementioned historical information confirms the importance of School Psychology in SA, understood as an "area of knowledge and professional practice whose objective is **the encounter between the human subject and education**, with an emphasis on the relations established between the psychological and educational processes" (Meira, 2003, p. 55, author's emphasis), especially when we realize how necessary it is to fight for the right to quality education. The relation between School Psychology and Student Assistance deals with this legitimate claim, education for all. We see education as a mechanism which is necessary not only for the appropriation of scientific, artistic, and cultural knowledge. It is also essential if we want to atone for historical inequalities.

... when we affirm that we want a school that prepares individuals for the exercise of citizenship, we mean that we want a school that will form autonomous individuals, who

2 "The National High School Exam (Enem) assesses student performance and helps students have access to higher education – Sisu / Prouni / Pronatec / Portuguese Institutions, Student Subsidies – Fies, personal development, self-assessment / access to the job market/ improvements in education–studies and indexes / learning enhancement". From <http://enem.inep.gov.br/>

are capable of initiative. That implies knowledge in order to perfectly understand situations, be able to make good decisions, and play an active role in social life. (Saviani, 2017, p. 654).

The history of Student Assistance at Cefet-MG, in consonance with the history of the institution was, at several moments, marked by fights and conquests that deserve to be remembered and registered. However, we have noticed that there are few documents, or formal registers on the matter. That makes it indispensable to resort to oral accounts by the few professionals who witnessed the facts in order to complement this narrative. At Cefet-MG, Student Assistance is an organizational area named Coordination of Student Policies. It is a dynamic department in a constant process of development in order to always evolve and adapt to the reality of student necessities, as well as those of the whole institution.

Methodology

Qualitative research proved a valuable alternative for the development of this study. It was possible to analyze the phenomenon profoundly while taking into consideration relational, subjective, and social aspects. According to Romagnoli (2009), the qualitative research studies the social world by means of an interpretation of phenomena, and attempts to comprehend everyday life experiences.

The methodological trajectory comprehended the following procedures: 1) a survey on Student Assistance at the institutions by means of an analysis of documents and registers; 2) semi-structured interviews with the Principal, two Social Workers, a Pedagogue, five Teachers who also had experience as coordinators, a School pedagogue, a mother, three former students, and two groups³ of students with six members each. One of the groups was in graduation and the other group was made up of students from technical courses. The Cefet – MG Araxá aggregates approximately 82 teachers, 950 students, and 44 administration technicians.

During the research, documental analysis became a valuable source for the discovery of new and complementary aspects, especially when we refer to institutional documents like school files (Lüdke & André, 1986). We also employed semi-structured interviews, which also brought revelations, all in accordance with the study's objectives. The semi-structures interviews were recorded, and then transcribed. The script contained the following aspects: knowledge on Student Assistance at Cefet-MG Campus Araxá; participation in the construction of Student Assistance; the practice of the psychologist from the interdisciplinary team working on SA; the necessities of the institutions that could be assisted by the school psychologist; the differences between the school

3 The interviews with students were collective because of the scarcity of available time; they were realized after the qualification exam, as suggested by the board of examiners. There would be no time for the individual format.

psychologist and the clinical psychologist. We used the content analysis of Bardin (2000) in order to better comprehend the interviews.

After careful reading and re-reading of the transcriptions⁴, we identified recurrent contents, which allowed us to organize the analysis into themes: a) the constitution of Student Assistance at Cefet-MG Araxá; b) Student Assistance according to important actors in the institution; and c) the school psychologist at Cefet-MG Araxá.

Results and Discussion

a) The constitution of Student Assistance at Cefet-MG Araxá – we chose this theme as the first one to be assessed because the interviews led us to revisit the trajectory of SA since the very beginning, when students necessities were assisted by a precarious, primary department of SA, until the present time, when we identified a multi-professional team with recognized space within the school scenario.

Another relevant information concerns the creation of the Cefet-MG unit, in the city of Araxá, in 1992. It was created due to requests by the local community for free quality technical education combined with the integral formation of students (Cefet-MG, 2014). Until then, the city did not possess a federal school, neither technical nor of higher education. This fact was also mentioned in the interviews. The presence of the institution brought a substantial quality leap concerning education in that city. We also noticed that a set of beliefs was born in the population regarding the meaning and the consequences of the existence of a school of federal level in their city. We can see that in the following excerpts:

At the time, the city really needed a good school. All schools, private or public, fell short when they had their services compared to what Cefet offered and still offers. (Educator)

... the Cefet curriculum is hard. Our motto was "you either study or study", so we united our efforts into small groups in order to succeed. There was no other kind of support. We were left to our own devices. (Student)

A federal educational institution became, to those who related directly or indirectly with the institution, a synonym for a place where the many requirements and the level of difficulty made learning very hard. It was a school "where only the good ones passed". That was the message the institution seemed to get across. That notion is still present in the testimonies of students and former students.

According to historical data such as the records of personnel contracts, the institution initially employed, in order to be able to operate, only the teachers and a support team made up of a pedagogue, a social worker, and administration staff including the school register and the library.

4 In the transcription of interviews, the students are identified generically; teachers, administration technicians, and the mother are all referred to as educators. Their identities were kept secret.

The institution is located on the outskirts of the city and, especially at the time of its inauguration, it was difficult for students to have access to restaurants, cafeterias, or even transportation to their homes. Technical education is offered full time in one of its modes. Thanks to negotiations and a combination of efforts, a campus restaurant was built and, after getting some help from the parent association, started, though precariously, providing meals.

Another highlight is the constitution of the Student Assistance team at the Araxá unit. According to data obtained by this research, for approximately 16 years, SA was restricted to the practice of the Social Worker as we can see in the following excerpt:

Ever since I entered the Cefet in the late 1990s, there was a Social Worker who did all the work. She received the applications and selected students for the scholarship program, as far as I can remember. (Educator)

The team, essentially consisting of a social worker, a psychologist, and a nutritionist, was constituted only in 2008 when there was a selection test for the position of SA psychologist. We asked: Do these data point at an effective SA? Would a guarantee of the social minimum sustain an effective SA? We emphasize here the dynamic character of SA, where necessities change and multiply at every identified profile, and for every student that brings particular realities concerning their needs. Besides that, the guarantee of material permanence is not enough. The institution also needs to take care of symbolic permanence. It concerns the possibilities for students to have feelings of affiliation. In other words, "conditions for entrance and survival in the education system" (Santos, 2009, p. 79).

b) Student Assistance according to some actors in the institution – SA is directly connected and committed to student's welfare. We noticed in the educators' testimonies that the safeguarding of basic students' rights such as nutrition, financial support by means of scholarships – which should be actions theoretically denominated social staples (residence, transportation, and food) – are considered to be the department's main objective. Little attention was paid to the possibility of extended, more strategic operations in the area in order to also provide support to teachers and technicians.

What I know is that Student Assistance at the Cefet is an organ that is a combination of professionals, a psychologist, and a social worker, in which some of their responsibilities are to provide assistance to the students that enter the Cefet, and also to their families when necessary. I know that for sure and I have had the opportunity to watch the way they provided support. (Educator)

Well, the Student Assistance at Cefet Araxá is more related to scholarships and aid to families. And, I know that there is this food plan in which you get your meals for free. There is the work of the psychologist, who's always there to help the students and everything. (Student)

The interviewees also paid compliments to the psychosocial services as great part of the SA program that, according to testimonies, is added to social basics such as scholarships and the student restaurant. The psychosocial program was most often described as clinical, therapeutic service, which demonstrates a certain unawareness of the role played by school psychologists and their possibilities in the institution. According to Martínez (2010, p. 40)

the psychologist's work is frequently associated to diagnosing and dealing with children suffering from emotional or behavioral difficulties, as well as providing parents and teachers with guidelines in order to handle students with such problems. This situation results from the impact of the clinical therapeutic model of formation and practice by Brazilian psychologists on the predominant social representation of the activities of such professionals.

We have noticed that raising awareness of Student Assistance proves indispensable for the institution, especially after considering what the potentialities are in the school scenario and which strategies to go for. Considering the institutional situation in which the psychologist is placed, it is fundamental that the psychologist's practice incorporate the demands of SA, and go beyond by embracing teachers and technicians as well. In this sense, according to Souza et al. (2014a), from an institutional perspective, the work refers to:

The forms of intervention, in which the focus of the practice is the whole institution, including the diverse actors of the school context. The psychologist is the professional who problematizes "not learning" as a less individual than contextual phenomenon. For this purpose, psychologists operate in the schooling process and take into consideration all people involved in this process as well as the institutional realm, which is ruled by power relations and public policies. One of their responsibilities is to contribute to better communication among the different departments of a school by mediating conflicts and promoting reflection in order break away from crystalized relations and minimize discrimination... (p. 152).

Thus, although the term "Student Assistance" refers to students, and students obviously need assistance concerning educational issues, it is essential that psychologists incorporate the whole institution. Otherwise, their practice will be disconnected with the principles of Critical School Psychology.

c) The school psychologist at Cefet – MG Araxá – according to students and educators, the psychologist is present in diverse moments of their life in the institution. She provides assistance in matters concerning grades, bad grades, learning strategies, bullying, families, interpersonal relations, the institution and contact with the teachers.

I get support by the psychologist and it has helped me a lot. I failed at all my tests and I am doing the 2nd year again. If it

wasn't for the help provided by the psychologist the first time I did the 2nd year I wouldn't have made it. I passed my tests. (Student)

... she is a reference for students, especially teenagers. It is a time when they have many questions and a few problems. (Student)

... in my opinion the most important thing the psychologist must do is to detect where the problem is, why the student is not learning, what's the reason... after that the psychologist, in collaboration with the Social Worker, produce a prognostic for support and treatment. (Educator)

Such conceptions, present in the interviews, restrict the possibilities for practice by this professional because the institution's expectations limit themselves to psychological, therapeutic services, which is not in accordance with the critical perspective on School Psychology (Moura, 2015; Souza, Silva, & Yamamoto, 2014). The greatest problem with this conception is that, according to Meira (2003), it leads to blaming students, who respond by pathologizing and psychologizing educational matters. Thus, the focus of the psychologist's work is still the student.

However, in some testimonies we perceived the nuances of a more contextualized, scenario-based work, even though it is still situated within a logic of clinical assistance but with promising evidence of the recognition of the great necessity to incorporate the other segments of the institution.

The most important thing is that the psychologist detect and provide the institution with answers concerning where and how the institution is causing trouble to students, or making students fail. (Educator)

The intervention of the Psychology professional on personal and community issues that compromise learning and the development of social relations at school is essential in order to prevent situations capable of harming students, or their families, or the school community. The identification of social risks or vulnerabilities, support, and the search for concrete solutions at school are some of the responsibilities of the psychologist, who is an important collaborator in the development of Student Assistance policies at school. (Educator)

This evidence reverberates the effects of the work that the psychologist has been trying to develop by presenting effectively institutional proposals to the actors in the decision-making process at the Cefet-MG Araxá. In her interview, she demonstrates a clear vision concerning the necessity to extend her assistance beyond the students, which seems to reveal a contradiction in her reality. However, she might feel encouraged to extend, by incorporation, these individual benefits. Inviting teachers, administrators, and technicians to create partnerships in order to provide for

institutional demands, from the perspective of critical School Psychology,

and the emancipatory dimension of education, are actions that contribute to a comprehension of the complexity of the schooling process, as well as education. The insertion of a critical dimension of human development brought on by Psychology will constitute an opportunity for psychologists to help the school handle challenges and accomplish its mission (Souza et al., 2014b, p. 273).

By means of the interviews, we have noticed that the reality of the school psychologist in Student Assistance at the Araxá campus is another classic example of the problems faced by these professionals in the education field. Problems most often result from a lack of comprehension of the extensive role played by the psychologist and the incipient recognition of the strategic necessity of this professional in the institution. In several testimonies, we have noticed ignorance concerning the numerous functions and programs of the area, even when these programs are already implemented and operating, most often restricting the work of the school psychologist to clinical assistance. In many testimonies, the professional is identified as a provider of services who supports the students in their psychological, psychotherapeutic issues. She is situated in SA, but she could be in any other institutional department. Such conceptions, present in the excerpts of the interviews, restrict the probabilities for practice by this professional. It is not in accordance with the critical perspective (Moura, 2015; Souza, Silva, & Yamamoto, 2014). Besides, it is fundamental that we promote a new interpretation as well as a new institutional practice so that the educational processes at the Cefet might, in fact, reach out to all those who are part of it.

Another important point to emphasize is the public selection test that officially describes the profile of the professional that the institution is searching for in the job Market. For this purpose, we examined the official announcement for the selection test by the institution for the position of psychologist in 2010. We identified a certain imprecision in the definition of the profile of the intended professional. It was too generic and with some inclination to the clinical area. The position of administration technician offered for candidates with a college degree is intended for professionals to work in Student Assistance; there is, however, a romanticized view on the role played by this professional, without presenting a delimitation of practice, which points at the existence of a position still under construction. According to Meira, the position of school psychologist implies:

that professionals put themselves inside education and have a theoretical and practical commitment to school issues. The school must be the main focus of their reflections. In other words, the work developed in the schools contribute to the great issues for which we must search for explanatory resources as well as methodological resources in order to conduct their actions. (Meira, 2000, p. 36).

Concerning the generic nature of selection test announcements, Silva et al. (2013, p. 118) emphasize “public selection tests” with announcements specifically targeted at the area of School Psychology might, in advance, provide some help in the preparation of candidates not only for the selection process, but also for their future practice in the position”.

We have contemplated a rich scenario of possibilities but improvements would imply great skills to handle the present situation in the institutions. The school psychologist needs to understand and play a role in the diverse elements that constitute this dynamics, while critically and comprehensively mapping out the numerous voices present in the school, so that the teaching-learning process will lead to autonomy, critical thinking and creativity. According to Marinho-Araújo (2016, p. 206), psychological perception (as a starting point in order to avoid falling into clinical parameters) and the subsequent institutional intervention by the school psychologist intend to “situate the psychologist so that they will be able to listen and understand the singularity of each demand, and will diligently investigate them, question them, and attempt, with clarity to manage the intersubjective nature of relations”.

Final Considerations

Student Assistance goes way beyond guaranteeing access to and permanence in education. We see limitless possibilities for action in which the protagonists of education, students, educators, family, and community are fully considered. In this context, School Psychology plays a fundamental role in the comprehension of the psychological processes “that constitute the subject of the education process and are necessary in order to make pedagogical action effective” (Antunes, 2008, p. 29). Besides that, it is important that, in addition to access and material as well as symbolic permanence, quality graduation be a dimension to be observed by the school psychologists.

Based on the theoretical assumptions of Critical School Psychology, we understand that the psychologist can provide the school with assistance for social transformation and for the accomplishment of the school’s social mission. Consequently, we identified that the connection between School Psychology and Student Assistance needs to be seen as a sensible, prosperous partnership. We have noticed, in the testimonies of the actors at Cefet-MG Araxá, that there is still a blank space to be filled in order to consolidate the strategic position of School Psychologist. Analyzing the professional practice of the school psychologist described in the interviews, we could verify the restrict configuration with which it is still perceived. Psychologists are identified as “problem solvers”, who have the possibility to influence their environment, but according to testimonies, we still haven’t found an effective, transforming way to produce interventions. Such contradictions are present in the operations of these professionals. They still need to promote their actions

so that they can develop effectively institutional practices. The fact that psychologists are working at a school does not make them true school psychologists.

Thus, Psychology professionals should propose more comprehensive actions with collaborations in order to produce the institution's political-pedagogical project, and continuous formation processes for teachers. By listening carefully, psychologists might contribute to the educational process of an institution by means of critical thinking, and attention to the diverse voices present in the testimonies, in order to get to know all conceptions and subjectivities. Student Assistance responsibilities are a reminder that school psychologists must focus on the students, but they need to make the right decisions so that their work will not be restricted to student issues. Also, they must not blame students for the constitutional issues of the institution's educational process. However, this scenario does not have to be so desolating. In some testimonies, we noticed the nuances of more amplified perceptions, which are promising signs that this context can be changed.

The reality of the Federal Center has helped us become aware that there is still a lot to be done and many hands write history. In every campus of the Cefet-MG, we found the school psychologist operating in Student Assistance, which is a sign of evolution in the level of relevance of such professionals. Student Assistance must not be restricted to social basics such as the distribution of scholarships or the student restaurant. School Psychology corroborates to that notion. Our conclusion is that space has already been conquered. Now it needs to be amplified. The everyday routine of institutions offers diverse possibilities for practice by school psychologists.

The role played by school psychologists needs to be focused on empowering individuals and raising awareness of the educational process, with an eye on emancipating social transformations and academic success. We believe that, by discussing ways to provide opportunities for educational actors to play an active role in the development of their practices and functions in an eminently collective process, a promising reality might be built for the institution, for Student Assistance, and for School Psychology in general. Thus, the present research indicates that there is still a lot to be investigated in this field.

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