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The importance given by teachers and the various school personals to the interactional dimensions of the school-parents relationship at the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten level in Québec

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CONTENTS

- Early childhood intervention in Québec: the structure
- Partnership within the structure: «The school team»
- The ecological approach: theory and practice based on interdisciplinarity
- Some exploratory research results
 - ✓ Integrating the intervention: wishful thinking ?
 - ✓ Partnership with the parents: reality or fiction?
- Conclusions

Early childhood intervention in Québec: the structure

- Since the early 1980's, a prevention mission aimed essentially toward the "at risk" child essentially identified as low SES origin
- Multiple jurisdictions (Pre-K and Kindergarten: Ministry of education; Day-care centers: Childhood and Family; Family education: Health and Social services; etc.)
- Socio-educative child and family interveners acts within their own jurisdiction besides of the bureaucratic (formal) areas of collaboration within a same service or between services
- A shared discourse fostering an integrated intervention in an ecological approach
- The articulation of the socio-educative child and family interveners actions is compulsory since 1997

Partnership within the structure: «The school team»

- For the last 30 years the educational work with the child and its family has been fragmented within the school structure
 - ✓ Psychologists were doing the child's evaluation and were held responsible for the remedial intervention upon teachers' formal request
 - ✓ Special education professionals were doing the same
 - ✓ Social workers were building training and supervising parenting competences programs upon request of the psychologists
 - ✓ Teachers were seeing themselves as curriculum specialists and, besides of teaching, they were only requested to identify and refer children with special needs on the basis of their informal observations
- Since 1997 all the professionals are required to be part of the socio-educational process and to work as a team, within the classroom, integrating the parent as a partner

The ecological approach: theory and practice based on interdisciplinarity

- Ecological approach is often perceived by professionals in a reductionist way limiting the systemic definition to a serial of hermetic micro-systems (family; school; day-care center; etc.)
- Each system is defined in function of the professional's area of intervention (eg: child-family nucleus; child-peers in the classroom micro-system or child-peers in the school yard)

(Sontag, 1996; Tyler et Jones, 2000)

- A holistic approach of the child relationships with his environment implies an interactionist perspective based on a unique focal component (eg: the subject)
- The co-construction of a global image of the subject's reality based on a shared comprehension of the various professional perspectives about the subject reality is therefore compulsory

Some exploratory research results

- Source: data collected during a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (1999-2002) granted research
- Objectives:
 - ✓ Define the socio-educational competencies desired for front-line interveners with young children (0-6 years old) and their family, in low socioeconomic milieus
 - ✓ Circumscribe the needs of these front-line interveners
 - ✓ *Determine if the competency profile desired by interveners, parents and teacher education educators and teacher education needs corresponds to the socio-educational competencies required by the symbio-synergetic model of intervention actually put forth by governmental organisms*

➤ **Method:**

- ✓ Semi-structures interviews; Survey
- ✓ Treatment: (Nominal & Ordinal variables: Correspondence analysis)

➤ **Sample:**

- ✓ 370 socio-educative child and family interveners (Teachers; Social workers; Day-care centers educators; Psychologists, etc.)
- ✓ Gender: women (96 %)
- ✓ 44 % working with low SES children or families
- ✓ 46 % working with middle class clientele

Network	Percentage
Health and Social Services (CLSC)	20
Community services (autonomous)	18
Day care centers (+ Head-Start type programs)	48
School (Kindergarten 4 and 5 years old children)	14

Integrating the intervention: wishful thinking?

- **Work as a multidisciplinary team and in an interdisciplinary perspective** is seen as:
 - ✓ Not important by teachers and day-care centers educators
 - ✓ Quite important by the community services workers
 - ✓ Essential by the Health and social services professionals
- **To share with the other professionals concerned, informations about the child and its family** is seen as:
 - ✓ Not important or secondary by the day-care centers educators and community services workers
 - ✓ Quite important by the Health and social services professionals
 - ✓ Essential by the teachers

Partnership with the parents: reality or fiction?

- **Establish a collaborative dynamic in a partnership perspective with the child and its family** is seen as:
 - ✓ Not important by the day-care centers educators
 - ✓ Very important by both the community services workers and the Health and social services professionals
 - ✓ Essential by the teachers
- **Get familiar with the child's social environment culture and family knowledge and use it as an educational tool**
 - ✓ Not so important by the day-care centers educators and by the teachers
 - ✓ Very important by the Health and social services professionals
 - ✓ Essential by the community services workers

Conclusions

- In the actual Québec policy, the perspective to be adopted by the various professionals intervening with the young child (0-6) and its family have to be an eco-systemic one operationalized by an interdisciplinary practice
- For the last 30 years, professionals have behaved, inside the school or in the community, in a closed specialized perspective
- Even if new structures such as “school team” have been created, the socio-educational interveners still weight quite differently the importance of interdisciplinary practices just as they weight in an adapted way the importance of the partnership with the parents
- There is an urgent need for continuous education programs creating a space for interdisciplinary projects based on the exploration of parents competences as an essential tool of the socio-educational intervention