

Raising Awareness towards the Role of Psychology in the Development of Citizenship: A Perspective from the Brazilian Educational System

Raquel Tavares Vieira John*

Educational Psychology, Independent Professional, Brazil

***Corresponding Author:** Raquel Tavares Vieira John, Educational Psychology, Independent Professional, Brazil.

Received: October 31, 2018; **Published:** November 16, 2018

Very little is known about the important role of psychology within the Brazilian educational setting. Even though there is a very strong correlation between the different perspectives offered by educational psychology and the quality of learning [1], the cultural background in Brazil is yet to learn and adopt the effective strategies proposed by validated approaches such as social and emotional learning [2], positive psychology [3], among many others.

For quite some time, research has shown us that a psychologically secure environment in the classroom provides not only a positive setting for learning, but also encourages social engagement amongst peers [4], which is the key for the development of early perception of citizenship [5].

In Brazil, the late Paulo Freire was probably the first to raise awareness to this issue, identifying the early ages and the school setting as key elements for the development of citizenship [6]. Freire stated that the school is the best social environment for a meaningful learning, where children can perceive human interactions and mutual respect, building a solid perception of citizenship

Hence, this paper argues about the underlying necessity to insert the psychology frame of reference into Brazilian schools [7]; by establishing a natural development of emotional intelligence competencies such as empathy, self-regulation, self-awareness, sense of belonging, character, and self-efficacy, all directly related to citizenship [8].

Literature provides multiple definitions of citizenship and most converge towards 'membership' or 'belonging' to a sovereign state or organized ethnic group - nation. In order to become a member or belong to a certain group, one must develop personal characteristics and selected indicators of social and psychological functioning [9]. Therefore, there are psychosocial aspects of each individual that intersect with one another and influence the collectivity, providing a sense of community and a base for citizenship.

Those individual psychosocial traits are optimally developed in the classroom setting as children's personal characteristics are predictors of rule compliance and peer sociability [10]. That statement points out to the role of the school in creating citizens. Only in the classroom children learn from an early age that there is a world of people, rules, routines and perspectives, different from those of his home.

Hence, by learning to develop individual psychosocial skills, appreciation and respect towards their community from early ages, children will naturally develop a sense of belonging and mutual respect, being more likely to become responsible citizens and productive members of society [5].

Unfortunately, in Brazil, the cultural background established within early childhood education throughout the years, lacked consideration towards psychological approaches. It resulted in a vicious cycle that ended up terminating any attempt to develop this approach or implement similar perspectives, increasing high school evasion [11].

According to the latest Brazilian educational census, there was a drop of nearly 400.000 enrollments in high school from 2013 to 2017. One of the problems identified by the Brazilian Education Ministry is the ever increasing number of inactive teenagers, that do not feel part of any social structure [11]. In theory, the Brazilian children do not develop psychological perspectives or social skills in early childhood education and later become 'apathetic' teenagers without any sense of purpose or belonging.

On the other hand, we might improve our model if we take into account what the improvements in the field of education, psychology, and pedagogy offered us lately. There is quite an urge to shape this approach, providing guidance to children and building productive citizens for the future. The knowledge produced from psychological research can contribute to a more productive educational practice for students to develop the skills and characteristics necessary for creative performance in their different present and future contexts.

Inasmuch, human beings are social beings, and as such, they must live in groups to survive and consequently, prosper [12]. This prosperity is only achieved through human interaction based on the development psychosocial skills needed for healthy and productive relations.

The school setting in early childhood is one of the places to learn and improve psychosocial characteristics, and those are better developed with the presence of a school psychologist, whose perspective contributes meaningfully to the formulation and evaluation of educational interventions [13]. This perspective, however, not only is it not part of Brazilian culture, it is does not have any legal reference. Moreover, guidance instructions - viewed as 'emotional intelligence lessons' - are only practiced in few international private schools.

Even though we fell behind in many sectors of our education - most of them due to lack of knowledge or lack of involvement from stakeholders and decision makers - our system flaws are latent, though resolvable. For instance, the absence of guidance lessons, or even guidance-oriented instructions in Brazil curtails the children's abilities to perceive themselves as self-effective and empathetic towards one another, creating indifferent teenagers, and sentencing their communities to a hopeless future [14].

In order for children to start being encouraged to explore issues to do with power and politics, they must first develop individual psychological skills that interfere directly in their social setting, only then, it is feasible to include factual information about the structures and processes of government, and their participation, understanding the true meaning of citizenship [15]. Something Brazil sorely needs.

We have a much better understanding of the importance of the social context for learning, the role of experience and action, and how the brain manages knowledge. These all have implications for how people learn to be active citizens, and for education efforts to promote citizen engagement [16,17].

Bibliography

1. Ormrod JE. "Educational Psychology: Developing Learners (8th edition)". Greeley, CO: Pearson (2014).
2. Zins J., *et al.* "Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?" New York, NY: Teachers College Press (2004).
3. Seligman M., *et al.* "Positive education: positive psychology and classroom interventions". *Oxford Review of Education* 35.3 (2009): 293-311.
4. Ames C and Archer J. "Achievement Goals in the Classroom: Students' Learning Strategies and Motivation Processes". *Journal of Educational Psychology* 80.3 (1988): 260-267.
5. Devine D. "Children's Citizenship and the Structuring of Adult-child Relations in the Primary School". *Childhood* 9.3 (2002): 303-320.
6. Freire P. "Pedagogy of the Oppressed". London: Bloomsbury Academic (1970).
7. Carrara K. "Psicologia e a construção da cidadania". *Psicologia: Ciência e Profissão* 16.1 (1996).

8. Carson KD and Carson PP. "Career Commitment, Competencies, and Citizenship". *Journal of Career Assessment* 6.2 (1998): 195-208.
9. Hagerty B., *et al.* "Sense of belonging and indicators of social and psychological functioning". *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 10.4 (1996): 235-244.
10. Adams GR., *et al.* "Rule compliance and peer sociability: A study of family process, school-focused parent-child interactions, and children's classroom behavior". *Journal of Family Psychology* 14.2 (2000): 237-250.
11. Ministério da Educação e Cultura. "Censo Escolar da Educação Básica". Governo Federal, Brasília, DF (2018).
12. Harari Y. "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind". New York, NY: Harper (2014).
13. Deno SL. "Formative evaluation of individual student programs: A new role for school psychologists". *Psychology Review* 15.3 (1986): 358-374.
14. John R. "Educational psychology in Brazil: a case for children". Stillwater, OK, USA (2010).
15. Howard S and Gill J. "The Pebble in the Pond: Children's constructions of power, politics and democratic citizenship". *Cambridge Journal of Education* 30.3 (2000): 357-378.
16. Merrifield J. "Learning Citizenship". Learning from Experience Trust (2001).
17. Emmer E and Stough L. "Classroom Management: A Critical Part of Educational Psychology, With Implications for Teacher Education". *Educational Psychologist* 36.2 (2001): 103-112.

Volume 7 Issue 12 December 2018

©All rights reserved by Raquel Tavares Vieira John.