

TEACHER TRAINING AND ESSENTIAL VALUES FOR EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

In order to help students' development, it is important for teachers to achieve autonomy. Teacher training can stimulate experiences that favor adherence to justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence. This study investigates whether the quality of training – initial and continuing – of teachers in the Final Years of Elementary School, in [name of the city], is related to adherence to essential values for moral education. total of 260 professors, aged 23 to 70, mostly women, participated. The following were used: (a) Teacher Profile Questionnaire, (b) IEQ, (c) CEQ and (d) SMVS. The following were performed: (a) cluster analysis, (b) ANOVAS and (c) Kruskal-Wallis. Teachers showed greater adherence to justice and democratic coexistence; minor to respect. For justice, there was a difference between high and low quality continuing education. High quality continuing education can promote adherence to values. It is important that training initiatives address values in a non-dogmatic way, promoting dialogue and criticism.

Keywords: values; teacher training; moral education

Formación de profesores y valores esenciales a la educación en una sociedad democrática

RESUMEN

Para ayudar en el desarrollo de los estudiantes, es importante que los profesores alcancen la autonomía. La formación docente puede estimular experiencias favorables a la adhesión a la justicia, respeto, solidaridad y convivencia democrática. En este estudio se investiga si la calidad de la formación – inicial y continuada – de profesores de los Cursos Finales de la Enseñanza Primaria, en [nombre de la ciudad], se relaciona a la adhesión a valores esenciales a una educación moral. Participaron 260 docentes, de 23 a 70 años, mayoritariamente mujeres. Se utilizaron: (a) Ficha de Perfil del Profesor, (b) QFI, (c) QFC y (d) EVSM. Se realizaron: (a) análisis de *clusters*, (b) ANOVAS y (c) Kruskal-Wallis. Los profesores presentaron mayor adhesión a la justicia y convivencia democrática; menor al respeto. Para la justicia, hubo diferencia entre formación continuada de alta y baja calidad. Formación continuada de alta calidad puede promover adhesión a valores. Es relevante que las iniciativas de formación aborden valores de forma no dogmática, promoviendo diálogo y criticidad.

Palabras clave: valores; formación de profesores; educación moral

Formação de professores e valores essenciais à educação em uma sociedade democrática

RESUMO

Para auxiliar no desenvolvimento dos estudantes, é importante que os professores atinjam a autonomia. A formação docente pode estimular experiências favoráveis à adesão à justiça, respeito, solidariedade e convivência democrática. Este estudo investiga se a qualidade da formação – inicial e continuada – de professores dos Anos Finais do Ensino Fundamental, em [nome da cidade], relaciona-se à adesão a valores essenciais para uma educação moral. Participaram 260 docentes, de 23 a 70 anos, majoritariamente mulheres. Utilizaram-se: (a) Ficha de Perfil do Professor, (b) QFI, (c) QFC e (d) EVSM. Realizaram-se: (a) análise de *clusters*, (b) ANOVAS e (c) Kruskal-Wallis. Os professores apresentaram maior adesão à justiça e convivência democrática; menor ao respeito. Para a justiça, houve diferença entre formação continuada de alta e baixa qualidade. Formação continuada de alta qualidade pode promover adesão a valores. É relevante que as iniciativas de formação abordem valores de forma não dogmática, promovendo diálogo e criticidade.

Palavras-chave: valores; formação de professores; educação moral

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INTRODUCTION

An individual develops his morality (Piaget, 1932/1994) in interaction with people, ideas and values. The school is an important space for the development of children and adolescents, as it provides interactions with individuals outside the family circle, enabling values and rules to be extended to society as a whole (Couto, 2019). Teachers participate in the youth environment and can help in their development. However, teachers are not only trainers, but also individuals in constant development. It is therefore necessary to investigate possible relationships between teacher education – initial and continuing – and their values.

Essential Values for Moral Education

Enabling the moral development of young people includes encouraging the construction of their values. According to Cortina (1997), there are values that deserve special attention in education, as they are essential for young people to become citizens: (a) justice, expressed by the principle of equality, (b) respect, (c) solidarity and (d) democratic coexistence, instrumentalized by dialogue. These values are pointed out by an official Brazilian document called National Curriculum Parameters (NCP; Secretary of Elementary Education, 1998) as fundamental for moral education in a democratic society.

According to Piaget (1932/1994), justice is essential for moral life. In his research, this author investigated two types of justice: retributive and distributive. Retributive justice refers to the relationships established between an offense and its consequences. The first notion of retributive justice to emerge in development is the expiatory sanction: arbitrary and unrelated to the content of the sanction and the nature of the sanctioned act. The second is the sanction by reciprocity, which maintains a relationship of content and nature between the offense and the punishment. Distributive justice is bounded by ideas of equality and equity. The first notion of distribution in development is that the just is in accordance with the determinations of authority figures (e.g., parents and teachers). Then comes the idea of dividing assets into exactly equal parts, ensuring that no one is harmed. This notion is known as mathematical equality. Finally, the just becomes the division of goods according to the unique conditions and characteristics of the recipient. This is the principle of equitable distribution: equality that takes into account differences.

A study (Couto, Alencar, & Salgado, 2017) carried out in Vitória - ES with six elementary and middle school teachers, showed that justice was considered by them as an important value to be taught, as it has the potential to organize society and resolve conflicts. In another survey (D'Aurea-Tardeli, Fittipaldi, Postal, & Reis, 2012) carried out in São Paulo – SP, 72 high school students attributed

importance to justice. As they reported living in an unfair world, this value could help resolve interpersonal conflicts and combat violence. In fact, in Brazil, there are recurrent injustices involving issues of social, racial and sexual inequality (Madeira & Gomes, 2018).

According to Piaget (1932/1994), respect is fundamental for the education of young people. Unilateral respect – the first type to appear in development – is aimed at authority figures and is based on a mixture of love and fear for such figures. Young people recognize the right of parents and teachers to give them orders without the reciprocal being true. For example, if a student decides to give an order to his/her teacher to do something, that professional will not feel obligated to do it. Mutual respect – which succeeds unilateral respect – consists in the fear of being negatively viewed by a respected individual. This is made possible by the cooperative relationships that the child establishes with his/her peers. In addition to demanding that young people exercise reciprocity, mutual respect acts directly in the construction of citizenship (Secretary of Elementary Education, 1998).

In general, respect evaluates a person as distinct from others, considering him/her as a single whole. A study (Alencar, De Marchi, Couto, Romaneli, & Lima, 2014) carried out in Espírito Santo with middle and high school teachers, showed that this value is considered the most important for education. It is possible that this relevance is due, at least in part, to constant complaints about the lack of respect at school. Bullying, for example, is quite frequent among students (Magalhães, Cameira, Rodrigues, & Nogueira, 2019). In addition, teachers complain of disrespect on the part of students (Marques, Venturin, Santos, & Zinelli, 2017). However, the opposite also occurs: teachers are often authoritarian and lack respect for students (Tognetta & Daud, 2018). It is not uncommon, for example, for teachers to place students in embarrassing situations as a way of punishing inattention in the classroom.

Solidarity is essential at school, as it refers to cooperation (Secretary of Elementary Education, 1998). A study (Tognetta & Assis, 2006) carried out in Campinas – SP with 23 students aged 6 and 7 years, found that solidarity is encouraged when the teacher provides an environment with cooperative relationships. In this research, the cooperative classroom presented students with a higher level of moral development compared to the coercive one. Furthermore, almost half of the students immersed in the cooperative environment demonstrated the ability to perform operations, while the same was not true for students in the coercive room. Thus, an evolution in solidarity was evidenced, which is linked to the experience of reciprocity and mutual respect.

Democratic coexistence – instrumentalized by

dialogue – is fundamental to the school environment, as it allows the establishment of more respectful interpersonal relationships (Vinha, Nunes, Silva, Vivaldi, & Moro, 2017). According to the NCP (Secretary of Elementary Education, 1998), “the foundation of a democratic society is the constitution and recognition of legal subjects” (p. 19). A study (Vinha & Tognetta, 2006) carried out in São Paulo's inland cities, with two elementary school teachers, showed that autocratic classrooms – that is, with essentially coercive practices – favor the maintenance of heteronomy (the morals whose norms come from on the other; Piaget, 1932/1994) among students, while democratic classes contribute to the promotion of autonomy. The democratic environment enabled the appropriation of norms through reflection, discussion and action, allowing students to perceive the consequences of their attitudes.

Justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence have different levels of decentration. Next, the development of these values will be discussed, presenting different researches, based on the concept of commitment to values.

Commitment to Values

Commitment to values refers to the way an individual sees other people, interprets their feelings and considers the role they play in society (Marques, Tavares, & Menin, 2017). It is about how one stands towards others when certain values are adopted. There are different levels of commitment, which develop as follows: (a) an egocentric perspective, aimed at satisfying one's own needs and the inability to assume different points of view; (b) sociocentric, centered on group and family relationships and social norms; and (c) properly moral, based on contracts democratically established by fair procedures (Tavares et al., 2016).

Studies (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017; Tavares et al., 2016) carried out in the state of São Paulo with Basic Education teachers investigated commitment to the values of justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence. Teachers were classified into four increasing levels of decentering: (a) level I, countervalue, that is, positioning contrary to the value in question (b) level II, egocentric pro-value, (c) level III, sociocentric pro-value, and (d) level IV, properly moral pro-value. Teachers showed greater commitment to solidarity, distributed in levels IV (71%) and III (29%), and less to justice, arranged in levels III (93.7%), II (6%) and I (0.3%). Commitment to respect and democratic coexistence was intermediate, with all professors at level III. In summary, the professors achieved moral autonomy only in solidarity. In the other values, sociocentric commitment predominated. In justice, some teachers even presented an egocentric and countervalue level. These professors are still quite attached to social conventions, especially when they

adopt the values of justice, respect and democratic coexistence.

These studies identified associations between continuing education and the values investigated. Teachers who took courses about (a) teaching methodologies and (b) values and attitudes had higher commitment to justice, solidarity and democratic coexistence. The teacher education and its possible relationships with values will be discussed below.

Relations between Teacher Education and Commitment to Values

According to Tognetta and Daud (2018), teacher training can stimulate reflections and experiences that contribute to commitment to the values of justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence. In addition, it helps to understand the need to provide cooperative environments and use more assertive strategies to resolve conflicts. Teacher preparation is essential to promote students' moral development. However, it is important that educators are autonomous to foster autonomy (Tognetta, Martinez, & Daud, 2017). In this way, they can recognize it in students and encourage discussions in this direction (Menin & Bataglia, 2017).

Initial and continuing education have the role of preparing teachers for teaching in Basic Education, covering both specific content and values for citizenship. Initial training – that is, graduation – is essential for teachers to adequately fulfill their role (National Education Council, 2015). However, there are some minimum conditions for this to occur: (a) mastery of important content in his/her own area, (b) knowledge about moral development, (c) qualification to relate theory and practice, (d) preparation for cooperation at school and with the family, (e) knowledge beyond his/her own area, (f) mobilization of knowledge and values, (g) responsibility for education in values and (h) didactic-pedagogical preparation (Mello, 2000; Santos, 2012).

A study by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Intelligence Statistics (2018), with 2,160 Basic Education teachers in Brazil, showed that most of them consider their initial training insufficient. The research by Santos (2012), with 10 Kindergarten teachers, examined whether the professionals had contact with topics related to morality during their graduation. Seven reported having studied the subject, but only four remembered an author in the field. Most teachers conceived autonomy in a limited way and none of them considered cooperation as relevant to autonomy. The initial training of these teachers was deficient in terms of understanding moral development. This supports the idea that, according to Tognetta et al. (2017), “the training of teachers in Brazil is insufficient with regard to the school's Achilles heel, that is, the moral” (p. 37).

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National

Education (LGB; Special Secretary of Publishing and Publications, 2005) indicates that teachers must carry out continuing education activities. This training makes up for graduation needs, in addition to deepening and updating some content (Magalhães Júnior, Tomanik, & Carvalho, 2016). Good-quality continuing education activities need to: (a) encourage the exchange of experiences, in addition to the particularities and opinions of teachers; (b) be oriented towards attitudes, values and the work context; (c) have knowledgeable trainers who encourage reflection; (d) be relevant and applicable to educational practice; and (e) focus on teaching disciplines and methodologies (Souza, 2007).

A study (Zechi, 2014) investigated 193 moral education projects in all Brazilian regions, and its results showed that schools do not usually invest adequately in the continuing education of their teachers. This occurs, above all, with regard to professional development to assist in the construction of students' values. However, training activities seem to contribute to the commitment of teachers to essential values for moral education (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017; Tavares et al., 2016). Tognetta and Daud (2018) even state that the quality of training is important for committing to values. However, the authors did not examine these variables empirically. Therefore, it is worth investigating possible relationships between the quality of training and commitment to values.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In order for teachers to contribute to the moral development of their students, it is important that they achieve autonomy (Tognetta et al., 2017), committing to justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence in a decentered way (Tognetta & Daud, 2018). Thus, they can encourage essential values for moral education in a democratic society (Cortina, 1997; Secretary of Elementary Education, 1998). Paying attention to the values of middle school teachers is particularly relevant, as their students are entering adolescence. During this period of youth, students acquire the ability to establish a scale of values and elaborate life projects (Palhares & Freitas, 2017). Thus, they can rank values based on their own internal convictions, not grounded on immediate impulses or social pressures.

Even though some studies (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017; Tavares et al., 2016) have presented evidence of the relationship between education and commitment to values, the quality of teacher education was not taken into account. Therefore, this research aims to investigate whether the quality of education – initial and continuing – of middle school teachers, from Porto Alegre-RS, is related to commitment to essential values for moral education. The specific objectives are to examine: (a) the commitment of teachers to solidarity, respect, justice and democratic coexistence; and (b) possible differences

in commitment to values when considering the quality of teacher education.

In previous studies (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017; Tavares et al., 2016), teachers showed greater commitment to solidarity and less commitment to justice. As this research also evaluates teachers and uses the same instrument, the study considered the hypothesis that teachers will have greater commitment to solidarity, less to justice and intermediate to respect and democratic coexistence. As Tognetta and Daud (2018) suggested a possible relationship between quality of training and commitment to justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence, it was raised the hypothesis that there will be differences in commitment to values considering teacher education: a greater commitment will be related to high-quality training.

METHOD

Participants

In this research participated 260 middle school teachers from Porto Alegre-RS, selected by convenience. The inclusion criteria were: (a) work as a teacher; (b) work in middle school; (c) teach in Porto Alegre-RS; and (d) teach some subject. The exclusion criteria were: (a) work only as an intern; (b) carry out exclusively pedagogical management; and (c) teach only in adult education.

Teachers were between 23 and 70 years old ($M = 40.68$; $SD = 10.09$) and were mostly women (68.5%). They worked in private (46.5%), municipal (16.5%), state (38.5%) and federal (5.8%) schools. As for education: (a) 61.5% had completed Higher Education, (b) 6.5% incomplete Masters, (c) 20.4% complete Masters, (d) 4.2% incomplete Doctorate and (e) 5.8% complete Doctorate; 1.5% of the sample did not inform the education level. More than half (55%) completed a *lato sensu* postgraduate course.

Instruments

The research used instruments developed by the authors themselves based on other studies (Mello, 2000; Marques, Tavares et al., 2017; Santos, 2012; Souza, 2007): (a) Teacher profile sheet; (b) Initial Education Questionnaire (IEQ); and (c) Continuing Education Questionnaire (CEQ). We also used the Socio-moral Values Scale (SMVS), created by Tavares et al. (2016).

Teacher profile sheet. It has a total of 15 objective questions and a subjective one to obtain the following data: (a) gender, (b) date of birth, (c) individual income, (d) family income, (e) education, (f) type of education, (g) type of university in graduation, (h) undergraduate area, (i) *lato sensu* post-graduation, (j) length of profession, (k) years working in middle school, (l) subjects that teaches, (m) number of schools, (n) type

of school, (o) exercise of pedagogical management and (p) conceptions about the role of the school.

Initial Education Questionnaire (IEQ). Nine questions address characteristics considered desirable for good initial training. An example of an item is: "My course prepared me to mobilize knowledge and values to enrich teaching and learning situations". The questions are followed by a five-point Likert scale for teachers to assess how much they agree or disagree with the statements ($\alpha = 0.82$). The questionnaire has a one-factor structure for the items. Bartlett's sphericity ($\chi^2 = 566.75$; $df = 28$; $p < 0.05$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index ($KMO = 0.84$) indicate the adequacy of the data matrix.

Continuing Education Questionnaire (CEQ). Nine items assess, on a seven-point Likert scale, the frequency of teachers in continuing education activities that provide them with good performance in their school practice ($\alpha = 0.94$). Example: "Activities with trainers/trainers who have adequate knowledge and encourage reflection among participants". The questionnaire has a one-factor structure for the items. Bartlett's test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 1793.84$; $df = 36$; $p < 0.05$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin ($KMO = 0.91$) indicate the adequacy of the data matrix.

Socio-moral Values Scale (SMVS). It investigates commitment to the values of justice, respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence. There are a total of 24 questions, 6 for each value. These are short stories in which there are five alternatives; two contraries to the investigated value (countervalues) and three favorable (pro-values). The vignettes take place in four contexts (family, school, community and internet). Thus, it is possible to obtain an overall score and classify the participant in one of four increasing levels of decentering: (a) level I, countervalues; (b) level II, egocentric perspective; (c) level III, sociocentric; and (d) level IV, properly moral.

Data Collection Procedures

A pilot study was carried out with 18 educators (teachers and pedagogical coordinators) of Basic Education to refine the instruments. In the main collection, teachers were contacted through 18 schools (13 publics and five privates). In addition, the snowball strategy was used, in which indications from other educators were requested from the research participants.

Initially, we selected middle schools. Then, contact was made, by phone or email, with the coordinators, explaining the study to them and inviting them to participate. When the invitation was accepted, a meeting was scheduled. Some coordinators authorized the research team to deliver the questionnaires to

the teachers in person; others preferred to carry out the delivery themselves. In both cases, a date for the return of the instruments was agreed. When the questionnaires were returned, the indication of other possible participants was requested. Afterwards, contact was made with each of the indicated teachers, individually. Upon accepting to participate in the study, a time and place were scheduled for the delivery and receipt of the questionnaires. All professionals were able to choose to fill in the instruments in their preferred location.

Data Analysis Procedures

Missing data were inspected, replacing them with measures of central tendency (mode and mean). To characterize the sample, descriptive statistics of sociodemographic variables were performed. In order to examine the characteristics of commitment to values, descriptive statistics of general scores were run and a survey of frequencies of decentralization levels was carried out.

To distinguish the quality of training, groups were formed using cluster analysis (Two Step method). Preliminary analysis was run with all IEQ and CEQ questions. As the IEQ items did not contribute to the creation of groups, the analysis was carried out again with only the CEQ questions. To assess the clusters, the S index was used. In order to verify possible differences between the training groups in terms of commitment to values, the following were performed: (a) One-way ANOVAs for variables with homogeneity of variances (*post hoc* by Bonferroni); and (b) Kruskal-Wallis for those that did not show homoscedasticity.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the guidelines and standards of Resolution 466/2012 of the Ministry of Health and was sent to the Ethics Committee of Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, approved with number 2.273.966. The direction of the schools signed an authorization document to carry out the research. All participants signed an Informed Consent Form. Teachers were informed that they had the right to choose to participate or not in the study, and their exit was assured at any time, without any prejudice or penalty. The project content was explained to those involved. They were informed that filling out the instruments would take around 45 minutes. The main results were presented at the end of the research through a free extension course held at Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. All participants, upon returning the questionnaires, were informed about the course being carried out. When the date was scheduled, they received an e-mail with detailed information. There was also dissemination of the course on social networks and institutional bulletins.

RESULTS

Commitment to Essential Values for Moral Education

The first hypothesis asserted that teachers would have greater commitment to solidarity, less to justice and intermediate to respect and democratic coexistence. Descriptive statistics considered the values separately: (a) justice ($M = 13.73$; $SD = 3.11$); (b) respect ($M = 12.61$; $SD = 2.35$); (c) solidarity ($M = 14.80$; $SD = 2.34$); and (d) democratic coexistence ($M = 14.44$; $SD = 3.14$).

For the survey of frequencies, only participants who could be classified in any level of commitment were taken into account: (a) justice ($n = 183$), (b) respect ($n = 110$), (c) solidarity ($n = 184$) and (d) democratic coexistence ($n = 199$). Figure 1 shows the frequency of levels of commitment to values.

The first hypothesis has not been confirmed. Despite solidarity having the highest average, the values with the highest frequency at level IV were justice and democratic coexistence. The lowest commitment was to respect, both in relation to the average and to the frequencies. Intermediate values were solidarity, considering the frequencies, in addition to justice and democratic coexistence, with regard to the averages.

Relationship between the Quality of Education and Commitment to Values

The second hypothesis of the study asserted that there would be differences in commitment to values considering training: greater commitment would be related to high-quality training. To carry out the comparison, groups were established through cluster analysis. Group 1 ($z = -1.40$; $n = 43$) refers to low-quality training; group 2 ($z = -0.10$; $n = 148$) to intermediate;

and group 3 ($z = 1.09$; $n = 69$) to high-quality training. The silhouette of cohesion and separation of clusters is 0.4. Cluster quality is considered reasonable.

Justice, respect and democratic coexistence showed homogeneity of variances. Then, one-way ANOVAs were performed. A non-parametric test (Kruskal-Wallis) was used with solidarity, since, in this case, the assumption was violated. There was a significant effect for justice, $F(2, 257) = 4.17$, $p < 0.05$. Bonferroni post-hoc showed a mean difference of -1.72 ($SE = 0.60$; $p < 0.05$) between group 1 (low-quality; $M = 12.63$) and group 3 (high-quality; $M = 14.35$). Tests for respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence did not show significant effects ($p > 0.05$). Figure 2 presents the results on the relationship between training quality and commitment to values.

The second hypothesis was partially confirmed. Commitment to justice differed in relation to high- and low-quality training groups. The group with good training had higher average than the other group. However, there were no significant differences for commitment to the rest of the values.

DISCUSSION

Commitment to Essential Values for Moral Education

The teachers in this study showed more decentered commitment to justice and democratic coexistence. They achieved moral autonomy in these values, committing to them from a properly moral perspective (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017). Being fair and democratic was conceived by teachers as a good, not just for themselves, but for anyone.

Properly moral commitment to values is important

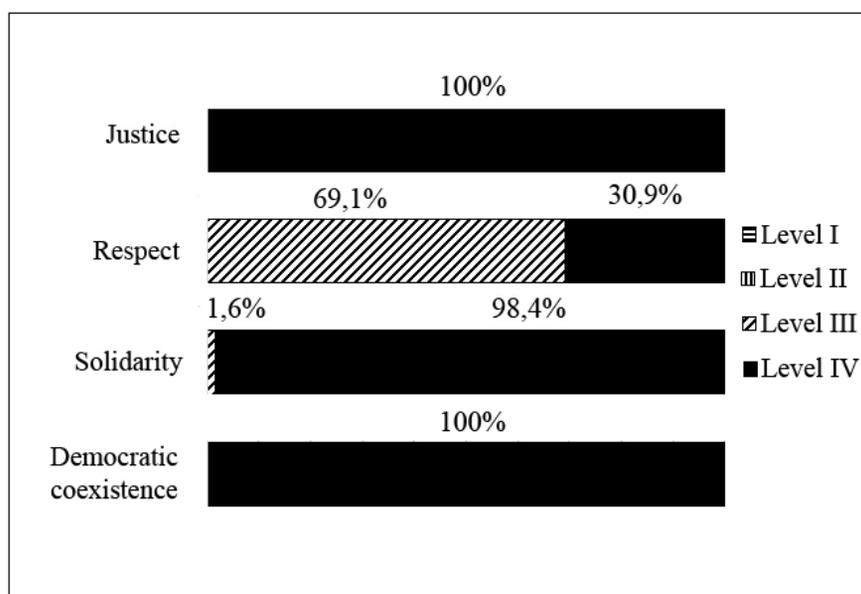


Figure 1. Frequencies of decenteration levels.

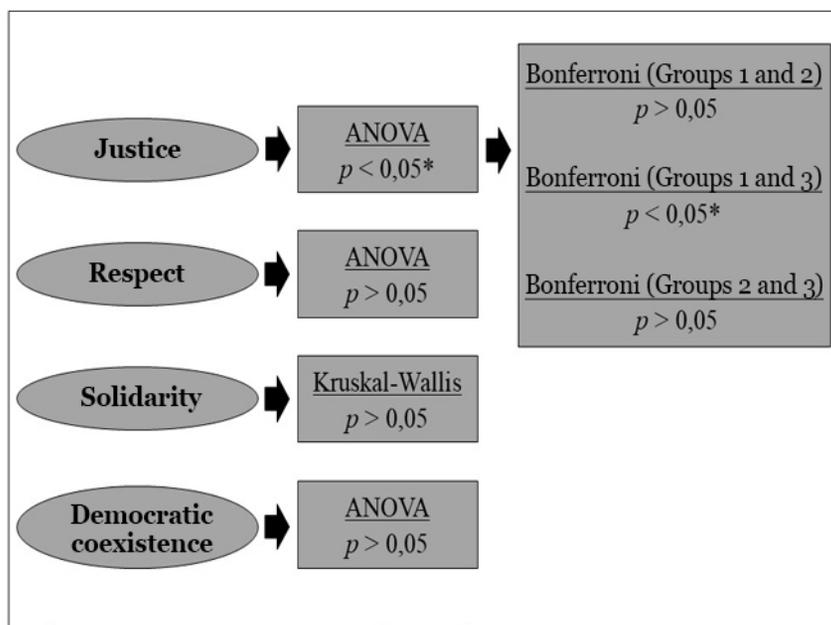


Figure 2. Relationships between the quality of education and commitment to values.

for teachers. Thus, they can encourage the autonomous construction of such values in their students (Tognetta et al., 2017). As justice is essential for the moral life (Piaget, 1932/1994), its development is desirable to students. In fact, studies (Couto et al., 2017; D'Aurea-Tardeli et al., 2012) show that teachers and students themselves recognize the importance of justice. Education for justice enables the evolution of judgments about rights and duties. As Brazil is full of inequalities (Madeira & Gomes, 2018), addressing this issue in schools can contribute to making the country a more egalitarian place. According to Piaget (1932/1994), "it is quite frequent that the injustice suffered makes people aware of the laws of equality" (p. 209). Teachers and students can develop their notions of retributive and distributive justice, thus helping to build a less exclusive society.

Teachers with high commitment to democratic coexistence are also essential for the education of young people. They have the ability to resolve school conflicts, favoring the establishment of better interpersonal relationships among teachers and students and among students themselves (Vinha et al., 2017). In addition, a democratic school environment provides opportunities for the development of students' autonomy (Vinha & Tognetta, 2006), which is especially relevant when considering young people who are going through adolescence. Individuals who live in a democratic environment tend to fight authoritarianism and segregation. Thus, it becomes possible to strengthen the nation's democratic institutions.

Although solidarity is not the most decentered value, as in previous studies (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017;

Tavares et al., 2016), most teachers committed to it in a properly moral way. Only a few had a sociocentric perspective. In fact, at school, this value seems to be present frequently (Martins, Braga, Silva, & Lucatto, 2017). Teachers tend to be solidary with each other and with the students' families to seek solutions to everyday problems. It is important, then, that teachers encourage this value with students to allow the exercise of cooperation. In this way, young people can reciprocate with their peers, understanding the help as something good in itself. If, on the contrary, the professional acts in an authoritarian manner, preventing solidarity, he or she encourages individualism or, at the most, simple collaboration among students.

Respect was the only value that did not reach autonomy. Although teachers often consider this value as important for education (Alencar et al., 2014) and regret not being respected by students (Marques, Venturin et al., 2017), most did not commit to it in a properly moral way. In the study by Tavares et al. (2016), there was also a predominance of professors at the sociocentric level. A possible explanation for this result would be that professionals understand respect as a synonym for obedience. Students who question orders are seen as disrespectful. However, in adolescence, it is normal and desirable for young people to question authority (Piaget, 1932/1994). To deal with the lack of obedience, teachers are often permissive or authoritarian (Silva & Abud, 2016). Some seek to be loved, others feared; few really seek to be respected. According to Piaget, respect is a mixture of love and fear; not just one or the other, but the synthesis of

both. However, teachers do not seem to conceive of respect this way.

Relationship between the Quality of Training and Commitment to Values

The association between training and commitment to justice found in this study seems to reflect the Brazilian context. The inequalities present in Brazil (Madeira & Gomes, 2018) are probably debated in high-quality training activities. With this, professionals have the opportunity to reflect on themes such as bullying, indiscipline and school dropout, being able to discuss the fairest ways to solve these problems. Thus, it is possible that justice is being addressed, not necessarily with a moral character, but political. According to La Taille (2006), “justice is both a moral and a political issue: one can talk about fair people, but also about fair institutions and fair laws” (pp. 61-62). It is a political attitude, for example, to talk about valuing teachers, dealing with issues such as a fair wage floor, good working conditions, safety in schools, etc. When this is properly discussed in training activities, the development of a more decentered conception of justice is encouraged.

Continuing education, then, serves not only to acquire knowledge about specific areas (Mello, 2000), but also as an adequate environment for the construction of morality. Good training initiatives allow teachers to become aware of their values and reflect about their role as agents of moral training. In this way, they become capable of fostering student development (Tognetta et al., 2017). Brazilian documents (Secretary of Elementary Education, 1998; Special Secretary of Publishing and Publications, 2005) already explain the need for continuing education and the importance of citizenship. In any case, it is worth emphasizing the importance of increasingly encouraging this type of training for education professionals.

In this study, no relationship was found between training and commitment to respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence. It is important that these values are addressed during teacher education. Like justice, they can be discussed based on everyday situations. However, it seems that even justice is not intentionally addressed, as in the study by Zechi (2014). In order to achieve better results, it is necessary that all essential values for moral education are deliberately addressed.

The data, then, are in accordance with the idea of Tognetta and Daud (2018) that quality training can contribute to commitment to values; notably in relation to justice. However, an alternative explanation cannot be disregarded: teachers with greater commitment to this value are the ones who most seek good continuing education activities. As they understand that it is fair to exercise their profession in the best possible way,

they seek to invest in the regularity and quality of their training.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to investigate whether the quality of education – initial and continuing – of middle school teachers, from Porto Alegre-RS, is related to commitment to essential values for moral education. It was evident that high-quality continuing education is related to a more decentered commitment to justice, and low-quality, to less decentered commitment. However, there were no associations with other values (respect, solidarity and democratic coexistence). Other studies (Marques, Tavares et al., 2017; Tavares et al., 2016) point to a relationship between teacher education and commitment to values. However, the quality of training was not considered in these cases. This study advances as it presents empirical evidence about the subject.

Training, then, seems to be a way to engage teachers in the process of building student values. It is important that training initiatives – both initial and continuing – carry out discussions on morality, not dogmatically, but encouraging dialogue and a critical attitude on the part of teachers. Thus, it is possible for these professionals to discuss the subject in schools, encouraging students to reflect about current values. In this way, education is promoted not only as schooling, but also as a benefit to teachers, students and society as a whole.

Graduation has been shown to be insufficient (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Intelligence Statistics, 2018; Muttão & Lodi, 2018; Santos, 2012; Tognetta et al., 2017); it remains for continuing education to make up for the knowledge deficiencies of teachers (Magalhães Júnior et al., 2016). Ideally, at graduation, the professionals would already develop themselves to overcome everyday challenges. While this does not happen, it is necessary that the government and school institutions encourage teachers to participate in continuing education initiatives. Through these initiatives, it is possible to update knowledge and even build morality. In this study, respect was the value least developed by teachers, which suggests that continuing education needs to be dedicated to this value as well, teaching not only obedience, but developing the ability to put oneself in the other’s point of view.

Another contribution of this study concerns the instruments built to assess the quality of teacher education (IEQ and CEQ), which seemed adequate for the Brazilian context. Furthermore, SMVS was appropriate for the tests carried out. However, this last instrument was treated as a questionnaire and not as it had been initially proposed, that is, as a scale. As values have different types (e.g., distributive, retributive justice) and appear in different contexts

(family, school, internet and community), we considered that the questions of each subscale have different characteristics, but address the same value. In any case, the SMVS represents a great advance for the field of moral psychology in Brazil, as it contributes to the development of Brazilian research and encourages researchers to develop other instruments.

It is also worth emphasizing that it is necessary to be cautious about the generalization of the results. The data found here may reflect the constitution of the sample. Teachers participated voluntarily and without receiving benefits. Thus, it is possible that only those who have a more developed moral conscience participated. We suggest that this research be replicated with random samples. Furthermore, it is important that the same variables are investigated elsewhere to see if the relationships hold. One can also think about examining these relationships with teachers from other stages of education and not just in middle school.

Finally, the aim of the study was to investigate the existence of relationships between teacher education and commitment to values; and not the direction of these relations. It was admitted, like Tognetta and Daud (2018), that quality training can contribute to commitment to values. However, it is possible that the direction is the opposite: teachers with greater commitment to values are those who most seek high-quality training activities. This is a question to be investigated in future studies.

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