

DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY: THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION¹

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ABSTRACT. This theoretical and bibliographic work aims to discuss the relationship between pedagogical practice developed in Early Childhood Education and the formation of a child's personality. It is based on assumptions of the Cultural-Historical Theory and seeks to answer, primarily, the following questions: What is personality?; What are the driving forces of its development process in the first years of life of a child?; What are the specificities of the work of Early Childhood Education teachers, and how can pedagogical activity contribute to the development of a child's personality? To do so, we intend to think over some essential principles of a teaching work capable of impelling a child's comprehensive formative process in Early Childhood Education. We consider that, with the consolidation of pedagogical practices that mediate the relationships between children and culture, it is possible to organize activities focusing on different dimensions of human development and personality.

Keywords: Subjectification processes; maternity; premature infants.

DESENVOLVIMENTO DA PERSONALIDADE DA CRIANÇA: O PAPEL DA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL

RESUMO. Este trabalho, de cunho teórico-bibliográfico, tem por objetivo trazer à discussão a relação que se estabelece entre a prática pedagógica desenvolvida na Educação Infantil e a formação da personalidade da criança. Tem por fundamentos os pressupostos da Teoria Histórico-Cultural e busca responder, fundamentalmente, às seguintes questões: O que é a personalidade?; Quais são as forças motrizes do seu processo de desenvolvimento nos primeiros anos de vida da criança?; Quais as especificidades do trabalho dos professores da Educação Infantil e como a atividade pedagógica pode contribuir para o desenvolvimento da personalidade infantil? Para tanto, pretendemos refletir sobre alguns princípios essenciais de um trabalho docente capaz de impulsionar o processo formativo integral da criança na Educação Infantil. Consideramos que, com a consolidação de práticas pedagógicas que mediem as relações entre as crianças e a cultura, é possível organizar atividades que focalizem as diferentes dimensões do desenvolvimento humano e a personalidade.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil; Vigotsky; personalidade da criança.

DESARROLLO DE LA PERSONALIDAD DEL NIÑO: EL PAPEL DE LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL

RESUMEN. Este trabajo, de carácter teórico-bibliográfico, tiene el objetivo de traer a la discusión la relación que se establece entre la práctica pedagógica desarrollada en la Educación Infantil y la formación de la personalidad del niño. Tiene por fundamentos los presupuestos de la Teoría Histórico-Cultural y busca responder, fundamentalmente, a las siguientes cuestiones: ¿qué es la personalidad?; ¿cuáles son las fuerzas motrices de su proceso de desarrollo en los primeros años de vida del niño?; ¿cuáles las especificidades del trabajo de los maestros y maestras de Educación Infantil? y; ¿cómo la actividad pedagógica puede contribuir para el desarrollo de la personalidad infantil? Pretendemos, así, reflexionar acerca de algunos principios esenciales de un trabajo docente capaz de impulsar el proceso de formación integral de los niños en la Educación Infantil. Consideramos que, por intermedio de la consolidación de

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práticas pedagógicas que auxiliem las relaciones entre los niños y la cultura, es posible organizar actividades que enfoquen las diferentes dimensiones del desarrollo humano y de la personalidad.

Palabras-clave: Educación Infantil; Vygotsky; personalidad del niño.

When children are born, what responsibilities does their birth bring to the life of their parents and to the society that surrounds them? How should their life condition and education be organized? What are their current and future needs? What skills will they develop in the course of their lives? How to educate them so that they are subjects of their own actions, aware of their position and place in the world?

The birth of every child represents a big challenge to all who are responsible for his or her care and education. Simultaneously, it represents the renewal of the hope of men and women, because a new opportunity to achieve full humanization of the individuals born with him or her as well, with the consolidation of practical, intellectual and artistic capacities (Zaporóshetz, 1987), and affection, all constituted in his or her integration into social life and expressed in his or her singular way of being, feeling and acting. How can school contribute to the development of a child's personality? What is the role of Early Childhood Education in the comprehensive formation of the little ones, addressed in academic and legal texts, but not always made concrete in educative practices at daycares and preschools (Brasil, 2009a, 2009b)? Our reflections are dedicated to these questions. We know, nonetheless, that, given their complexity, we are not able to go through all of them in one single article. We will seek, then, to present some principles we deem to be fundamental for the comprehension of the development of the personality of little children, based on assumptions of the Cultural-Historical Theory. We understand that the dialogue we have herein with the authors that help us to reflect about the theme from this perspective can expand in/to other spaces, leading teachers to be aware of how much – even though often little intentional – they interfere with the formation of a child's personality, and of how the understanding of this process can enhance (Davidov, 1988) their work with

children. Thus, we see that the conceptual discussion about personality development and, especially, about the interference that the educative process has on it, is an important theme to the formation of teachers that work or will work at daycares and preschools.

We believe that, in addition to close attention to the children, deepening readings, studies and debates developed by teachers working at these spaces is a must, because, through their practice, specific programs of and for Early Childhood Education are established (Carvalho 2011; Brasil 2009a), which leads them to expand positively and qualify the way through which boys and girls relate to the world around them, to people, and, in this process, how they progressively build the understanding of themselves.

In this article, we invite the reader to think with us over the theoretical foundations that allow us to perceive how a pedagogical work influences the formation of specifically human capacities in every child we care for and educate. After all, whether we are aware of that or not, teaching interferes with a child's personality, making every boy or girl a unique and unrepeatable individual, and with the intellectual and practical forces that are essential to their present and future lives.

PROBLEMATIZATION

For the comprehension of the importance of education in the process of personality development, let us start by discussing what speaking of this concept means for the Cultural-Historical Theory.

We know that, based on the Dialectical and Historical Materialism, the movement and contradiction categories are essential to the explanation of phenomena. Vigotski³ and

³ Although the spelling of the Russian author's name is quite varied in the publications used herein, we have chosen to refer to him by the Portuguese-style form

colleagues supported their entire theoretical construct on this philosophy. From this point-of-view, we understand that human development involves, in a continuous movement, two forces that while contradictory and independent from a common sense perspective, are essentially inter-related, for the Cultural-Historical Theory: social forces and biological forces. According to Vigotski (1931/2013a),

Both development realms – natural and cultural – coincide with and merge in one another. The changes that happen in both realms intercommunicate and constitute, in fact, a unique process of social and biological formation of a child's personality. As the organic development is produced in a cultural domain, it starts to be a biological process historically conditioned. At the same time, cultural development acquires a very peculiar character that cannot compare to any other type of development, since it is produced simultaneously and together with the organic maturation process, and because the one that has such character is the growing and maturing mutant body of the child. (p. 36).

To perceive the influence between biological and social factors, attributing to the cultural development the power of interfering with the formation of specifically human capacities, which Vigotski (1931/2013a) calls superior psychic functions, has direct implications on the way of seeing pedagogical work. Thus, we understand that, as teachers, we can do something about child development by organizing spaces and times, establishing relations, and proposing involving and enriching experiences for the cultural repertoire of children so that they can develop activities with culture objects and, thus, appropriate them (Carvalho, 2011; Duarte, 1993). As the activity becomes more complex, intellectual capacities and personality become more complex as well, since they are formed in and by the activity (Bissoli, 2005).

Vigotski, respecting, in the references, the forms adopted by the publishers.

We ask herein: what does that mean? When children engage in tasks with a meaning, when they know the reason and purpose of their actions and make emotional moves toward achieving their goals, they are performing an activity and, for this reason, they develop their capacities fully, becoming gradually and progressively aware about the motives for their conduct (Leontiev, 2010). Thus, the concept of activity allows us to see the indissolubility between cognition and affection in the development of personality, which, according to Leontiev (1978, p.135) is “a new psychological formation being shaped in the midst of the individual's vital relations, as a product of the transformation of his or her activity.” To the author, personality is a comprehensive formation whose systemic qualities are generated by social relations in which each individual takes on the role of subject of the activity. This is evident in his words: “... the real basis of a man's personality is not the set of his relations with the world, which are social by nature, but the relations that occur and that are established by his activities, more specifically by the set of his diverse activities” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 143).

In this sense, when an adult allows a child to participate in decisions about how to express what the latter has learned during a visit to the zoo, for instance – through the preparation of a panel, or a dramatization, or even a sheet containing curiosities about the animals seen there –, each task acquires a meaning and, due to the emotional involvement it allows for, it contributes to the development of different capacities of the child. In this regard, memory, attention, oral, written or plastic language, and self-control are some of the superior psychic functions that are strengthened, directly interfering with the development of personality.

It is important to highlight that personality is a complex formation of human psychism (Leontiev, 1978) that comprises cognitive capacities, emotions, will, character traits. Personality is a system constituted of distinct psychological functions that, when integrated, characterize the singular form that every individual acts in the world. It is a stable system. Thus, developed personality is characterized by certain univocal reactions to

events (relative unity of behaviors, the individual's reaction to what happens around him or her) and by unit values. That means that it is not merely reactive to situations. People with a mature personality are aware of their possibilities, of the reasons for their conduct, and, above all, can actively dominate their behavior.

Nevertheless, Duarte (2013), based on studies by Vigostki, stresses that the development of the personality of individuals is conditioned by the development already achieved by the society of which they are part, since human psychism is historical and social. The author points out that the process through which the subject appropriates culture in an active manner is the propelling element for him or her to master capacities that are proper of the social dynamics, and to master conducts, attributing to the educative process a fundamental importance: the expansion of the cultural capital, effected in the school, sophisticates the forms of comprehension of subjects about society and themselves, allowing for the qualitative transformation of their consciousness and, with it, of their forms of acting, and of their personality.

If this is a complex process that extends throughout a long period in the ontogenesis, having it as an objective since early childhood is the way through which teachers can contribute to the enrichment of the children's experiences. According to Vigostki, experiences represent the unity between the elements of the cultural domain and the singularities of personality, and determine the way that every child relates to his or her surroundings in each moment of his or her development (Vigotski, 1935/2010; Mello, 2010). Proposing experiences that broaden the cultural references of children, by means of involving activities that take them as individuals means to construct a program that intentionally interferes with the development of different child psychic functions, of emotions and of personality (Carvalho, 2011).

Unlike other approaches, the Cultural-Historical Theory has as one of its assumptions that the development of personality is not natural, rather historical and social, that is, it depends on the integration of the individual, since the first moments of life,

into society, which is full of demands, expectations and habits. For this reason, the regularities that characterize the formation of personality since childhood until adulthood are – as are so all spheres of a person's development from this very same perspective –, resulting from the interchange between the peculiarities of the child's psychophysiological development and of his or her cultural development (Vigotski, 1931/2013a). It is in social activity that personality is configured.

During childhood, the first levels of formation of an individual's personality are established. Leontiev (1978) states that this is the spontaneous period of the development of this system. It is in the first year of life that children learn values, conduct norms and specifically human capacities, and become capable of expressing themselves in a singular manner before the world: they build a more and more complex consciousness about objects and their knowledge of them, about human relations and, especially, about themselves (self-consciousness). This process is mediated by situations that children live, thus we can affirm that the personality of each one of them is a result of their biography: their life and education conditions, the activities they develop, the learning processes they undergo, and the development of their psychism, as pointed out by (1929/2000) and Sève (1979).

For this reason, the intentional and systematized educative process that takes place in the childhood school plays a fundamental role. As teachers, based on a permanent theoretical deepening that allows for the comprehension about a child and the construction of specific forms of teaching, we can and should mediate the formation of this integrative system that marks every child's singularity. Let us understand the pedagogical implications of this statement.

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY IN CHILDHOOD

At birth, children are immediately inserted into social relations: all of their needs are met by an adult, who becomes the center of attention of the baby. Affection, attention and

constant talk with children creates in them a need that is socially mediated: the need for new impressions (Bozhovich, 1981), that is, the need to see more, to hear more, to touch more and to be touched more. It is important to remember that, in babies, visual and hearing structures have not developed completely yet. The enrichment of visual and hearing impressions contributes to the organic evolution of the senses in a satisfactory manner. For this reason, the richer the experiences of a child with an adult – who becomes the mediator of the first sensorial contacts of the baby with the world around him or her –, the more positive this child's physical and emotional development will be in the first period of life.

The central psychological formation in the first year of life is perception. It enables the sensorial appropriation of the world in a direct communicative and emotional process with the adult. What does this mean? In this first period of the psychic development, the main activity – the one that promotes a greater development of the intellectual and practical capacities and of the personality of the child in this moment (Leontiev, 2010) – is the emotional communication the baby establishes with people around him or her (Elkonin, 1987). Because of that, although in the first months of life babies are not able to express themselves through conventional talk yet, they can communicate with the people around. For this reason, they use other languages, such as crying, smiling, movements of throwing their arms and body towards the adult and the objects they want, closing their hands as if they wanted to grab something they cannot reach, etc. It is important to observe that all of these behaviors of the baby have an affective nature, that is, they happen because people around him or her and objects presented to him or her provoke emotions, like the joy of reaching them or the pleasure of physical contact with the adult, creating a need for new impressions.

Thus, talking to children, showing them objects and people, holding them, touching them with kindness are all forms of communication affectively mediated that sophisticate perception and promote the functional development of the brain, through

the enrichment of the impressions about the world and people, and of the possibility babies have to execute their first forms of generalization: the sensorial generalization. One only needs to remember the motor-sensorial unity that characterizes the first year of life. Perception happens as the baby operates with objects around, in constant interaction with the adult. It is worth remembering that it is this very same interaction the main motivator of the intellectual and affective development of the baby. Thus, by knowing to what extent a systematized and intentional educative work can impel the development of children since very early age, we can grasp how important it is, in Early Childhood Education, since day nursery, for children to be cared for and educated by teachers (Brasil, 2009a, 2009b).

The activity together with an adult generates a new need that is culturally mediated and originates a new moment in the child's psychic development: the moment of object manipulation (Elkonin, 1987), which extends throughout a period of one to three years of age, approximately.

During the manipulation of objects, memory becomes, at first, the function developed as a major line, subordinating the other psychic formations. Very little children now no longer subject themselves to stimuli present in their perceptive field. If a short time ago an adult could distract them, placing before them different objects attractive by themselves, now, with the evolution of memory, children already show their condition as subjects. They do not want the object anymore. They want a certain object they remember and that motivates their behavior. There is, for the first time, a clear evidence of their developing personality. Motivating representations are then defined (Bozhovich, 1987), which attest the presence of a new level of thinking: if once the baby thought only by means of actions, now he or she is also thinking through images. Thus, the more a teacher talk to babies about the objects they manipulate and recognize – which should be varied and attractive –, the more he or she will be contributing to increment their thoughts.

In this period, the perception of children become increasingly semantic, that is, they are

already capable of comprehending the world around them in a more integrated manner. Very little children begin to perceive themselves as subjects of the actions they perform, and this is a central progress for the development of their personality. In this way, even if the adult remain as the central motivator of the child's behavior, the former, in this moment, takes a new position: of partner in the actions executed with social objects. Children manipulate them, appropriating their physical characteristics and, simultaneously, perceiving their own possibilities as subjects that perform actions with these objects. This is why it is so common that they repeat the same actions over and over again: opening and closing the door; throwing on and taking back an object from the floor; pushing and pulling... They are involved in a complex process of perception on things and of self-perception, mediated by the presence of an adult – first as a collaborator, then as a model of actions. It is important to consider that in this moment children impersonate the adult. Then, what Vigotski (1932/2013b) calls a “near play” happens (p. 359). If, apparently, the activity they perform is a make-believe one, children, actually, do not create a fictitious situation, which is proper of the role-playing game. They are not capable yet of representing a role symbolically. For this reason, a little girl cradles her doll, but still sees it as a doll, while for an older child involved in the make-believe, the doll would be, in an imaginary situation, the daughter, and she, the mother. We can say that children externally imitate the actions of the adult without putting themselves in his or her place.

Even before three years of age, the first form of self-consciousness is defined in children: the affective one. Although they do not know consciously they are somebody different from the adult, and even though they do not perceive themselves as people and have not developed their identity fully yet, children already have their own will, which often opposes the will of the adult, showing that their personality is about to go through a complete transformation.

During the period in which the main activity is the manipulation of objects, children develop a fundamental capacity, which will mark a new

stage in their thinking processes: the oral language. It is when they seek to broaden their communicative possibilities by expanding their vocabulary deliberately. He or she wants to know the names of objects, as if the former were properties of the latter. The enrichment of oral language promotes new levels of generalization that start to mediate children's actions. It is interesting to observe that, even without mastering language structures in full, a child can communicate very well by creating expressions, words and phrases that allow others to comprehend him or her, although his or her thinking is radically different from the thinking of an adult. In this sense, adults and children share words, which help the little ones assimilate an increasingly rich vocabulary and a progressively less situational thinking, although the meanings of these very same words undergo an evolution process and have their own characteristics (Vygotski, 1934/2001).

Thus, oral language allows children to do generalizations that are more complex and to think of objects and relations that are not present in their perceptive field. This enrichment brings about the consolidation of a new form of thinking: the verbal thinking. Thereby, talking to children is a fundamental action. Paying attention to what they say and dialogue with them about facts and objects are attitudes that mobilize an increasingly comprehensive development of language and thinking.

Vigotski (1935/2010) helps us to think over a question that is essential to the comprehension of a child's personality development: at every moment of life, and according to the possibilities already achieved in their development, children are able to comprehend facts and situations around them and to relate to them, emotionally and cognitively, in a completely new way. Thus, the development of verbal thinking takes on a fundamental importance in personality formation. The author states that the oldest memories about our early childhood originate from the moment when language and thinking are no longer independent processes, constituting, now, one single process, mediated by the meanings of the words – which start to be the substrate of both the way

how we think the world and the way how we express our comprehension of it (Vygotski, 1931/2013a).

In this sense, if once the little child had a comprehension of facts, of people and of relations that was limited to what was immediately seen and witnessed, without more complex relations being established, now, with verbal thinking, he or she can create new and more sophisticated relations, through words that represent objects, facts, people (Mello, 2010). This leads children to, little by little, get rid of the coercive effect objects had on them and to begin acting according to plans and motives expressed by means of the oral language, which represents the verbal form of thinking. They become capable of thinking, and being moved, and motivating their behavior by words, which represents an intense sophistication of their possibilities of relating to and comprehending the world where they live.

Around three years of age, a new moment starts in the development of a child's personality that will last until he or she is six years old, approximately: the moment of games and playful activities (Bissoli, 2005).

In this period, children go through a complete transformation in their personality, being marked by a new central formation: the discovery of themselves as subjects, the formation of their own identity, or, in the words of Bozhovich (1987, p. 261), of the "I system". If a short while ago, children did not think to be people independent of an adult, now this change happens. They begin to refer to themselves by the pronoun "I" and to attempt to mark their possibility of performing activities without the help of those who take care of them. They want to dress themselves, to bath themselves and to eat by themselves; they oppose the adult who might want to control their actions. The awareness of parents and teachers about the importance of this critical moment, which represents a turn in a child's development, is fundamental to prevent crises (Vygotski, 1932/2013b) that happen when there is a deep gap between what the children is already able to do and what is effectively allowed by the adult. In this context, if letting children solve everything by themselves is not a possibility, the adults can present options so

that the former make choices. The important thing is that children take a new position in the relations, that they are no longer treated as babies, and that they exercise, as far as possible, their autonomy. Thus, if life and education conditions have had an impact on their condition as developing subjects who have a voice and a place in the world, this autonomy results from the children's previous experiences, in which they developed talking, walking, memory, perceptions in general and the perception on themselves. It is worth remembering that their relationship with their surroundings has changed proportionally to the development of their capacities. They are able to comprehend facts and themselves in an entirely new way, and, in these conditions, the adult plays the essential role of preventing crises, allowing children to take on new roles in relationships with people (Leontiev, 2010).

Role-play or make-believe games constitute the main activity in this moment of development (Elkonin, 1987, 2009) started around three years of age. The child, who already used to imitate the actions of the adult since the previous period, now recognizes that such actions have a social role. The desire to perform the same activities adults do, and the inability of doing so, combined with the development achieved so far, condition the appearance of the make-believe game. How is his or her development in that moment? We can say that, with an adequate organization of the child's life and with the experiences lived in the first three years of life, the child will have formed or will be about to form: the semantic perception on the world, which allows him or her to comprehend reality in an integrated manner; developed memory; verbalized thinking; intellectualized language; increasingly concentrated attention that ceases his or her reactions to any and every stimulus present in his or her perceptive field; the possibility of performing actions with indirect objectives; symbolic representation, which enables the use of substitutive objects to represent real objects; consciousness, first affective and increasingly more rational of himself or herself as a person who, in addition to performing actions, also participates in relations as a "social me" (Bozhovich, 1987, p. 264); subordination of motives, which allows

children to hierarchize their actions and to act according to such hierarchization; establishment of inner ethical instances (Vygotski, 1932/2013b), which allows children to differ desire from duty and, in the game, to act in accordance with the rules, appropriating social norms and values. With all this development, which is cognitive and affective, in an integrated manner, (Gomes, 2008), now, when playing, children imitate the social roles of adults they could observe in their real life experiences. They symbolically represent the activities performed by them, the adults, progressively developing their own forms of understanding the world, people and themselves.

It is important to highlight that role-playing does not develop spontaneously (Vigotski, 2007; Mukhina, 1996; Martins, 2006), it is also socially mediated: the themes of children's games are those present in their daily lives and that can be observed. Hence the importance of the adult in the enrichment of experiences of children. When adults read stories on a daily basis, when they encourage the observation of social roles around, when they enrich children's experiences with knowledge about the world and people, the possibility of playing make-believe become much broader and developmental.

On the other hand, something should be remembered: although they have an essential importance, role-playing games are not the only responsible for the development of all the important learnings of children in Early Childhood Education. Their engagement in other activities that develop their expressive capacity and their knowledge of the world, of people and of social objects has a fundamental role. Drawing, orality, movements that promote body awareness, painting, molding, math knowledge, music, writing and reading also have a great importance in the formation of intellectual, practical and artistic capacities and in the development of personality. Hence the need children have to be involved in diversified and meaningful activities that incite their curiosity and affect them positively and, in this sense, lead them to appropriate cultural objects, developing their superior psychic functions. In this context, the work of a teacher as a person who, when

proposing situations that enable an increase in children's needs to know and to express diversify and enrich their activities, becomes essential to the development of children's personality (Zaporóshetz, 1987).

The moment of games and playful activities creates the bases for a new period in personality development: the education moment. By imitating the social roles of adults, children progressively realize they do not master the knowledge of the latter, which become so interesting to them. Adults (and older children) know many things little children want to learn. In our society, the privileged place for learning these pieces of knowledge is the school, and boys and girls know that since very early. They wish to occupy new spaces in social relations, a new development situation in which they no longer feel so distant from the adults, but are valued by them. New transformations in personality are yet to come: increasingly abstract ways of thinking and the formation of concepts that result from that; a greater argumentative capacity; a deeper and deeper self-consciousness about their own possibilities and will; the possibility of acting with objectives formulated in advance. All these new capacities and personality traits will make children's consciousness more complex in the moment of education (Bozhovich, 1981, 1987; Elkonin, 1987).

The role of teachers is vital in this process. These professionals have an indisputable function in the full development of children. Let us think it over.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As seen so far, education plays a preponderant role in the development of children. Educating is humanizing; it is, according to José Martí (1991, quoted by Mészáros, 2008), depositing in every man the entire human work that precedes him, making him effectively human.

We know that the educative activity does not happen in the school only; family and society also participate in this task actively. The school, though, is the place systematically organized for educating. Its social function is to promote, by means of pedagogical process,

the learning of contents of the culture defined by humankind throughout History and, from it, to promote the development of capacities of children and their singular form of being and acting socially.

To do so, the pedagogical work that effectively promotes development is founded on a deep theoretical knowledge about human development. It is a teacher's responsibility to comprehend that culture, through different mediation forms, can be appropriated by children, contributing to their formation as complete people. It is also his or her role to select material and non-material objects of the cultural capital accumulated by society, and, knowing about the specificities of the moments of children personality development, to organize times, spaces, relations and formation experiences that allow for the effective appropriation of knowledge that goes beyond that already present in the daily living of children and that is assimilated even without the participation of the school's systematized work. The childhood school should be a space that makes a difference in the life of children: a space for intervention on formation capacities, a space for activities that allow children to comprehend and comprehend themselves, to perceive and perceive themselves, to learn, to enjoy (Brasil, 2009a, 2009b). The school should be a space for creation of new needs that impel children to learn and develop.

Thus, as children grow up and experience different situations – seeing, hearing, imitating and performing by themselves what they learn from people around them, participating in the life of their families, community and society –, new formations (Leontiev, 1978) are constructed in their brain, and new relations are established by them with their social surroundings. The childhood school has a fundamental role in the qualification of these processes by carrying out a pedagogical work marked by intentionality and systematized methods.

Acting pedagogically in order to intervene positively in the broad development of little children, provoking the development of personality, requires a knowledge of the main characteristics of each moment of child development and its formative dynamics. It demands, above all, acting not only on the

capacities already formed, but, especially, on those capacities already in formation process in the child. In this way, teachers act, primarily, on the development zone close to the child (Vygostki, 1932/2013b), and thus their work impels the development of intellectual, affective, practical and artistic capacities of child personality.

Comprehending what being a mediator of learning and development means, herein, becomes fundamental. Etymologically, the word mediation derives from the Latin term *mediation*, meaning intercession, interposition, intervention. In this sense, mediating is positioning in between, it is acting deliberately to interfere with a process or situation. The interpretation of the term *mediate*, when it comes to the educative work of teachers, refers to the fact that they take on the task of promoting a meeting between two elements of the learning-teaching process: the child who learns and the cultural object learned by him or her. Thereby, this is not about putting children beside objects so that they, by themselves, discover, build knowledge – whether these objects are material, like books, building blocks, folding paper, scissors and glue, puzzles, paints and pencils, or non-material, like numbers, reading, writing, music and diversified forms of human expression. Every object carries, in addition to physical properties, pieces of knowledge accumulated about their use, historically formulated by humankind. Books are followed by manipulation and reading procedures culturally defined; games have set rules; movements have meanings consolidated throughout history, just as music, painting, sculpture, drawing, sciences. Mediating means, therefore, promoting a meeting between a child and the social use for which an object exists. Thus, it is not necessary that every child reinvent knowledge. The process through which they learn is an appropriation/objectification process of what exists. (Duarte, 1993). Learning means knowing how to use objects according to their social role, knowing about them and thinking about them in an increasingly autonomous manner. In this process, knowing himself or herself and knowing his or her own possibilities. In this sense, teachers perform a

fundamental work: acting with children so that they perceive the uses of cultural objects and expand their understanding of human knowledge and productions; organizing situations for children, in interaction, to act toward interfering with the learning process of each other based on previous knowledge, aiming at the creation of new and more complex forms of comprehension that stem from relations with the culture historically accumulated in objects, in human knowledge and productions. The most important thing is that, through the mediation of an adult, the child is always in activity (Leontiev, 2010): that he or she is always motivated by the result of actions he or she performs and, in this way, is physically, intellectually and emotionally involved in what he or she performs.

Children are not passive in relation to the influences of teachers. Learning is an active process and implies the participation of the former as subjects, promoting their development. When listening to a story, when singing a song, when participating in a game or learning what an object is used for children live a singular experience that always involve learning and affection (Vigotski, 1935/2010).

In this sense, preschools and daycares are spaces for the establishment of relations between children and generic objectifications (arts, sciences, moral, politics and philosophy), given the specificities that mark learning and development in early childhood. These are spaces for mediation between daily living and their own knowledge (language, uses and habits) and unordinary and more complex possibilities of human action (Heller, 1977, 2008). The daycare and the school are spaces and times for learning and expressing; spaces and times for living every moment of development fully without anticipating them (Zaporóshetz, 1987) or awaiting them passively as if they were an autonomous, natural process; spaces and times for creation and expansion of humanizing needs capable of motivating the activities of children and, in this process, enabling the development of new forms of comprehension and action on objects, and of new relations with people; in short, spaces and times for personality development.

Human development is historical and social. Personality is historical and social. May

the childhood school be the space for a meeting of children with historical and social conquests, with people and with themselves. May teachers be aware of the magnitude of their work in the formation of people, and be consciously and intentionally, the builder of a new humankind.

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