

Health in the school environment: Some reflections about



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ABSTRACT

The present work addressed theoretical bibliographic studies on the theme of health education and its interfaces in health promotion. The results showed that one of the main ways in which education professionals can promote health is through awareness and dissemination of accurate information on topics related to the subject. This can occur in interdisciplinary pedagogical projects, where students learn the importance of health in everyday life through the curricular components of mathematics, science, physical education, geography and the others. Therefore, educators can also play an active role in identifying and referring students who need additional support, watching for signs of physical or emotional health problems and working together with other professionals such as doctors, psychologists and social workers to ensure that students receive the necessary support. Based on the theoretical framework presented, we reflect on possibilities for expanding care at school. The role of educators is fundamental for the integral development of students, not only in the academic aspect, but also in the search for quality of life and the formation of healthy habits. The school is an environment where health promotion and disease prevention needs to be a mission, as it concentrates a large number of children and adolescents, who represent the future of the nation.

Keywords: Health education, Health in education, Health at school.



1 INTRODUCTION

Health is considered an essential condition for people's well-being and quality of life. Often, the responsibility for knowledge and actions related to this topic is attributed to traditional services such as clinics and hospitals, but there is a growing understanding that health promotion needs to start from childhood in school and in the community. Thus, the role of the school institution, represented mainly by education professionals, is of great importance in promoting health among students.

The National Curriculum Parameters consider the concept of health to be complex and subjective, since it can take on different meanings according to cultural, social and even personal factors. However, they consider that educational institutions are able to efficiently address all the diversity present in this theme. "In other words, what society understands by health is always present in the classroom and in the school environment." (Brazil, 1997, p. 15).

In this context, it is up to education professionals, in addition to practicing healthy habits that are models of behavior and promoting, together with the responsible bodies and institutions that provide traditional services, actions and strategies aimed at preventing diseases and improving the quality of life. The aim is to prevent the emergence of diseases or adverse health conditions by raising awareness of risk factors and adopting practices that are beneficial to human life.

These professionals can have an impact on the health of children and young people due to the time spent together made available by the educational process. Thus, they become responsible for creating a balanced and safe school environment where students can learn and develop fully. In addition, they have the ability to influence students' behaviors and attitudes, promoting healthy choices and encouraging the adoption of appropriate behaviors.

In order to reflect on health in the school environment, this work dealt with a theoretical and bibliographic study through the qualitative research method. It sought information on websites, scientific articles and official documents on health at school, as well as health projects at school.

2 HEALTH EDUCATION

Buss (2001) emphasizes the importance of information and practices related to health in the early years of the school process, as this is a decisive phase of human development, where habits are formed.

One of the main ways in which education professionals can promote health is through raising awareness and disseminating accurate information on topics related to the subject. This can occur in physical education classes, where students learn the importance of regular physical activity, and lectures on nutrition and balanced eating. Topics such as personal hygiene, disease prevention, mental health and sexuality can also be addressed, providing students with the necessary awareness to make decisions that contribute to their health.



In addition, these professionals can encourage students to adopt important habits such as regular exercise, balanced diet and sleep, which needs to be sufficient in quantity and quality to invigorate the body and mind. It is worth emphasizing, again, the importance of example. By adopting these behaviors in their own lives, education professionals demonstrate to students that health is a priority and that these practices are relevant to overall well-being.

Educators can also play an active role in identifying and referring learners who need additional support. To do so, they should watch for signs of physical or emotional health problems and work together with other professionals such as doctors, psychologists and social workers to ensure that learners receive the necessary support.

Education workers are also committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all, regardless of health condition. It is part of their role to collaborate with families and health professionals to ensure that students with special needs have an appropriate environment and services that enable their full participation in school life.

For those who play such a crucial role, it is also necessary to have a deep knowledge of the school community and the whole context that surrounds it. Pedrosa (2006) considers that the definition of strategies to work on health at school requires study and planning, as it is necessary to ensure that the proposals are appropriate to the reality of the students. Otherwise, it can become a mere manual of unattainable rules and not promote the formation of the desired behaviors.

As mentioned, the role of educators is fundamental for the integral development of students, not only in the academic aspect, but also in the search for quality of life and the formation of healthy habits. The school is an environment where health promotion and disease prevention needs to be a mission, as it concentrates a large number of children and adolescents, who represent the future of the nation. For this goal to be achieved efficiently, the integration of public health policies at school is indispensable.

The implementation of public health policies at school involves the union of efforts between several sectors. Coordinated actions between government spheres can provide joint strategies to ensure access to health services, promote awareness on the subject and create an environment favorable to the physical and emotional development of students.

One of the main ways of integrating public health policies in schools is through the work of health professionals within the school environment. Doctors, nurses, psychologists, nutritionists, among others, could work together with school professionals to develop health promotion actions. These actions can cover aspects such as periodic medical examinations, vaccination, physical and sports activities, nutritional guidance, prevention of drug and alcohol use, sex education and others.

This work would also involve promoting a culture of health and well-being within the school community. This can be done by including health-related content in school curricula, conducting



educational campaigns, creating healthy and welcoming spaces, training teachers to deal with health issues, among other strategies.

The joint efforts generate benefits for both students and the entire school community. By promoting health and preventing diseases, it contributes to the improvement of students' academic performance, to the reduction of school absenteeism and to the formation of more conscious and responsible citizens with their own lives.

It is important to emphasize that this integration cannot be a commitment restricted to the school. It is essential that there is an effective articulation between the government sphere and the different sectors of society, such as health, education, family and community so that the actions are effective and achieve positive results.

The integration of public health policies in schools is an essential strategy to promote health and prevent diseases among students. This integration involves the work of health professionals in the school environment, the promotion of a culture of health and well-being and the articulation between the different sectors of society. Investing in this integration is fundamental for building the future and the healthy development of generations to come.

3 HEALTH AT SCHOOL

The topic of health at school is extremely important and relevant today. Understanding and promoting students' health is not only limited to the physical aspect, but also involves emotional, social and cognitive well-being. A holistic approach to school health is fundamental to create an environment conducive to learning and healthy development of students.

First and foremost, it is critical that schools are safe and healthy places for all pupils, as pupils spend much of their time there. This involves ensuring that the physical infrastructure is in good condition, with adequate classrooms, spaces for physical and recreational activities, as well as ensuring the hygiene and cleanliness of the facilities. Pleasant and safe physical environments contribute to the prevention of accidents and illnesses, promoting the general well-being of all students, without discrimination.

In addition, health promotion at school should include the implementation of health education programs. Students should receive information on healthy eating, the importance of physical activity, personal hygiene, disease prevention, mental health and responsible sexuality, mutual respect, social responsibility and contraception. These programs should be developed in a comprehensive manner, involving the participation of teachers, health professionals and even the students themselves and their families, through projects and practical activities.

The theme Health in the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs) is considered a "[...] state of complete physical, mental and social well-being [...]" (Brazil, 1997, p. 63). The health of a population



is closely related to its quality of life. The school can fulfill its social function of preparing individuals for citizen life and thus contribute to improving the quality of life through important information for the well-being of the population.

Although this theme can be worked within the content of the Natural Sciences discipline, the PCNs present Health as a cross-cutting theme. The theme can permeate all areas of knowledge. This document records the importance of school education in the process of socialization of health-related knowledge, since education is considered one of the most significant factors for health promotion. By educating for health, in a contextualized and systematic way, the teacher and the school community contribute decisively to the formation of citizens capable of acting in favor of improving personal and collective health levels (Brazil, 1997). It is worth remembering that: "School alone will not lead students to acquire health. It can and should, however, provide elements that enable them to lead a healthy life". (Brazil, 1997, p.66)

The school also plays an important role in supporting students' socio-emotional development. It is essential that students feel emotionally safe and supported so that they can focus on the learning process. Promoting healthy relationships between students, teachers and school staff is key to the smooth running of school activities. The implementation of bullying prevention programs, inclusion and the encouragement of empathy and peaceful conflict resolution are some of the strategies that can be adopted to strengthen the emotional well-being of students.

In addition, it is important that the school is attentive to the cognitive aspects of the health of students and school staff. This involves encouraging critical thinking, creativity and the development of socio-emotional skills such as resilience and perseverance. The promotion of a stimulating learning environment, with trained and motivated teachers, as well as innovative teaching methods, contributes to the intellectual and cognitive development of students in general.

It is observed that the school should establish partnerships with parents and guardians, as well as with community health professionals to ensure a comprehensive approach to the health of students and all school professionals. The active participation of the family and the community in the educational process is fundamental to strengthen the ties between the school and the surroundings, promoting health in an integrated manner.

In summary, the concept of health at school goes beyond the absence of physical illness. It involves creating a safe and healthy environment for all who live there, promoting healthy habits, emotional support and cognitive development of students. Taking a holistic approach to school health contributes to the holistic education of students and prepares them for a healthy and successful life.



4 HEALTH AT SCHOOL FOR PUPILS' DEVELOPMENT

Education is one of the essential pillars for social development and building a healthy and productive society. However, health plays an essential role in this process, as healthy students are able to learn, develop and reach their full potential. Thus, "health should be seen as a resource for living, not as the goal of living [...] it is a positive concept, which emphasizes social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities" (Brazil, 2002, p. 19-20).

It is perceived that students who are in good health have a greater capacity for concentration, energy and endurance to face academic activities. The absence of health problems, such as chronic diseases, malnutrition or obesity, allows students to be present at school on a regular basis and actively participate in school activities. In addition, proper nutrition and regular physical activity contribute to students' brain and cognitive development, improving their memory, reasoning and learning abilities.

In addition to physical health, emotional and mental health also play a crucial role in students' development. School can be a challenging and stressful environment for many students, and it is important that they have access to adequate emotional support. Through mental health programs in schools, students can learn skills to manage stress, cope with negative emotions and develop resilience. The emotional support provided by the school creates a safe and nurturing environment, promoting students' psychological well-being and, consequently, improvements in academic performance.

Another aspect to note is that the school plays an important role in promoting healthy lifestyle habits and health education. By providing useful information and guidance on health, schools empower students to make informed decisions. This information is crucial for students to become autonomous and responsible adults, able to take care of themselves and contribute to a healthy society.

School health is not limited to students, but also encompasses the entire school community, including teachers, staff and family members. It is essential that the school establishes partnerships with health professionals, such as nurses and psychologists, nutritionists and others, to offer comprehensive and integrated support to all involved in this process. The creation of a safe and healthy physical environment, with adequate spaces for physical activities, healthy eating and accident prevention, are essential aspects to promote the health of all those involved in the educational process.

One of the most widespread conceptions of education and health is developed through formal teaching-learning situations, functioning as aggregates to the spaces of health practices. Health Education is a social practice, whose process contributes to the formation of people's critical awareness of their health problems, based on their reality, and stimulates the search for solutions and organization for effective individual and collective action aimed at the well-being of all.

The predominant model of health care in Brazilian society (structure, processes and relationships) is based on a political-pedagogical project, explicit or not, which tends to reproduce the



way Brazilian society is structured, as well as the social relationships and labor relations that are characteristic of them.

According to the National Curriculum Guidelines, the pedagogical proposal or pedagogical political project of a school is the planning responsible for guiding the actions of an educational institution, also defining the goals to be achieved through the process of learning and development of students.

The role of the school is to prepare its students for the most diverse social demands. It can be said, then, that Education and Health are two faces of the same process, interdependent and co-constructive. The school has the social function of forming citizens.

The Ministry of Health defines Health Education as an educational process of building health knowledge that aims at the thematic appropriation by the population (Brasil, 2009). It is a set of sector practices that contributes to increasing people's autonomy in their care and in the debate with professionals and managers in order to achieve health care according to their needs (Brasil, 2006; Falkenberg et al, 2014).

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by an important historical moment in the construction of conceptions and practices of education and health. At that time, hygiene was the basis for a field of knowledge that related to and explained health problems. According to Arouca (2003), hygiene ends up reducing the solution of health problems to the application of hygienic measures, which are based on the conditions of existence.

Health education campaigns democratize access to quality information and help raise awareness among the population about behaviors that are essential for quality of life (Zello, 2021). An articulation that must occur between public, private entities, health professionals, schools and society in general. Each one has its role, considering the reality in which they live.

In this sense, an articulated and collective construction that involves the three segments of groups in education practices is of paramount importance: health professionals who are those professionals who go beyond curative practices only; managers who support and favor the performance of these professionals; and the population, who needs to be open to knowledge and stay informed to increase their autonomy in care, individually and collectively, as within their families and circle of friends (Oliveira, 2020).

Health Education aims at popular health education. This means that it values the knowledge, the prior knowledge of the population and not only the scientific knowledge (Falkenberg et al, 2014).

It is essential to expand Health Education by creating opportunities for all people to become informed and change their awareness about the subject. Disseminating information and stimulating prevention, this is the reality that is sought within communities.



In the search for integral health, education assumes a very important significance, contributing to the orientation of practical and more effective actions. At school, the work must be oriented towards educating with meaning, educating with participation, educating for creativity, joy and hope.

In this perspective, Health Education can be focused on specific topics, such as sexuality, chronic diseases, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, drug use, among others. One of the most efficient health education actions in Brazil is the National Campaign to Combat Smoking. The control of smoking as a public disease was stipulated according to Federal Law 7.488, which establishes August 29 of each year as the "D-Day to combat the use of cigarettes and other forms of smoking".

It is emphasized that more informed and aware individuals take better care of their health and, as a consequence, lead a more balanced life. This helps to reduce the number of citizens with chronic diseases and other health problems in Brazil, significantly reducing the impact on the SUS (Public Health System) budget (Zello, 2021).

The term Health Education is a parallel between the areas of Education and Health, with Education having the pedagogical methods to transform behaviors and Health the knowledge capable of intervening on health promotion challenges for the general population (ProDoctor, 2020).

In schools, there are programs that help maintain health for the betterment of the school community. As an example, the School Health Program (PSE) is reported.

5 SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM (PSE)

Regarding health programs, the Mais Educação project is mentioned, which is part of one of the instruments of the Education Development Plan (PDE). A project that was created from the Interministerial Ordinance No. 17/2007 (Brazil, 2007) and its exercise was regulated by Decree 7.083/10. The Ministry of Education, with the aim of full-time education for students in public schools in state and municipal networks, expanded the workload to provide students with an environment conducive to quality learning.

The proposed activities of the program are in various fields of learning such as pedagogical accompaniment for those who have not obtained satisfactory learning, environmental education, sport and leisure, human rights, health promotion, communication and use of the media, experiences in the field of nature and economic education.

The proposal to extend the daily time young people spend in public schools needs to be analyzed in terms of economic and administrative feasibility. It is also necessary to discuss which pedagogical activities will be used in the additional hours.

In Brazilian society, "the current justifications for extending school time are based on authoritarian or welfare conceptions as well as democratic conceptions" (Cavaliere, 2009, p. 51). Regarding the More Education Program (PME), "The image of managers is that, for many families,



the PME means protection and reception of children who could be left helpless to their own fate in their communities." (Soares; Brandolin; Amaral, 2017, p. 1069).

The programs created by the federal, state or municipal spheres are roadmaps, planning policies aimed at solving some problem. In the case of the School Health Program (PSE), under Presidential Decree No. 6,286 of December 5, 2007 (Brazil, 2007), it is a federal plan to integrate and articulate health and education. The PSE is concerned with contributing to the comprehensive education of students through health promotion, prevention and care actions, with a view to addressing the vulnerabilities that compromise the full development of children and young people in the public school system (Brasil, 2007).

The target audience of the program are children, adolescents and young people who are enrolled in basic education in Brazilian public schools. These subjects represent groups that are undergoing intense constructions, such as identity.

It is observed that uniting health and education means taking care, for example, of the mental health of students with the care of professionals from the Family Health Teams, being a need recognized by 80% of young people between 11 and 19 years old, according to data from the Research Institute - IPEC. In this same survey, another importance of the PSE is noted: reducing school dropout rates, whose problem was aggravated by the pandemic.

Sensitive to school dropout issues, the PSE cites the concern to "contribute to the construction of a social care system, focusing on the promotion of citizenship and human rights" (Brazil, 2007, p. 03).

Another important point is the concern to "strengthen community participation in basic education and health policies, in the three spheres of government." (Brasil, 2007, p.03). In this action, according to Environmental Psychology, important aspects can be worked with those involved. One of them is the "appropriation", in which the individual will feel part of interacting with the environment from their reflections, desires and desires for changes that can start at school and replicate in the surroundings (Bandeira, Bomfim, Sales. 2012).

6 CONSIDERATIONS

For health promotion, health education is an important tool that involves theoretical and philosophical characteristics. The characteristics guide the practices of all health professionals aiming at a work convergent to the principles of health promotion.

Activities for health promotion need to give importance to the development of personal and social skills of participants in a dialogical and liberating way. With this, the people involved in the process of health promotion in schools should act in consultations, technical procedures, nursing care actions, care rooms and others, making it possible to establish dialog and respect for life.



The work also recognizes the importance of the Health at School Program (PSE) that reaches various activities in the school environment such as pedagogical monitoring for those who have not obtained satisfactory learning, environmental education, sports and leisure, human rights, health promotion, communication and use of media, experiences in the field of nature and economic education. These activities are supported by education professionals and can be developed through pedagogical projects.

It is necessary to comment that the participation of the community is fundamental for the success of health projects at school because of the interest in the well-being and quality of life of students, teachers, parents and guardians.



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