STIMULUS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL SKILLS: AN INVESTIGATION IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

ESTÍMULOS PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS HABILIDADES ÉTICAS: UMA INVESTIGAÇÃO NA EDUCAÇÃO FUNDAMENTAL

ESTIMULOS PARA EL DESARROLLO DE HABILIDADES ÉTICAS: UNA INVESTIGACIÓN EN EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA

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ABSTRACT: Elementary education is a crucial moment in the construction of values on which individuals' social behavior is based. Thus, it is deemed opportune to provide a triangulation between the knowledge that addresses the development of ethical skills and the data obtained in the context of this investigation. It is recognized that this theoretical coupling may allow inferences that develop new pedagogical models that build a fairer and more democratic society. Thus, the main problem of the research arises - Does fundamental education welcome the stimuli for the development of the ethical skills of its students? The specific objectives of the research were to observe, register, and analyze the pedagogical practices and the teachers' knowledge about ethics and the development of ethical skills in children. In order to fulfill these objectives, it began with bibliographical and documentary research to substantiate the inferences, interviews were carried out with professionals in effective teaching, seeking to identify the concepts, knowledge, and practices of this group on the main themes of the research and reflected on the data obtained, throughout the various stages, analytically and methodologically. In view of the analysis, it was concluded that public school education, within the specific scope, welcomes, in its pedagogical activities, stimuli for the development of ethical skills.

KEYWORDS: Ethics. Ethical Skills. Schooling.

RESUMO: *A educação fundamental é um momento crucial na construção dos valores em que se assentam os comportamentos sociais dos indivíduos. Assim, julga-se oportuno proporcionar uma triangulação entre os saberes que abordam o desenvolvimento das habilidades éticas e os dados obtidos no âmbito desta investigação. Reconhece-se que este acoplamento teórico poderá permitir inferências que desenvolvam novos modelos pedagógicos, que edifiquem uma sociedade mais justa e democrática. Surge assim problemática principal da pesquisa: A educação fundamental acolhe os estímulos para o desenvolvimento das habilidades éticas de seus educandos? Teve-se como objetivos específicos da pesquisa: observar, registrar e analisar, as práticas pedagógicas e os conhecimentos dos docentes sobre a ética e o desenvolvimento das habilidades éticas nas crianças. Para cumprir tais objetivos, iniciou-se com uma pesquisa bibliográfica e documental para substanciar as inferências, fizeram-se entrevistas com profissionais em efetiva docência buscando identificar os conceitos, os conhecimentos e as práticas deste grupo sobre as temáticas principais da pesquisa e refletiu-se sobre os dados obtidos, ao longo das diversas etapas, de forma analítica e metodológica. Diante da análise se chegou à conclusão de que a educação escolar pública, dentro do recorte específico, acolhe, em suas atividades pedagógicas, os estímulos para o desenvolvimento de habilidades éticas.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Ética. Habilidades Éticas. Educação Escolar.*

RESUMEN: La educación primaria es un momento crucial en la construcción de valores en los que se sustenta el comportamiento social de los individuos. Por lo tanto, se considera oportuno brindar una triangulación entre los conocimientos que abordan el desarrollo de habilidades éticas y los datos obtenidos en el contexto de esta investigación. Se reconoce que este acoplamiento teórico puede permitir inferencias que desarrollen nuevos modelos pedagógicos que construyan una sociedad más justa y democrática. Surge así el problema principal de la investigación - ¿La educación fundamental acoge los estímulos para el desarrollo de las competencias éticas de sus educandos? - Los objetivos específicos de la investigación fueron: observar, registrar y analizar las prácticas pedagógicas y los conocimientos de los docentes sobre la ética y el desarrollo de competencias éticas en los niños. Para cumplir con estos objetivos se inició con una investigación bibliográfica y documental para fundamentar las inferencias, se realizaron entrevistas a profesionales en la docencia efectiva, buscando identificar los conceptos, saberes y prácticas de este grupo sobre los temas principales de la investigación y reflexionó sobre los datos obtenidos, a lo largo de las distintas etapas, de forma analítica y metodológica. Delante del análisis, se concluyó que la educación escolar pública, en el ámbito específico, acoge, en sus actividades pedagógicas, estímulos para el desarrollo de competencias éticas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ética. Habilidades Éticas. Enseñanza.

Introduction

Experiences involving school practice have created the need to understand how stimuli for the development of ethical skills in school education occur. Fundamental education is crucial in shaping the values upon which individuals' social behaviors are based. Thus, it is considered opportune to provide a triangulation of knowledge addressing the development of ethical skills and the data obtained within the scope of this research. It is recognized that this theoretical coupling may allow inferences to develop new pedagogical models that build a more just and democratic society. The devaluation of ethical practice in school environments is an evident fact in postmodernity, as highlighted by Castro *et al.* (2019, p. 268, our translation):

> Observations on rejection and exclusion made it possible to identify behaviors stemming from teachers and students at the institution. Empathy difficulties with the differences encountered in the classroom, both regarding socio-political ideologies, were the main triggers for exclusion and rejection of the other. The segmentation of the class into affinity groups that repeatedly rejected outsiders' participation in activities was evident.

Ethical skills are understood as the basic cognitive capacities of social interaction, such as empathy, autonomy, and reciprocity, among others. These are abilities that underpin the mental elaboration of complex human moral values (Waal, 2009). This research began in the

pursuit of understanding the stimuli created in school environments to develop these cognitive capacities. The National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) for education define ethical capacity as:

> Ethical capacity is the possibility of governing one's actions and decision-making by a system of principles according to which values and options involved in different life situations are analyzed. The internal, personal construction of principles considered valid for oneself and for others implies considering oneself as a subject among other subjects (Brasil, 1997, p. 49, our translation).

In this context, the central question of the research arises: Is school education promoting the development of ethical skills in its students? The specific objectives of the research included observing, recording, and analyzing pedagogical practices and teachers' knowledge about ethics and the development of ethical skills in children. To address these questions, a research journey began, drawing on literature and documents available in the library of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), using the descriptors "Teachers," "Ethical Skills," and "Public Education." Subsequently, interviews were conducted with elementary school teachers. Finally, through a triangular analysis between the theoretical framework and the collected data, the conclusions of this study were drawn.

Bibliographic Review

Moral values are one of the most essential cohesive elements for integrating individuals into the social environment. According to Harari (2015, p. 18, our translation), "It takes a tribe to raise a human. Evolution thus favored those capable of forming strong social bonds." Humans lack strong social bonds, collectively built within the 'tribe,' for a sense of fullness in life. It is in elementary education that children experience extended community living, where they face rules and social agreements previously unknown within the family. These experiences promote value judgments that, if effectively stimulated, evolve into ethical formation.

It is from sociology that Émile Durkheim was invited to engage in dialogue with this work. In 1903, Durkheim taught a course at the University of Sorbonne titled Moral Education, addressing theoretical moral issues such as the theory of duty, good, and autonomy. For Durkheim, there was no question more urgent for educators than moral education. He believed that since the school was the most comprehensive formative environment, it was in this institution that efforts to develop ethical skills should be concentrated.

Durkheim argued that the excessive rationalization of the educational process was leading to the loss of the natural dignity of ethics, accentuating individualism at the expense of collective skills, and that it was necessary to rethink educational techniques. The school significantly influences the child when they leave the family environment and begin to engage with the world around them. This is a crucial period in which the child begins their life experience and interacts with their surroundings. This is "[...] the critical moment for the formation of moral character [...] after school age, if the foundations of morality are not already established, they never will be" (Durkheim, 2012, p. 34, our translation).

For Durkheim, morality consisted of the principles of value between human beings, the violation of which would be severely punished. The family did not bear the responsibility for moral education, as it was not structured to prepare the child for social life. Only formal education would have the necessary competencies for comprehensive moral formation. Educational institutions should assume the role of ethical formation, with schools holding the greatest responsibility for fostering ethics among their community members. According to Durkheim (2012, p. 18, our translation), "[...] educational theories aim directly to guide conduct."

Another dialogue invitation was extended to Piaget's Psychology. Jean Piaget researched the cognitive processes that lead individuals to respect and create rules and values. Through studies on the development of moral judgment, he identified that morality is a norm of action. For Piaget, morality is "[...] a system of rules, and the essence of all morality must be sought in the respect that the individual acquires for these rules" (Piaget, 1948, p. 23, our translation). Piaget engaged with various children, conducting interviews about game rules to discuss their representation of the world and causality, aiming to discover the students' perspectives on various subjects.

Piaget began by analyzing the game of marbles, examining the children's understanding of the rules, and reached coherent conclusions when comparing the results with the theory of genetic epistemology. For him, "[...] children's morality in a certain way clarifies that of adults. Therefore, nothing is more useful for shaping men than teaching them to understand the laws of this formation" (Piaget, 1948, p. 22, our translation).

Colby *et al.* (1987) present the theory of moral judgment development. The general structures of moral judgment are universally applicable, although there are aspects that may vary from one culture to another. Through a socio-moral perspective, Kohlberg presents an

unvarying sequence of stages in which the individual progressively develops their ethical abilities.

Another invited approach is Zygmunt Bauman's sociology. Bauman introduces us to the concept of moral blindness in liquid postmodernity, where "[...] there is no longer any unequivocal social situation, just as there are no longer any inflexible actors on the stage of history" (Bauman; Donskis, 2014, p. 11, our translation). New forms of pedagogical art must be aligned with the human ethics of the 21st century. The old forms of ethics no longer work, and there are no others to replace them. Bauman assists us in this understanding, showing that we live in a moment of existential uncertainty, a "[...] terrifying blend of ignorance and powerlessness, an inexhaustible source of humiliation [...] where teachers have embraced the corporate culture of educational institutions and present themselves disconnected from educational principles and values" (Bauman; Donskis, 2014, p. 79, our translation).

In Brazilian documents, one finds the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Brasil, 1996, our translation), establishing that ethical education is a duty of Brazilian educational institutions. This document states in Article 2 that education is a duty "[...] of the family and the State, inspired by the principles of freedom and the ideals of human solidarity, aiming at the full development of the student, their preparation for citizenship, and their qualification for work."

The National Curriculum Parameters of 1997 have ethics as one of the educational axes to be addressed transversally by school education. The NCPs affirm the importance of reflection and critical analysis of values, attitudes, and social behaviors, and the responsibility of the teacher in promoting this activity:

> Pedagogical action contributes to such development, among other ways, by clearly affirming its ethical principles, encouraging reflection and critical analysis of values, attitudes, and decision-making, and enabling the understanding that the formulation of such systems is the result of historically situated human relationships [...] it is known that the learning of values and attitudes is of a complex and underexplored nature from a pedagogical point of view. Many studies point to the importance of information as a factor in transforming values and attitudes; undoubtedly, information is necessary, but it is not sufficient. For the learning of attitudes, constant, coherent, and systematic practice is necessary, in which desired values and attitudes are expressed in the relationships between people and in the choice of subjects to be addressed (Brasil, 1997, p. 47- 48, our translation).

The same document also contains the following definitions of morality and ethics:

Morality and ethics are sometimes used as synonyms: a set of principles or standards of conduct. Ethics can also mean the Philosophy of Morality, which is, therefore, a reflective thought on the values and norms that govern human behavior. In another sense, ethics may refer to a set of principles and norms that a group establishes for its professional practice (for example, the codes of ethics of physicians, lawyers, psychologists, etc.). In another sense, it may refer to a distinction between principles that guide thinking without, a priori, prescribing precise forms of conduct (ethics) and precise and closed rules (morality). Finally, attention should be drawn to the fact that the word "morality" has, for many, acquired a pejorative sense, associated with "moralism." Thus, many prefer to associate the word ethics with the values and rules they cherish, thus wanting to mark differences with "moralists" (Brasil, 1997, p. 49, our translation).

The Office of the Comptroller General of the Union (CGU), through the Citizenship Education course - Ethics, citizenship, and the fight against corruption, states the following:

According to the Philosopher Marilena Chauí, to exercise ethical conduct, it is necessary for the subject's action to be conscious, to be able to discern between "good and evil, right and wrong, permitted and prohibited, virtue and vice." Thus, the individual is endowed with a moral conscience that, in addition to knowing such differences, is also capable of judging the value of actions and behaviors and acting in accordance with the social and moral values established by the society in which one lives (Brasil, 2020a, n.p., our translation).

The Citizenship Education course - Ethics, Citizenship, and the Fight against Corruption defines education as "[...] the process of socialization of individuals. It is the fundamental means by which habits, customs, behaviors, values, and knowledge are transferred from generation to generation, materializing in intellectual, emotional, social, and cultural changes in these individuals" (Brasil, 2020a, n.p., our translation).

The etymological origin of the word ethics comes from the Greek ethos, meaning related to the way of being, customs, or habits:

The definition of "being ethical" is given through certain attributes acquired from birth to the formation of one's identity. As a historical and social subject, each individual results from this set of social relations and commitments assumed throughout life (Brasil, 2020a, n.p., our translation).

The National Common Curricular Base points out some of the ethical competencies to be developed:

> To exercise empathy, dialogue, conflict resolution, and cooperation, asserting oneself and promoting respect for others and human rights, welcoming and valuing the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures, and potentialities, without prejudice of any kind (Brasil, 2020b, online, our translation).

Methodology

This study fully complied with the ethical requirements for research involving human subjects, considering the norms of Resolution No. 466/2012 of the National Health Council. The Board of the Committee of Ethics in Research with Human Beings of UFMS approved the research under CAEE number 40562720.0.0000.0021, in opinion number 4,555,963 on February 24, 2021.

The starting point of the study was bibliographic research in the Library System of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, focused on the following descriptors: Teachers, Ethical Skills, and School Education. No research was found with these interconnected thematic axes. Works by Émile Durkheim, (1948) Jean Piaget, (2014) Zygmunt Bauman, (2015) Yuval Harari, (1987) Anne Colby, and Lawrence Kohlberg, were selected for triangulation, study, and support in content analysis, connecting these bodies of knowledge with Brazilian legal documents.

In a second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely via video conferencing, with audio and video recording, with elementary school teachers in the public education system in the city of Aquidauana, Mato Grosso do Sul. According to Oliveira *et al*. (2013):

> The interview is a meeting between two individuals wherein one of them gathers information about a specific subject through a professional conversation. It is a procedure used in social research for data collection or to assist in the diagnosis or treatment of a social problem (Oliveira *et al.,* 2013, n.p., our translation*).*

Boni and Quaresma (2005) emphasize that the interview is the only way to obtain information about subjective data, such as values, attitudes, or opinions of the interviewees:

> The interview as a data collection method on a specific scientific topic is the most used technique in the fieldwork process. Through it, researchers seek to obtain information, that is, collect objective and subjective data. Objective data can also be obtained through secondary sources such as censuses, statistics, etc. However, subjective data can only be obtained through

interviews, as they relate to the interview subjects' values, attitudes, and opinions (Boni; Quaresma, 2005, p. 72, our translation).

The recruitment of teachers was through invitation letters sent to the selected school for the research. Remote interviews were conducted via video conferencing. It was planned to interview a minimum sample of twenty teachers, actively teaching in elementary education, at one of the public municipal schools. Out of the twenty invited, seven agreed to participate in the research. The following open-ended question guide was organized with a total of four questions:

1) What is your concept of morality?
2) What is your concept of ethics?
3) Do you engage in pedagogical activities to stimulate the ethical skills of your students? If yes, what are they?
4) What are the theoretical frameworks or reference authors you use for school activities aimed at stimulating ethical skills?

As this is a qualitative study, it was considered necessary to evaluate whether the formulation of the questions would reveal the elements to be analyzed. Therefore, two exploratory interviews were initially conducted to refine the final questionnaire, following the methodology adopted in this study. These exploratory interviews were grounded in the methodology employed, allowing for a deeper review and understanding of the research environment's reality. After the exploratory interviews were concluded, it was found that there was no need to revise the questionnaire, as the responses obtained contained the essential elements for analysis.

A third stage involved transcribing the interviews and analyzing the content with the aim of describing and understanding the data obtained through the collection instrument. As highlighted by Moraes (1999):

> Content analysis is a research methodology used to describe and interpret the content of all types of documents and texts. This analysis, which leads to systematic, qualitative, or quantitative descriptions, helps reinterpret messages and achieve an understanding of their meanings at a level that goes beyond common reading (Moraes, 1999, p. 9, our translation).

Analytical and methodological reflections were made throughout these stages, theoretical triangulations were conducted, and possible changes in the researchers' perspectives were analyzed. A qualitative and diagnostic analysis of the interviews was conducted to identify the concepts, practices, and knowledge about ethics, morality, and stimuli for the development of ethical skills.

Presentation and analysis of the interviews

The seven interviewees were teachers actively engaged in teaching, six of whom were female and one male, all residing in urban areas, with ages ranging from 32 to 57 years old. All had completed higher education.

Three out of the seven teachers had dual degrees. Only one teacher held a master's degree, in education in this case. None of the teachers reported having a doctorate. Regarding specializations, one teacher had a specialization in Geography and Field Education; one specialized in Education, Poverty, and Inequality; one in Physical Education Methodology; one in Early Childhood Education, Literacy, and Mathematics, Portuguese Language in Early Childhood Education, Portuguese Language in the Early Grades, and one in Arts.

The teachers' education years ranged from 1996 to 2018. The length of time the interviewees had been working in school education varied from 3 to 28 years. All of them worked in early childhood, elementary, and high school education. Out of the seven interviewees, four held different positions than classroom teaching, working as social assistance pedagogues, school principals, pedagogical coordinators, and academic administration technicians.

The starting point of this study was a bibliographic research in the UFMS Library System, focused on the following descriptors: Teachers, Ethical Skills, and School Education. No research was found with these descriptors combined. From this finding, it was deduced that the study represents an innovative theme that has never been addressed in UFMS works. Regarding Brazilian legislation, several references to the theme of teaching interconnected with morality, ethics, and stimuli for developing ethical skills in school education were found. Important documents such as the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law of 1996 and the National Curricular Parameters of 1997 present this theme's guidelines, concepts, and frameworks.

All documents analyzed highlighted the importance of including ethics in teaching methods and school discussions, relating education to the construction of collective values that unite individuals. The National Curricular Parameters (PCN) have, within their cross-cutting themes, a chapter of fifty-six pages dedicated exclusively to the concept of ethics, emphasizing the subject's relevance.

It is considered important to ground the analysis of interviews with educators in a critical and respectful perspective, understanding that the dialogue was conducted among education professionals with higher education at various levels, where it is expected to find academic conceptualizations, theoretical references, and fluency in discussing the themes of ethics and morality, given the profound relationship of this approach with education. The analysis of responses was constructed under this perspective, relying on inferences and expecting that, given the academic context, it would be considered appropriate.

The first two questions aimed to assist in the analysis of the interviewees' understanding of the concepts of morality and ethics. It is understood that for a reflection on the stimuli for the development of children's ethical skills, it is necessary to understand how the educational environment interprets the concept of ethics. As, at times, a less formal approach, morality, and ethics, are confused with each other, it is deemed important to analyze the interpretation of the two concepts by the interviewees and verify if there is conceptual confusion.

The first question: What is your concept of morality?, intended to clarify how the interviewees would understand the concept of morality, to support the analysis of the main content of the research. Regarding the responses to the first question, the following was observed:

- Interviewee PR01[1] linked morality to social learning and character formation, relating it to both family and school as agents of moral formation. Defines morality as learning acquired in the family and school environment. Interviewee PR02 defined morality as the valorization of human beings, questioning the moral decline in the modern world. Interviewee PR03 defines morality, within the school context, as an introduction to debate with the aim of stimulating sensitivity. He reflected on the lack of moral 'fit' in some colleagues and society.

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[1] We used coding to identify the interviewees, ensuring confidentiality of identities and maximum impartiality in the content analysis of the transcripts.

- Interviewee PR8 defines morality as a set of values and norms that must be accepted, addressing the concepts of right and wrong. It also highlights the loss of values in human interaction, relating this phenomenon to the formation of personality, character, and morality. Interviewee PR10 conceptualizes morality as part of the individual learning process that occurs in the family and social environment. Interviewee PR11 defines morality as the manifestation of mutual respect between individuals. Interviewee PR12 defines morality as individual constructions and perceptions of respect and behavior, which emerge in social interaction. The terms "ethics" and "ethical morality" are mentioned, but it was not possible to interpret them impartially.

The responses to the question: What is your concept of morality?, evidenced by the construction, by the interviewees, of a broad, diffuse concept involving interconnections with other concepts such as family, school, learning, debate, character, values, personality, and society. It is understood that all the statements presented in the responses to the question can be interpreted as valid in light of each interviewee's individual interpretation. "It is easy to verify that the concept is constituted of elements that articulate in a structured unity" (Dahlberg, 1978, p. 102, our translation). Although they did not use any theoretical framework, it was possible to identify that all the statements contain elements approximating the constitutive elements of the concept of morality as made by reference works.

The second question: What is your concept of ethics?, aimed to clarify the interviewees' understanding of ethics. As for the responses to the second question, the following was observed:

- PR01 established a relationship between the concept of ethics and teacher education, emphasizing the definition of principles guiding teaching practices and social interactions. PR02 defines ethics as individual care for one's teaching practice. PR03 conceptualizes ethics as a reflection guiding human behavior in social and professional spheres. PR08 associates ethics with social values such as empathy and charisma, as well as professional values like confidentiality, morality, and good conduct. PR10 defines ethics as respect, understood as an analytical stance towards situations. PR11 establishes a relationship between the concept of ethics and professionalism. Finally, PR12 associates the concept of ethics with respect and confidentiality.

The responses to the question: What is your concept of ethics?, highlighted the construction of a broad, albeit diffuse, concept involving interconnections with teacher education, action principles, protection of teaching, investigation, and socially guiding analysis, such as the amalgamation of social values (empathy, charisma, confidentiality, morality, respect). Although, once again, no theoretical framework was used to support the definition, it was possible to identify that all statements contain elements akin to those constitutive of the concept of ethics found in reference works, but the statements overlap with the previous definition of morality.

The last two questions aimed to assist in the analysis of the practices, planning, and theoretical frameworks of the interviewees regarding the stimuli for the development of ethical skills. It is understood that for a better reflection on educational stimuli for developing children's ethical skills, it is necessary to understand how these practices occur and are grounded.

The third question: Do you engage in pedagogical activities to stimulate your students' ethical skills? If yes, what are they?, aimed to ascertain whether the professional practice of the interviewees included explicit pedagogical activities that stimulated children to develop ethical skills. Regarding the responses to the third question, the following was observed:

- PR01 answered yes. They stated that they developed activities related to values and social relationships but did not describe the practice. PR02 answered no. They argued that their speeches and pedagogical practices already encompass ethical concepts without describing the activities or concepts. PR03 answered yes, in projects and activities. They did not describe the practices. PR08 answered yes, in speeches, and pedagogical practices. They did not describe the practices. PR10 answered yes, in dialogues and practices of respect and inclusion. PR11 answered yes, in music activities, but did not describe the activities. PR12 answered yes to ongoing activities about respect, loyalty, social positioning, and ethnic and racial issues but did not describe any activity.

The responses to the question: Do you engage in pedagogical activities to stimulate your students' ethical skills? If yes, what are they? They were predominantly affirmative; it was noticed that the interviewees used broad concepts such as dialogue, music, projects, and inclusion as examples of practices but did not describe in detail the actions they executed and the objectives linked to them. According to Puig (2004, p. 59, our translation), pedagogical practices should be "[...] constituted by multiple actions ordered coherently and oriented to

achieve a previously fixed objective." He adds that they should be "[...] behaviors ordered coherently, that is, arranged in a succession that can be narrated as if it were a story."

The fourth question: What theoretical frameworks or authors do you use for school activities to stimulate ethical skills?, aimed to clarify whether the interviewees used theoretical foundations in planning pedagogical activities to encourage ethical activities. Regarding the responses to this question, it was observed that interviewees PR01, PR02, PR03, PR10, PR11, and PR12 responded that they do not use theoretical references. Only PR08 responded affirmatively, indicating the pedagogue Cris Poli, the host of the reality show Supernanny, as their primary theoretical reference.

Responses to the question: What theoretical frameworks or authors do you use for school activities aimed at stimulating ethical skills?, were mostly negative. Only one interviewee responded affirmatively. It became evident that the majority of the interviewed educators did not establish a theoretical foundation to support the planning of practices aimed at stimulating the development of children's ethical skills.

Final considerations

Through this work, it was possible to address the central question of the research. It became evident that teachers in public education incorporate stimuli for the development of their students' ethical skills into their pedagogical practices, but they do not develop a theoretical foundation for these practices.

Morality and ethics are fundamental pillars of human social behavior. Morality is the mortar that promotes unity and harmony among the members of a society, and ethics is the ability that allows the interpretation of norms that unify or separate. Now, the ethics of children in the process of school education are also stimulated by the pedagogical practice of teachers. These teachers are shaped by the morality of social life, family, and the ethics of academic life pedagogy. It is a cycle that continuously feeds back on itself. Teachers were once children who went through the process of moral formation and should have the responsibility to exercise pedagogical art with the utmost care regarding the ethical formation of their students. Today, school education is one of the most impactful cycles of transmission of social, cultural, and moral knowledge in the collective socialization process.

There are several institutions that, in addition to having a code of ethics, also have an oath that each member must swear by. Teaching has a unified oath in which ethics and morality

are fundamental precepts, along with professional responsibility, loyalty, and dignity in service to society. Here is the oath of the graduation ceremony of the Pedagogy course at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul:

> I swear / before all present / and the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul / that I will obey the precepts / of ethics and morality / and be aware of my legal responsibilities / I will exercise my profession with loyalty / dedicating my professional life / in service to society / respecting the dignity / and the rights of the human person. / So I promise! [2]

Although it was possible to identify conceptual approximations in the statements and practices of the interviewees, significant weaknesses are exposed in the conceptual definitions and theoretical foundations. The precepts on ethics and morality still appear confused and intertwined in the conceptualizations of the interviewed educators. Despite having higher education, the interviewees demonstrated difficulties in conceptualizing morality and ethics and did not recognize, in their pedagogical plans, the theoretical frameworks aimed at the development of ethical skills. Pedagogical planning of practices should have theoretical support and concrete definitions of the practice to be carried out. It should not be neutral, as objectives are to be achieved and a reality to be transformed.

Given this finding, that the concepts and pedagogical practices for creating stimuli for developing ethical skills in children are not deeply understood, the question arises as to the path to take to rescue this vital topic in school education: the theoretical foundation of ethics.

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