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# Understanding sexuality and sex in schools according to primary education teachers\*

COMPREENSÃO SOBRE SEXUALIDADE E SEXO NAS ESCOLAS SEGUNDO PROFESSORES DO ENSINO FUNDAMENTAL

COMPRENSIÓN DEL SEXO Y LA SEXUALIDAD EN LAS ESCUELAS, DE ACUERDO A LA VISIÓN DE PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA PRIMARIA

Julieta Seixas Moizés<sup>1</sup>, Sonia Maria Villela Bueno<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

With the objective of identifying how teachers at a primary education level understand sexuality/sex in the school, we sought to collect data relative to these issues in the everyday school life, observing the school's position and how they deal with this issue. This is a qualitative, humanist study, performed by means of research-action. Data collection was performed through participant observation and individual interviews, using a questionnaire containing guiding questions. Data analysis revealed that most teachers value dialogue as a form of orienting their students. They emphasize the need to consult with qualified professionals to gain support regarding the issue and value family participation in the orientation process. In this manner, the school can help relatives, teachers and students to better understand the presuppositions of sex education, and health professionals are strong allies to build their awareness and provide orientation. Based on the findings, educational actions/interventions were performed with the teachers for the purpose of preparing them to work as multiplying agents in everyday school life. The teachers suggest seeking partnerships and creating sex orientation strategies.

## RESUMO

Com o objetivo de identificarmos a forma pela qual professores de Ensino Fundamental compreendem a sexualidade/sexo na escola, procuramos levantar dados relativos a estas questões no cotidiano escolar, verificando a posição da escola e como lidam com isto. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, humanista, por meio de pesquisa-ação. A coleta dos dados foi realizada por meio da observação participante e entrevista individual, usando um questionário com questões norteadoras. Os dados levantados foram organizados em categorias. A análise possibilitou apreender que a maioria dos professores valoriza o diálogo como meio de orientação aos alunos. Destacam a necessidade de obterem apoio de profissionais qualificados sobre a temática, e dão relevância à participação da família no processo de orientação. Neste processo, a Escola pode ser o recurso para ajudar familiares, professores e escolares a compreenderem melhor os pressupostos da educação sexual e profissionais da saúde são grandes aliados, no sentido de conscientizá-los e orientá-los. Baseando-se nos achados, desenvolveram-se ações/intervenções educativas junto aos professores, visando prepará-los para atuarem como agentes multiplicadores no cotidiano escolar. Os professores sugerem a busca de parcerias e a elaboração de estratégias de orientação sexual.

## RESUMEN

Con el objetivo de identificar el modo por el cual los profesores de Educación Primaria comprenden la sexualidad y el sexo en la escuela, buscamos recolectar datos relativos a estas cuestiones en el devenir escolar cotidiano., verificando la posición de la escuela y la manera en que se trabaja la temática. Esta investigación se trata de una encuesta cualitativa y humanista, en la que se utilizó el método de pesquisa-acción. La recolección de datos fue realizada a través de la observación con participación y la entrevista individual, utilizándose un cuestionario con preguntas orientadoras. Los datos recogidos fueron organizados en categorías. El análisis posibilitó entender que la mayoría de los profesores valoriza el diálogo como elemento de orientación a los alumnos. Ellos mismos destacan la necesidad de obtener respaldo de profesionales calificados en la materia, y dan relevancia a la participación de la familia en el proceso de orientación. En este punto, la escuela puede ser la institución idónea para ayudar a familiares, profesores y alumnos a comprender mejor los supuestos de la educación sexual, y los profesionales de la salud se constituyen en grandes aliados, en el sentido de concientizar y orientar. De acuerdo con las conclusiones, se desarrollaron acciones e intervenciones educativas junto a los profesores, proponiéndose prepararlos para que actúen como agentes multiplicadores en el ámbito del cotidiano escolar. Los propios profesores sugieren la búsqueda de asociaciones con órganos competentes y la elaboración de estrategias de orientación sexual.

## KEY WORDS

Sexuality.  
Education, primary and secondary.  
Sex education.  
Health personnel.

## DESCRIPTORES

Sexualidade.  
Ensino fundamental e médio.  
Educação sexual.  
Pessoal de saúde.

## DESCRIPTORES

Sexualidad.  
Educación primaria y secundaria.  
Educación sexual.  
Personal de salud.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is part of everyone's life; it is universal, and, at the same time, singular for each individual, involving individual, social, psychic and cultural aspects laden with history, practices, attitudes and symbolism<sup>(1)</sup>. The ever-increasing propagation of sex and eroticism in the media causes an early sexual initiation, as well as its banalization. This issue demands an approach for sexuality with children and adolescents in order to elicit a more effective Sexual Education, with the creation of barriers to reduce the existing aggravations. For so, it is necessary to speak appropriately about topics such as sexuality and sex to the population, with the necessity of promoting sexual health as something important<sup>(2-3)</sup>.

Since this has been a veiled issue over time, resulting in conceptions of sexuality related to obscenity, something that is dirty, sinful and forbidden, the youths were denied sexual education, making it difficult to provide them with the necessary orientations regarding peoples' sexual health. Sexual myths are either erroneous or inappropriate, which generate popular rumors and beliefs. Sexual taboos about homosexuality, masturbation, among others, are the consequence of conceptions that generate discrimination among the society. Still, when speaking about sex and sexuality, many are those who revert to values and beliefs laden with prejudice, taboos, myths and stereotypes. It is necessary to understand that sexuality is a constant and indissociable part of the person, regardless of its reproductive aspect, and that sexual values and lifestyles can be experienced in different ways from person to person. Diversity of values and beliefs is something natural within a society<sup>(2-5)</sup>.

In order to understand the sexual conceptions, it is necessary to discuss them under the light of historical and political knowledge related to the development of social institutions such as Church, State, Law, School, Media and Family. Nowadays, society makes sexuality more visible, but sexual appeal aims to meet the interests of social groups. The generation of the last 30 years was born under the impact of the onset of AIDS, a phenomenon that forced changes in behavior, that is, from free love to safe sex. For that reason, today's children and adolescents live the reflex of counter-censorship, but without educational ethics focused on health promotion<sup>(2-3)</sup>.

We consider that promoting integral education of children and adolescents, therefore discussing sexual education while focusing on health promotion is a prerogative of the educational system. This initiative should have been enacted for a long time now. Sex appeal in the media has not been enough for adolescents to adopt safe sexual behaviors. The lack of sexual education, which transcends the traditional form, restricted to the medical and biological

perspective, is one of the main reasons for the adolescents' lack of compliance with safe sex<sup>(2-5)</sup>.

The National Curriculum Parameters – *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* – PCNS<sup>(5)</sup> propose that themes about sexuality should be presented cross-sectionally regarding its contents (i.e., they should be present in every field of knowledge)<sup>(6)</sup>. Once discussed, the topics should return, with more in-depth content, every time the students show interest. Thinking about the cross-sectional aspects and the training of the sexual educator means thinking about who would effectively perform the sexual orientation work. This is the greatest problem, because, when the teacher is selected as the agent in charge of the objectives proposed by the PCNS, adopting sexual themes in his or her course, their real working conditions and the quality of their professional education have to be considered as well. Cross-sectionality demands the teacher to have mastered the program of his or her class subject, and also to have specific knowledge of the curriculum and being skilled to insert cross-section themes that are not directly related to his or her area of expertise. The greatest challenge is to make them capable of developing an efficient and informative project about sexuality in school. It is necessary to prepare the teachers so that they become well-informed and aware of the importance of their work in the field<sup>(7)</sup>.

Dialogue is the basic tool in the process of educating for sexuality.

Any project, either with children or adolescents, should be continuous and permanent, or, at least, during an effective time, so that the information and attitudes of people regarding collective sexuality and individual sexuality can be discussed. In addition, the project should have the characteristic of using the doubts of children and adolescents and topics that are of interest to them as starting points. Each group of youths has its own interests and characteristics. Therefore, we understand that sexual education should be led and prepared by someone who is well-liked and trusted by the youths. This is a slow process of achievement<sup>(1)</sup>.

Dialogue is the basic tool in the process of educating for sexuality. There are children and adolescents who make lots of questions, while others ask next to nothing and still others need an encouraging environment to make questions. All of them must be considered, for they are all *sexual beings*, and, as such, they must have access to informative material about sexuality and be provided with bibliography that is appropriate to their age. Dialogue is the natural exercise for the development of adult relations and the meetings among people. The school needs to reassume the sexual education tasks, but not to reproach it. Instead, the school should change distorted or denied views of sexuality, without replacing the family, however; the child comes to school with several inscriptions about sex.

The family-school interaction is fundamental so that sexuality will not become a target for the duplicity of discourses and attitudes. One should bear in mind that the

tasks of sexual education may be emotionally demanding of the teachers, since they belong to a culture laden with mistakes and taboos, and they do not feel like they are available, serene and mature regarding their own sexuality. Even in these cases, the school is the privileged space for children and adolescents to make their questions. In sexuality debates, the youths often make questions that their parents or even their teachers do not dare to.

These are different generations, signaling relationships of closeness-openness regarding the sexual discourse. Sexual education encourages the exchange of ideas and makes it possible to cause changes in social relations, overcoming sexism, prejudices and deceptions<sup>(8)</sup>.

Teachers are not required to be specialists in sexual education, but they should be well-informed about human sexuality and to reflect about it, being capable of creating appropriate educational contexts and selecting strategies of information, reflection and the debate of ideas, of recycling and updating their knowledge so that they are able to teach how to think, becoming mediators of knowledge<sup>(9-10)</sup>. The school is the chosen place to insert preventive education in the educational process. When speaking about sexuality, it is assumed that topics such as intimacy and personal relationships will be addressed.

Nursing and Psychology approach the topics, since both deal with the production of care related to community services, preparation for educational actions focused on the population regarding behavior, and the individual as a whole, consisting of mind and body. Nursing and Psychology, allied to Education, are strengthened when terminal and resolute actions are applied to health promotion, prevention and protection, in individual and collective levels, which, by means of criticism and reflection, are capable of comprehending the socio-economic, political and educational reality of the country and instrumentalizing the production and offer of healthcare actions in the scope of planning. Also, professionals in these fields seek and produce knowledge for the development of their professional practices, often becoming involved with education, as this is one of the main educational paragon – learning at every educational level<sup>(11)</sup>.

Therefore, health is directly linked to education, so that these are two pillars of human survival that are constantly being built. As such, when nurses perform their functions, with preventive education among them, they have a great role in the school, especially in elementary education, by providing scientific instrumentalization to the teachers and understanding the students' needs. The lack of debate and critical reflection increases the vulnerability regarding sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, in addition to the risks of unwanted, early pregnancies. Nowadays, although themes regarding sexuality are believed to be more exposed in the media, many youths still do not feel comfortable to expose their doubts or feelings. It is important to have sexuality in a broader view at school, using multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinarity, considering the biological, psychologi-

cal and social dimensions and contributing for the strengthening of self-esteem and personal identity<sup>(2-11)</sup>.

Sexuality, in order to be understood, cannot be separated from the holistic individual, since it is molded in the relations that the subjects establish from an early age, with themselves and with others. The preventive educational activities related to sexuality involve the definition of guidelines that will contemplate the integral education of the adolescent and the effective participation of all the members of the school universe. When teaching sexual education, self-assured and assertive attitudes are paramount, and the faculty must undertake professional training regarding the content, both technical-scientific and methodological<sup>(12)</sup>. The students behave and relate among themselves, attempting to recognize themselves and to be recognized according to a sex-based attitude. In this case, it is important to discuss and understand how they acquire and build attitudes regarding sexuality and gender. In the adolescents' reports, in many ways, sexuality appears as a primordial issue, requiring effective discussions about the topic<sup>(13)</sup>.

The PCNS are meant to be a reference that will promote the reflection about school curricula, as an open-ended and flexible proposal, which may or may not be used by schools to elaborate their curricular proposals. The cross-section themes must impregnate the whole field of elementary education and addressed by several fields of knowledge. The contents addressed in school must highlight the importance of sexual and reproductive health and the necessary care to promote it. The school must also integrate public healthcare services and raise the awareness for the importance of actions that are mainly preventive, or curative if that is the case<sup>(13-14)</sup>.

Indeed, teachers do not receive enough orientation in their training for sexual education. Therefore, talking about sex in school is a difficult task<sup>(15)</sup>.

## OBJECTIVES

As seen, the objective of this study is to identify the difficulties that elementary school teachers in municipal schools face in their daily routine regarding sexuality, verifying how the teachers and the school deal with the topic, seeking to develop education based on increased awareness.

Therefore, we felt the need of: 1. Knowing how the school and its teachers deal with sexuality within the school routine, according to the teaching-learning strategies used; and 2. Developing an educational program about sexual topics, providing teachers with knowledge about said topics in order to prepare them to address sexuality/sex in the school routine, favoring open-ended and awareness-based practices.

## METHOD

In this study, we adopted a humanistic approach. This is a qualitative study, mediated by the Research-Action

method<sup>(16)</sup>. This methodological reference makes it possible to elicit problems and, together with the participants, intervene with educational actions focused on the resolution of the apprehended problems.

The adopted data collection techniques were participative observation and individual interview. The inclusion of the participative observation was a strategy to aid the researcher in the interaction with the study subjects in their own environment. The interviews were held with a questionnaire containing guiding questions, so that the responses could be comprehended and interpreted.

*Population and place:* the sample was constituted by 13 effective/regular elementary school teachers from a state-funded school in Ribeirão Preto, in the state of São Paulo. The inclusion criteria were being an elementary school teacher and accepting to take part in the study voluntarily.

*Ethical Aspects:* The study was performed according to scientific rigor and followed the ethical precepts regarding research with human beings. It was approved by the Review Board of EERP – USP, file 0729/2009, according to Resolution 96/196. Privacy, voluntary participation and scientific utilization of the results were guaranteed to the teachers.

*Data collection stages:* In the first stage, the participative observation and the interviews were performed. The second stage comprised the selection according to the categorization and the organization of the data obtained, which made it possible to sort the generating themes<sup>(16)</sup>. With that, we proposed the educational development of the Research-Action.

*Socio-demographic information:* This topic consisted in data about the school and the teachers' personal data.

*Data treatment and reading:* We decided to raise the awareness of the experienced situation and the capacity of relating with the world in which one lives (in this case, the school routine and sexuality). The choice for the applicability of this model is focused on the libertarian or awareness-raising education, and its pathway assumes the participative observation for a better understanding of the focused reality. The records of the assessment of the needs, in additions to the participative observations and the interviews, were guided by the instrument used in the research-action. The data were selected and coded by categorization, yielding the generating themes. After the assessment of the necessities and the elaboration of the categorized responses, it was possible to plan, execute and assess the educational program, the researcher and the study subjects, collectively, in order to meet the identified problems<sup>(2-16)</sup>.

For the analysis of the data, we used the assumptions of the analysis according to Freire's 1992 categorization. The first stage covered the identification of the problems most frequently mentioned by the teachers with the students, regarding the general questions of sexuality in chil-

dren and adolescents. After carefully reading the results, the data collection material was organized in categories, with the selection of words and phrases uttered and registered, sorting the generating themes<sup>(2-16)</sup>.

The second stage consisted of the development of the educational activities of the research-action. We elaborated educational plans regarding the generating themes, culminating with the development of the problem-based/awareness-based education. Finally, the process was evaluated<sup>(2-16)</sup>.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### First Stage

#### A – Personal and professional data

Regarding personal data, the studied teachers were characterized as follows: 92.3% were female, 76.9% were over 40 years old, 84.6% were catholic, 61.5% were married, 69.2% had one or more children and 76.9% have been teaching for 12 years or more. All of them teach the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 50% teach the 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Of these, 61.5% teach in the morning and afternoon, and 38.5% also teach in other schools.

#### B – Categorization of the questionnaires

1. Categorization of responses about the question: Tell us a little about your life. And your professional life. Do you like being a teacher? What does it represent for you?

##### • Personal qualities

- **Achievement:** *I feel victorious.*

##### Meaning of the professional life

##### • Teaching and learning

- **Difficulties:** *It's tiresome, difficult, complex, having to play the role of the family as well, teaching too many classes;*

- **Importance:** *the profession is very important, because it will yield people with broad professional expectancies in the future, Through this profession we see that someone acquires knowledge, values, experience and respect;*

- **Achievement:** *I think I'm at the right place, it's more than a profession, I consider it a mission, an ideal of life, I like the school, the profession is an identity, I'm proud of it and my children are proud to say their mom is a teacher.*

##### Meaning of being a teacher

- **Achievement:** *I love teaching, It's rewarding, I love teaching, being a teacher. When I teach someone who has difficulties, I feel accomplished and make the difference.*

- **Human contact:** *it's enriching, Dealing with the public is great.*



According to the reports from the categorization of question #1, it was interesting to observe that few teachers talked about their personal lives. However, they highlight the importance that they place in their profession, revealing it as a vocation. The responses about the meaning of personal and professional life and of being a teacher show that most teachers feel accomplished. Regarding their professional life and the meaning of being a teacher, the manifestation of affection is blatant when they express how important they consider their work and their pride regarding a career in education, even though they consider that the difficulties in the profession are tiresome.

**2. Categorization of the responses about the question: What is the meaning of sexuality for you? And sex?**

#### *Meaning of sexuality*

- Discoveries, desires and self-knowledge: *It's awakening, changes, self-knowledge, their own body, in adolescence, the discovery of the other, responses for acts that have not been performed yet and attraction for people of the opposite sex, it's knowledge, feelings, desire, happening earlier and earlier.*

- Natural: *It's something natural, it's walking, breathing, kissing, feeling.*

- Attraction: *It's important to feel good, attractive.*

- Working with the topic: *It should be addressed to with the family, the school, psychologists.*

#### *Meaning of sex*

- Performing the act itself: *in its many forms, acts performed by a couple, with many types of relations being possible, a means for the perpetuation of the species and a means of pleasure, it's closer to the sexual act, an organic necessity.*

#### **Interest for the opposite sex**

- Physiology: *It's the genital organ of the man and/or the woman.*

- Changes in interests according to age: *Happening earlier and earlier, After marriage sex takes a different pathway in life, becomes a complement of marital life, since we have other goals and problems. When we are young and single it seems that sex is more important and present in the desire.*

- Accomplishment, love and companionship: *It's a complement of love, respect and mutual affinity, it's a consequence when you have a good partner.*

The meaning given to sexuality was associated to discoveries, desire, self-knowledge, naturality, attraction, interest for another person, also showing the importance of dealing with this topic at school. And sex was associated to performing the act itself, interest for the opposite sex, physiology

and changes in interests according to age. It was also reported as a form of accomplishment, love and companionship.

**3. Categorization of the answers about the question: When students ask about themes in general related to sexuality and sex, what do you do? Which educational strategies do you use? What educational materials do you use? How do you evaluate this knowledge?**

#### **Responsibilities of the Science teacher**

- Orientation: *Orienting, guiding through whatever I believe I have mastered and I feel safe about, I try to solve their doubts, I need to listen to them as if they were my children, guide.*

- Being natural when dealing with the topic: *I speak about it in a straightforward way according to reality and their age, Knowledge is natural for human beings and must be addressed very naturally, I answer naturally.*

- Educational material: *Educational material: books, magazines that can be specific or not, games, movies, songs, software, textbooks, as a science teacher, I use the testimonies of youths about the topic, magazines, texts about the topic, using language that is appropriate for the students, movies, experiences and testimonies from the students themselves, educational material: paper, crayons, CDs, DVDs, videotapes.*

- Dispelling myths: *I clarify certain myths, sex is not simply a pleasurable act.*

- Not dealing with the topic: *I don't deal with the topic in a specific way.*

In general, when teachers are approached about the topics related to sexuality and sex, they mention providing orientation to the students naturally and using some educational materials. According to them, educational materials must serve as conversation starters, view the themes as problems and raise questions, without providing answers. Audiovisual resources such as videos, slides, transparencies or posters should also be used for so. An appropriate educational video presents the topic and elicits questions, making debate possible. These elements are necessary for reflection, such as data regarding social reality, which should not be seen as truths to be accepted without discussion, since they express idealized interests and views regarding sex and sexuality<sup>(17)</sup>.

Teachers consider that sexual education at school is important. They suggest that teachers should deal with several contents about human singularity so that students are capable to become critical subjects, capable of thinking and discussing several topics<sup>(18)</sup>.

**4. Categorization of the teachers about the question: What do you think about education at school? Suggestions.**

- Importance of sexual education: *It's important in every grade.*

- Orientation: *Solving doubts, guiding the students so they can lead healthy lives, Guides, guiding them to fully experience sexuality.*

- Information: *They need correct and appropriate information, although they often speak about sex, the information is not always correct, distorted knowledge about sexuality and sex. They watch too many pornographic movies.*

- Prevention: *Providing orientation in prevention and how to protect themselves, they will learn how to prevent themselves and have a greater knowledge about sex, it should be treated preventively so that problems can be minimized.*

- Mistakes: *Mistakes happen when one learns things on the streets or by misinformed parents, many do not have opportunities or freedom to talk to their own families, they learn about it on the streets, with friends, and often in a distorted way, most of the time the parents avoid the topic and do not provide adequate orientation to their children, they are not prepared or shy to talk about it.*

- Need for qualified professionals: *It should be taught by competent and experienced professionals, dealing with the topic seriously.*

- Need for family integration: *It should be provided by the parents, and even during orientation we have to work together, making the parents aware that we are working, so that they will not think that we're encouraging initiation.*

- Seeking out partnerships: *making partnerships to get new orientations.*

- Ways of addressing prevention: *providing orientation about diseases, bodies and minds that are not prepared for pregnancy, they could help us deal with this topic with the students according to their age range, testimonials would be interesting for the group, making educational materials available, broader and more effective work.*

- Lectures with professionals in the field: *professionals that could give lectures, lectures, books, professionals in the field could give lectures, since people from the outside are more readily accepted, lectures given by professionals in the field.*

- Orientation by professionals in the field: *Orientation about sex and sexuality, even if there are capable teachers, different people with new methods always have better results, qualified professionals, having a professional in that field to provide adequate orientation, psychological follow-up for students who need it.*

- Focus on care: *focusing on responsibility regarding everything we do.*

- Others: *No suggestions, a diploma does not convey security just by itself.*

Most teachers reported giving importance to sexual education at school, focusing on orientation, information, prevention, support by qualified professionals and the need for

family integration. Most teachers prefer to have healthcare professionals giving lectures and orientation about the topic.

It is worth noting that sexual education should be led and prepared by someone that is well-liked or considered trustworthy by the students. The sexual educator must have it clear that trust is the main issue in this process, which requires a review of values, especially security, respect and responsibility associated to open, clear and frank dialogue<sup>(2)</sup>. It is possible to see that the studied teachers need more qualification<sup>(10-18)</sup> and effective projects of partnership. Investing in education will be good for nothing if students cannot become active subjects of learning, motivated and aware of that. It is necessary to have a shared feeling of partnership among teachers in order to perform this task<sup>(16-19)</sup>.

5. Categorization of the responses about the question: When you see pregnant students at school, what do you think? Have you had one in your classroom? What did you do?

- Lack of orientation: *from family and information, usually from dysfunctional families, were not oriented adequately by their families or guardians.*

- Dealing with the topic naturally: *dealing with the topic naturally.*

- Showing duties and responsibilities regarding pregnancy: *I advise them to keep studying, as it is the only way to improve their life and their child's life, for the student herself, I try to orient her to be responsible for what's to come, the child, etc, I try to show the other students the consequences of a momentarily pleasurable act which brings irreversible consequences to life.*

- Orientation: *advice to avoid risks for the mother and the child, I feel that the school could have helped more with prevention, I try to orient them and also talk to the parents to orient them as well, about the care that a baby needs and how to prevent another pregnancy, talking about the topic.*

- Concerns about the situation: *difficulties, there are many problems that mother, child and family will have to face regarding pregnancy during adolescence, responsibility for the child who is not to blame for coming, inexperienced and unprepared teenagers.*

- No action: *I didn't do anything.*

Only two teachers had had no pregnant students in their classroom, i.e., almost every teacher has taught pregnant students at school. They reported dealing naturally with the topic. They attribute lack of orientation as an associated factor to early pregnancy and suggest that partnerships, lectures and orientation should be sought with other professionals in the field, as well as promoting care.

## Second stage

Consisted of the course program (generator themes), which were: sexuality/sex; sexuality during adolescence; pregnancy and sexual education.

After data collection, regarding the difficulties related to the topic, the group proposed the elaboration of an educational project focused on reflection, based on educational workshops, dealing with health promotion and raising awareness about how the theme is dealt with in the daily routine. The following themes were addressed: sex, pregnancy and adolescence, developing the critical and transforming spirit, highlighting the importance of sexual education at school, considering teachers as agents that will spread knowledge and skills.

## CONCLUSION

We verified that the science teachers are the ones who provide the most orientation about sexual education issues, and that the topic is not usually dealt with cross-sectionally. The research-action was configured as an appropriate means for awareness-based sexual education, with the school as a privileged place for its development.

The educational program developed through meetings made it possible to build knowledge and skills in the field, as well as helping the teachers, providing them with the means to approach and discuss the topic within the school routine.

It was possible to observe that the environment created in the meetings made it possible to build knowledge, especially regarding the curriculum and education itself.

The participants were encouraged to talk about the topic at school, focusing on experiences, doubts, conflicts and

tensions. Often, one's doubt was clarified by the question of another in the discussion circles<sup>(16-20)</sup>. As the problems were unveiled, it was possible to identify that the orientation offered was better understood and interpreted. After the implementation of the educational plan, we noticed that many of the questions raised were answered and information was shared.

The educational approach used in the educational actions occurred in an open, dialogic, critical-reflective way, favoring awareness and providing better reflection and comprehension of the experienced reality. It was possible to discuss the identified problems. Discussions about intervention/educational actions and the reported cases produced reflections, becoming elements that produced new meanings. The narratives were configured as paramount in the process of raising awareness about the practice itself. The teachers brought stories of lessons, education and experiences at school to the meetings.

With the study, we observed that it is necessary to orient the parents and teachers, focusing on the importance of better qualification to deal appropriately with these issues in the routine of the students and their relatives. This higher awareness is necessary for the teachers, as they are the ones who spend the most time with the students, demanding instrumentalization to deal with the topic. In this process, the school can be a resource to help families, teachers and students to better understand the precepts of sexual educations. As such, the healthcare professionals are important allies of the teachers in order to qualify them and make them aware of all these issues.

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