THE HIGH-SCOPE CURRICULUM MODEL IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONTEXT

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Abstract

In Portugal the nursery education context has been more often targeted by child development experts. Because it is an extremely rich and useful context for the overall development of the child, it is imperative to think about its structure and organization.

Whereas the High-Scope curriculum model presents an appropriate plan of action to the Portuguese educational context, we intend to address this curricular model adapted to the nursery and thus envision a more effective organization for the development of the child at an early age.

One of the fundamental principles of the curriculum model in analysis, based on the theories of Piaget, is the child's active learning, and the adult in the High-Scope curriculum should take a less directive paper. Despite this principle, the adult plays a vital role in making decisions since he should intervene before the child's activity. Thus, it is their responsibility to prepare the space, materials and experiences, so that the child is actively autonomous in their activities.

In addition to the emphasis on the child's active learning, the adult-child interaction, the physical environment, the daily routine and the observation of the child are also principles that guide the High-Scope approach.

This model curriculum also contains the particularity of presenting a set of key experiences, representative of what children learn in their daily adventures. The set of key experiences is divided into nine areas covering the learning of young children: the sense of its own; relationships; creative representation, movement, music, communication and language; early notion of quantity and number; exploration of objects; space and time. Each submitted area contains objectives that can be translated into knowledge for children to experience and thus develop themselves actively.

Keywords: early childhood education context, High-Scope curriculum model.

1. THE HIGH-SCOPE CURRICULUM APROACH: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The High-Scope curriculum approach is part of a developmental perspective, having been triggered by David Weikart and initiated in 1960 (Formosinho, 1996 [6]; Schweinhart, 2003 [17]; Lima, 2004 [13]; Vieira, 2009 [18]; Nono, s/d [15]; Lunenburg, 2011 [14]; Formosinho & Araújo, 2004 [5]).

This approach was developed to assist poor children with special educational needs until entry to school. Hence, the "Ypsilanti Perry Pre-School Project ", which is based on the current model High/Scope curriculum, in order to equalize educational opportunities and to reject the perception of intellectual development as the mere learning of specific skills through memorization and repetition. The program focused at an early stage in the question of intellectual development of children with learning difficulties and their assumptions were based on learning through action (Formosinho, 1996 [6]; Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]; Kishimoto, Santos & Basílio, 2007 [12]).

Together with "Ypsilanti Perry Pre-School Project" also arises in the 60s a growing public awareness about the studies of Piaget that caught the attention of the "Ypsilanti Perry Pre-School Project" coordinating team. It is triggered a new phases of the project that perspective the human development as the purpose of education. The coordinating team of the "Ypsilanti Perry Pre-School Project" defined that the adult's role would be related to the promotion of the child's psychological development; it developed tasks that promote the appropriate development for each developmental stage, and organized a daily routine based in the cycle: plan-do-review (Formosinho, 1996 [8]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikart, 1979 [11]).

The third phase of the program, called phase of the key experiences, according to Formosinho (1996) [6] started in the 70s and was characterized by a new concept of the adult role and by the organization of the educational activity around key experiments. The new concept of the role of adult, inspired in Piaget, was intended to facilitate the development of the child structures as a builder of its own knowledge.

In the fourth phase of the curriculum with the aim of reduce the role of the adult the team realized that the coordinating role of the adult could not be intrusive in relation to the child's activity. Although the activity of adults is prior to the child's, preparing spaces, materials and experiences, it must never to paralyze it. Also in this phase the High/Scope team improved tools that support the educators' educational practice, particularly: Program Implementation Profile (PIP) and Child Observation Record (COR) (Formosinho, 1996 [6]; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2004 [7]).

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE HIGH-SCOPE APPROACH FOR CHILDREN FROM 0 TO 3 YEARS OLD

The High-Scope Wheel (Diagram 1) for baby and child represents graphically the fundamental ideas that should guide the educational intervention aimed at children up to three years old, including: active learning, adult-child interaction, learning experience, daily routine and assessment (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16]; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 1996 [9]; Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]).

Diagram 1 - The High-Scope Wheel (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 1996 [9]).

2.1. Active learning

According to Post & Hohmann (2000) [16]; Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikart (1979) [11] from birth that babies learn actively through their relationships with people and the environment that surrounds them. This contact helps them to discover and learn multiple skills. Thus, as active learners, infants observe, reach in and grab people and materials that arouse their attention. They choose single objects and people to play and explore, they initiate actions that particularly interest them and they respond to events occurring around them. Its explorations also facilitate the development of trusting relationships with adults who care for them. Through the active learning and direct and immediate experiences, absorbing meaning through reflection, children construct knowledge that helps them make sense of the world.

2.2. Adult-child interaction

Learning through action depends on the positive interaction between adults and children. According to Post & Hohmann (2000) [16]; Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikert (1979) [11]; Cró (2011) [1] and Formosinho (1996) [6] the interactions that children have with adults who they live with are the key to their emotional stability. It is therefore important that emotional ties are established positively. The keyword for this type of interaction is encouragement. Given that babies and small children are constantly seeking a sense of self and an understanding of its environment, the adult should maintain positive relations with them; since these relations tend to influence significantly the conclusions they arrive and that are drawn from experiences.

2.3. Learning experience

An active learning environment for children encourages their need to look, listen, shake, roll, crawl...

The physical space, according to Post & Hohmann (2000) [16] and Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10], should be as much as possible, safe, flexible, comfortable and provide a variety of stimuli, which promote the overall development of children.

The organization of space and storage of materials shall be consistent, customized and accessible so that children can understand this organization and access to materials and articles intended to explore. In the High-Scope curriculum approach, space and materials are organized into areas of play and care, covering all the needs of infants and children (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16]; Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikart, 1979 [11]; Nono, s/d [15]; Cró & Pinho, 2010 [2], 2009 [3]; Cró, 2006 [4]).

A High-Scope spatial organization facilitates freedom of movement, exploration of various materials, the exercise of creativity and problem solving (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [6]).

2.4. Daily routine

Post & Hohmann (2000) [16]; Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikert (1979) [11]; Cró (2011 [1], 2006 [4]) and Formosinho (1996) [6] report that, in addition to the environmental organization the adults in the High-Scope approach plan a consistent daily routine that supports active learning. Thus, the High-Scope curriculum framework includes the daily sequence of all routines and situations, setting schedules and routines around the needs of each child, although with due flexibility, promoting the development of the child's forethought.

It is important that the schedules and routines are repetitive to allow children to explore, train and gain confidence in their skills development and understand the sequence of day-to-day.

2.5. Assessment

The observation of the child according to Post & Hohmann (2000) [16] is a key component in the High-Scope approach, since the detailed knowledge of children facilitates not just the interactions with early childhood educators but also with parents. To facilitate the observation and a deeper understanding of children adults in the High-Scope approach should work in teams. When it comes to assessing children from three years old in the High-Scope curriculum approach the early childhood educators use the Program Implementation Profile (PIP) and Child Observation Record (COR) (Formosinho, 1996 [6]; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2004 [7]; Cró, 2011 [1] and 2006 [4]; Cró & Pinho, 2010 [2] and 2009 [3]).

The guiding principles referred to earlier (active learning, adult-child interaction, learning experience, daily routine and assessment) form the framework of the High-Scope educational approach and facilitate compliance with the High-Scope wheel.

3. HIGH/SCOPE INFANT AND TODDLER KEY EXPERIENCES

The High-Scope approach believes that learning by doing is fundamental to the full human development. Thus, in a High-Scope educational setting is important that adults are caring, responsible and that creatively support the natural desire of children to learn actively (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16]; Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikert, 1979 [11]; Formosinho, 1996 [6]).

The preparation of an active learning environment for infants and children up to three years old means considering all their needs: social and emotional needs, of security and companionship, physical needs for nutrition, body care, rest, movement and protection, cognitive needs and the opportunity to make choices and explore freely, sociolinguistic and communication needs of their desires and discoveries (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16]; Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikert, 1979 [11]; Formosinho, 1996 [6]).

Addressing High/Scope, in the line of thought of Post & Hohmann (2000) [16]; Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikert (1979) [11] and Formosinho (1996) 6], guides the educational practice around the active learning through key experiences with people and materials and assumes that infants and children up to three years old learn with whole body and all its senses, because they want to learn, communicate what they know and they learn in an environment of trusty relationships.

The key experiences (table 1) are a set of guidelines which outline the content of learning to early development. These experiences provide a deeper understanding of the skills that emerge from the child actions. The key experiences are "key" in the sense that they are essential for children to construct their knowledge and are "experiences" because they are participatory, often self-initiated and take place repetitively in several different contexts in an extended period of time. The key experiences are opportunities to learn and are distributed in broad areas of learning: sense of self, social relations, creative representation, movement, communication and language, music, exploring objects, early quantity and number, space and time (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16]; Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]; Hohmann, Banet, & Weikert, 1979 [11]; Formosinho, 1996 [6]).

The content of preschoolers' learning is guide by 58 key experiences in language and literacy, mathematics and science, social-emotional development, physical development and the arts. Teachers use the key experiences to design the classroom learning environment, implement individual and group instruction, and observe and document children's progress with validated assessment tools (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2004:1 [7]).

Sense of Self • Expressing initiative • Distinguishing self from others • Solving problems encountered in exploration and play • Doing things for one's self	**Social Relations** • Forming an attachment to a primary caregiver • Building relationships with other adults • Building relationships with peers • Expressing emotions • Showing empathy toward the feelings and needs of others • Playing with others

Creative Representation • Imitating and pretending • Exploring building and art materials • Responding to and identifying pictures and photographs	**Movement** • Moving parts of the body (turning head, grasping, kicking) • Moving the whole body (rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, balancing) • Moving with objects • Feeling and experiencing steady beat
Communication and Language • Listening and responding • Communicating nonverbally • Participating in two-way communication • Speaking • Exploring picture books and magazines • Enjoying stories, rhymes, and songs	**Music** • Listening to music • Exploring and imitating sound • Exploring vocal pitch sounds
Exploring Objects • Exploring objects with one's hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears, and nose • Discovering object permanence • Exploring and noticing how things are the same or different	**Early Quantity and Number** • Experiencing "more" • Experiencing one-to-one correspondence • Experiencing the number of things
Space • Exploring and noticing the location of objects • Observing people and things from various perspectives • Filling and emptying, putting in and taking out • Taking things apart and fitting them together	**Time** • Anticipating familiar events • Noticing the beginning and ending of time intervals • Experiencing "fast" and "slow" • Repeating an action to make something happen again: experiencing cause and effect

Table 1- High/Scope Infant and Toddler Key Experiences (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2000 [1])

3.1. Sense of Self

Post & Hohmann (2000) [6] consider that it is through action on objects and interactions with adults in which they trust that babies and children gradually begin to understand the existence of an individual being separated from others. This awareness of self emerges a sense of self as an independent actor and creator. In a context of active learning infants and children can build an image of themselves as distinct and capable persons, at the same time that they express initiative, distinguish the self from others and solve problems they encounter while exploring and playing.

3.2. Social Relations

To Post & Hohmann (2000) [6] and Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [4], the development in children of capacity of initiative and social relations starts very early with the formation of strong emotional links with people who surrounds them. Through their daily interactions with parents, other family members, teachers, peers and other adults, infants and young children learn how humans relate. These early social relationships influence them on how in the future they will address the people. Babies and children learn how to develop social relationships by

establishing links with the kindergarten teacher with other adults and with peers, expressing emotions and showing empathy for the feelings and needs of others.

When children feel they can trust people who are around them they feel more motivated to unleash holdings in their environment.

3.3. Creative Representation

According to Post & Hohmann (2000) [16] Hohmann, Banet & Weikart (1979) [11] and Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10] since the first sensor-motor explorations that babies accumulate a considerable body of experiences, that by its recurrence, facilitate the formation of mental images, i.e., children begin to make associations without the presence of objects. This process of mental visualization is the first child experience with representation. Involvement in a comprehensive sensor-motor experience, acting on objects with your whole body, all the senses and repeating these actions allows the child to try to represent in many ways: by mimicking the actions of others, interpreting pictures of objects or actions and acting on the material to represent something about the world. These actions facilitate the involvement of key experiences as to imitate and play make-believe, to explore building materials or plastic expression and to identify and respond illustrations and photos.

3.4. Movement and Music

For children who are in the sensor-motor period the physical movement plays a key role in learning (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16]; Hohmann, Banet & Weikart, 1979 [11]; Cró, 2011 [1], 2006 [4] and Hohmann & Weikart, 1995 [10]). The emerging sense of themselves is strongly linked to developing the ability to control their movements, to communicate, to manipulate objects and to move around. When children have space and freedom to move they recognize their limits and possibilities.

Babies and children experience the world through their senses, using various forms of simple motion.

By exploring the music with his body and his voice the child expands the sensory awareness of sound and rhythm. Thus, the key experiences of movement and music, allow children to move body parts, moving the whole body, handle objects, hear and respond to music, explore a steady pace, exploring sounds and tones and start singing.

3.5. Communication and Language

At the thought of Post & Hohmann (2000) [16], babies, as social beings, need to establish links with other human beings from birth to create a context of meaning and belonging. Babies listen and understand the language before being able to produce the form standard grammar. Babies communicate their feelings and desires through progressively more complex systems of crying, movements, gestures and sounds, because by communicating their feelings and discoveries they join the social life of the community. Thus, children learn to communicate when they engage in key experiences such as: listening and responding, communicating verbally and non-verbally, exploring picture books and enjoying stories, songs or mantras.

3.6. Exploring Objects

Children explore objects to discover what they are and how they work (Post & Hohmann, 2000 [16] and Cró, 2011 [1], 2006 [4]). Initially they present an uncoordinated handling of objects but progressively broaden and complicate their exploratory actions and discover the object permanence.

3.7. Space

According to Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10] and Post & Homann (2000) [16], the child's experience with spatial relationships and the understanding of these relationships is initiated very early in life when the infant follows the journey of people and moving objects. In daily activities of active learning children become aware of the space that surrounds them. With its increased activity and mobility the sense of space is enlarged, therefore, they learn to be autonomous in their movements and move towards the objects and materials to see them and grab them easily. Thus, children are involved in exploitation and location of objects and observation of people and objects from various perspectives.

The overall development of young children is facilitated when the space is filled with various, safe, adequate, challenging and accessible materials to the exploitation of children.

3.8. Time

With regard to time, Hohmann & Weikart (1995) [10] and Post & Homann (2000) [16] state that it is an abstract concept and that the notion that children have of it is backed in active and sensorial experiences. For children the time means "now", "this time", i.e. the present. Gradually the children will be able to anticipate situations from external cues, they understand the beginning and end of an interval and they will repeat actions to make something happen again.

3.9. Early Quantity and Number

As children explore objects, discover its features and functionality they engage in key experiences of quantity and number, in particular: experience "more", experience exploring connections and experience amount (Post & Homann, 2000 [16]).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, we emphasize that the High-Scope approach makes it easier for children up to three years old to build an understanding of its surroundings through its active involvement in situations. This approach is scientifically supported by the constructivist theories of Piaget, who suggests that active learning as a means of acquiring knowledge. We believe, therefore, that this curricular approach broadens and deepens the understanding that the child has from the world around it, which suffers frequent and consecutive changes that favours the development of the child who experiences them.

The High-Scope approach suggest that the control of daily situations will be shared between children and adults and therefore the adult role will be to support and guide children in developing adventures and experiences that integrate learning by doing. Adults and children together determine the content and course of learning.

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130 Early Childhood Education and Care. HighScope, educators 'first validate what children already know, and then challenge them to extend their thinking to the next level' (Epstein 2007:18). The learning environment in a HighScope setting, indoors and outdoors, is carefully planned to provide children with the optimum opportunities to work independently, to make choices and decisions and to solve problems. Both sets of KDIs are arranged to correspond to the National Goals for Education in the USA. They equally relate to Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework in Ireland. ASSESSMENT. In the HighScope approach careful daily observation of children's experiences is seen as essential to planning, teaching and learning.