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# Psychology Graduates in Elementary Education: The Possibility of Practice

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## Abstract

This report aims at pointing out the possibility of practice by psychology graduates in elementary school. In order to do that, a professional practice is described within a discipline of cross-sectional themes. The themes approached and their objectives are very close to the objectives of psychology teaching, even though it is not exactly a discipline in the area. A graduate at this level of education brings relevant contributions, develops individual emancipation and critical thinking. In students' oral and written productions, it was possible to observe the development of empathy, self-awareness, as well as the recognition and validation of differences by means of respect. It is highly recommended that the courses of teacher formation in psychology include contents for the practice by graduates in elementary education and also that these teachers go through stages of actual practice at this level of education as well.

**Keywords:** Education; psychology teaching; elementary school.

## *El licenciado en psicología en la enseñanza primaria: posibilidad de actuación*

### Resumen

En este relato se tiene como objetivo apuntar la posibilidad de actuación del licenciado en Psicología en la Enseñanza Primaria. Para eso, se describe una práctica profesional realizada en una asignatura de temas transversales. Los temas estudiados y sus objetivos se acercan de los objetivos de la enseñanza de Psicología, aunque que no sea propiamente una asignatura del área. El licenciado en este nivel de enseñanza trae contribuciones relevantes, desarrolla la emancipación de los individuos y la reflexión crítica. En las producciones verbales e escritas de los alumnos, fue posible observar el desarrollo de la empatía, del autoconocimiento, del reconocimiento y respeto por las diferencias. Como sugerencias, se apunta la importancia de los cursos de formación de profesores de Psicología incorporar contenidos para la actuación del licenciado en la Enseñanza Primaria y de poseer prácticas de pasantía también en este nivel de enseñanza.

**Palabras clave:** Educación; enseñanza de la psicología; enseñanza primaria.

## *O licenciado em Psicologia no ensino fundamental: possibilidade de atuação*

### Resumo

Este relato tem como objetivo apontar a possibilidade de atuação do licenciado em Psicologia no Ensino Fundamental. Para isso, é descrita uma prática profissional realizada em uma disciplina de temas transversais. Os temas trabalhados e seus objetivos se aproximam dos objetivos do ensino de Psicologia, ainda que não seja propriamente uma disciplina da área. O licenciado nesse nível de ensino traz contribuições relevantes, desenvolve a emancipação dos indivíduos e a reflexão crítica. Nas produções orais e escritas dos alunos foi possível observar o desenvolvimento da empatia, do autoconhecimento, do reconhecimento e respeito pelas diferenças. Como sugestões, aponta-se a importância de os cursos de formação de professores de Psicologia incorporarem conteúdos para a atuação do licenciado no Ensino Fundamental e de possuírem práticas de estágio também neste nível de ensino.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação; ensino da psicologia; ensino fundamental.

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# Introduction

The objective of this text is to raise awareness of the possibility of practice by psychology graduates in elementary education. To that end, we present a description of a professional practice realized within a discipline of cross-sectional themes.

Currently, Psychology follows Resolution no. 5 by the National Education Council, or “Conselho Nacional de Educação”, from March 15<sup>th</sup> 2011, which institutes as mandatory the provision of optional teaching certificates in all psychology courses. According to the National Education Law, or “Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB)” from 1996 (Law n°. 9.394.1996), the teaching certificate ensures specific formation for teachers in diverse area of knowledge (for example, Biology, History, Math) to work effectively in Basic Education, which comprehends Child Education, Elementary School and High School. However, concerning Psychology’s curricula, there is no specific discipline in the area for all levels of education, including Child Education and Elementary School (Maciel, 2009). By the same token, only High School Education is mentioned by the Psychology Institutions themselves such as the Federal Psychology Council, or “Conselho Federal de Psicologia (CFP)” and the campaign entitled “8 reasons to learn psychology in high school” (CRPSP, n.d.), as well as the course material named “Psychology Teaching in High School” (CRPSP, 2010) promoted by the Regional Psychology Council of São Paulo, or “Conselho Regional de Psicologia de São Paulo”. Among the publications on the teaching of psychology in Elementary Education there is a highlight on the ones referring to its presence in high school and vocational courses. However, there are also reports on Elementary Education such as the one by Moreira, Ferreira and Costa (2007), that describe an experience of teacher training for psychology undergraduates in the seventh grade (currently, the eighth year) in Elementary School, based on the Gestalt pedagogy.

To Leite (2007), Psychology can contribute to the process of turning young people into critically thinking citizens. In order to do that, “a strategy for psychological knowledge appropriation would have to be developed and realized in a functional way, that is, in connection with the lives of students” (Leite, 2007, p. 20). According to Dadico (2009), however, there is a risk that the contents of such psychology discipline will be transmitted without any articulation with the social, cultural and economic reality faced by students. Barros (2013), on the other hand, points at Psychology’s participation in an education based on human rights, and that acknowledges the dignity of the different. An education in which there would be full comprehension of the mechanisms underlying both prejudiced notions and the respectful recognition of differences.

## The discipline and the approached themes

The professional practice described in this report was developed in 2014 and 2015 in a private elementary and

high school, with approximately 400 students, located in the central region of the city of São Paulo. In this report, classes for fifth to ninth year in Elementary School were selected. Six groups in 2014 and five in 2015. Since the school was founded in 2000, in the diversified part of the school curriculum, there was a mandatory discipline named Personal and Social Development, or “Desenvolvimento Pessoal e Social” (DPS), inspired by the project described by Serrão and Baleeiro (1999), the general objective of which is to construct citizenship. The new discipline offered 40 sessions of 50 minutes to be held once a week throughout the year for each group. The students in this discipline would not be given tests, like in the other disciplines. Nevertheless, there were assessments, which consisted of in-class exercises, homework, paper production and presentations. Teachers were also free to pick themes, and there was no school-provided course material to be followed. Teachers selected approached themes after identifying their own students’ needs. Below, major themes approached and their objectives.

### Sixth year

Theme: transitions. Objectives: identification of things that change from fifth to sixth year and from Elementary School I to Elementary School II. Recognition of similarities and differences between these two moments. Theme: friendship.

Objectives: definition of friendship. Reflection on how to make and keep friends, and how to lose them. Theme: identity. Objectives: strengthening personal identity and self-awareness. Theme: the working class. Objectives: allow students to better understand the working world. Raise awareness over parents’ professional activities as well as the ones existing in the school community.

Theme: special necessities and inclusion. Objectives: definition of special necessity and its types. Pointing at actions to be realized towards the inclusion of people with special necessities.

### Seventh year

Theme: technology and the ways it is used. Objectives: discuss how technology affects everyday lives and personal relations. Extend safe and responsible use of the internet and social media. Theme: the working world. Objectives: reflection over how the working world changes with time and the influence of technological development on this process. Raise awareness of the relation between personal characteristics and professional activities, as well as of the interdependence among different professionals. Explore professional activities in imagination. Theme: gender. Objectives: discuss how gender stereotypes influence everyday life. Theme: citizenship and elections. Objectives: observe the relation between candidates’ proposals and the problems existing in each community/society. Reflection over the ideal candidate and the ideal voter.

## Eighth year

Theme: bullying, racism and prejudice. Objectives: definition of bullying, racism and prejudice. Discussion on how to identify these problems and the relation between racism and prejudice. Theme: gender. Objectives: identification of gender inequalities existing in society and what can be done to mitigate the problem. Theme: the working world. Objectives: stimulation of self-awareness, and the identification of personal characteristics, interests and skills. Reflection on professional trajectories, career and professional success. Theme: public spaces. Objectives: definition of public space. Discussion on how public spaces play a pivotal role in everyday life and how these spaces can be occupied. Theme: family. Objectives: definition of family and recognition of the relation between family and school.

## Ninth year

Theme: stereotypes of race and ethnicity in the media. Objectives: identification of stereotypes of race and ethnicity present in films, series, soap operas and advertisements. Theme: gender. Objectives: definition of gender identity and sexual orientation. Reflection on chauvinistic machismo, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. Theme: the working world. Objectives: deconstruction of gender stereotypes. Discussing gender inequality in the job Market. Identification of parents' professional trajectories and a reflection on factors that influence professional choices.

## Final considerations

The discipline described in this report, as well as other disciplines containing coincidental themes at school, constitutes itself as a possibility for practice in Elementary Education for Psychology graduates. The approached themes and their objectives are very close to the objectives in the teaching of psychology, although this is not a psychology discipline per se. The graduate in this level of teaching brings relevant contributions and develops the emancipation of individuals by promoting critical thinking. Besides that, such intervention might be construed as conducive to an education based on the vital importance of human rights, as described by Barros (2013). In the students' verbal and material productions, it was possible to observe their development of self-awareness, of recognition and respect for differences, as well as the cultivation of empathy, which gave students a chance to imagine themselves in someone else's shoes.

As suggestions, we point out that it is very important that formation courses for psychology teachers include content that will prepare graduates for teaching in Elementary School and will provide these graduates with plenty of training for this level of Education. Likewise, it is relevant that surveys are produced regarding professional practice by psychology

graduates in Elementary Education as an addition to current investigations that probably exist but get no recognition.

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