CHILDREN’S LEARNING AS THE FOCUS OF TRAINING EDUCATORS ON HOME-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – EDUCATIONAL FAIRS

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How can undergraduate students of Sciences of Education develop strategies to promote the collaboration of their university community with children and families? This paper is about an action research that took place in the University of Lisbon. A developmental project was based on Seeley’s idea (1985) of a productive learning relationship and on the theoretical perspectives developed by Epstein on the set of overlapping spheres of influence on children’s learning and development (1995). It lasted for one semester. The action team included a 20 student class of the School of Education and their professor. Having children’s learning as focus, the team was responsible for the work process of the organization and implementation of an educational fair with the collaboration of undergraduates from other schools of the University who contributed with their diversity of scientific knowledge. While the project was ongoing much discussion and project work took place between the class students and between them and the enlarged community of students. Accordingly, twelve thematic work groups were formed. The educational fair took place in the University campus on children’s day (June 1st). Twelve tents were visited by hundreds of children with their families. Some came with their own teachers too. Each tent offered active experiments and games on specific learning subjects or civic matters which involved children and, often, their families. They had the opportunity of playing and learning together. The final assessment was based on the counting of the children who visited each tent and on the content analysis of three kinds of data: naturalistic observation and video reports of children’s attitudes and behaviors, registration in loco of children’s and adults’ comments, and students’ individual reflections on both process and product (children’s and self development). The results were qualitatively and quantitatively positive. This way, two goals were achieved: (a) future educators learned how to stimulate community involvement on a productive learning relationship with children and families; (b) children’s development on scientific and civic matters was increased with the community’s and their families’ help. In the two following years, this experiment was replicated with different classes of undergraduates. The same positive outcomes occurred. Thus it seems that developmental projects may be a powerful strategy to be used to train educators in H-S-C partnerships.

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References:


