



# The professional learning of the adult-child interaction: A multi-contextual study

Rosa Novo

Escola Superior de Educação - Instituto Politécnico de Bragança - Portugal

An issue emerging from some research studies stresses the understanding that interaction competences depend on long, subsequent processes of reflected professional learning (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2003; Pascal e Bertram, 2003). In this study, the ecological, socio-constructivist model of supervision of final teaching practice (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2002) becomes of fundamental relevance because of its assumed need to consider child pedagogy as substantive to the construction of a new vision on practical training and on a new meaning of pedagogical supervision considered as adjectival (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2005).

**Research objective:** To understand the educational interaction of trainee-educators with reference to the pedagogical option adopted in the supervising context

**Participants:** The participants of this study are two trainee pre-school teachers in two different supervising contexts. One of these follow a traditional pedagogy and the other is based on a social and constructivist pedagogy.

**Data collection:** Using the scale of adult engagement (Laevers, 1994) this research follows an approach descriptive and interpretative in nature and the data collection process was based on the analysis of video recordings, field notes, training reflective portfolio and interviews with the trainees. It is a case-study that uses content analysis (Bardin, 1979).

**Results:** Illustration of the analysis of attitudes concerning sensitivity, autonomy and stimulation of two trainees, in a traditional context and in a social constructivist context, with the evidences separated by different colours for different sources of data.

## Analysis of sensitivity in multiple sources:

| Example of a traditional context   |                          |  | Example of a constructivist context  |                          |  |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| Examples   | Sources                  | Subcategories  | Examples   | Sources                  | Subcategories  |
| 1 - A relationship of proximity and affectivity is important. I try to be affective, but perhaps that is my problem because I feel that sort of necessity, I need to be with the children, to place back a tallen hairpin, to pull a chair...  | Interview to the trainee | References centered on the child.  | 1 - I plan for myself the child that I am going to observe and depending on the area that it chooses I follow him/her. Other times I only observe them and I take some notes.  | Interview to the trainee | References centered on the trainee.<br>-Feeling of belonging   |
| 2- As opposed to what happened with pre-school teacher, I had to speak many times to get the children's respect.   | Portfolio                | - Proximity and affectivity<br>-She places herself at the child's physical level<br>- Positive social gestures<br>- Sometimes she uses a negative tone of voice                  | 2 - I showed my total availability to listen to them. During the work time I regularly tried to participate in the children's activities, using the same materials and developing their plans and actions together. I bonded with the whole group and I managed to become an effective member of it. There is a really good environment with great companionship.  | Portfolio                | References centered on the child.<br>-Active listening of the children's interests and needs   |
| 3- The trainee questions the child, asking: "What are you going to use for the doctor? A hammer. What? A hammer? Go to the bedroom and look for the materials that doctors use". The child returns with an open doctor case and the trainee says: "I will be right back, all right? And she continues with the other children. (...) What are you going to do with the blocks today? A farm", answers the child: "A farm, again? I will do something else, then", answers the child. | Footage                  | - Reduced respect for the child's voice, actions and options<br>- Reduced respect for the children's opinions and initiatives<br>- Lack of empathy towards the children's needs. | 3 - The trainee asks: "Which book did you see? I will get it", says a child who answers when she returns: "It was this book, we saw this book. (...) And what experiments are you going to do? We will see if we can do the things. What? Explain better... with dough? We have to choose, right? answers the child: "You have to choose?" asks the trainee: "We need to discuss what Francisco and I are going to do, all right? All right", answers the trainee.   | Footage                  | - Positive tone of voice<br>- Positive social gestures<br>-Respect for the children's options, ideas and decisions<br>-Respect for the child's initiative<br>-Empathy for the children's needs |
| 4- While the checking was being done, on the sly, a child sits beside another. When Rita realizes, she says: "What is Manuela doing beside Luisa? Sit here next to Carlos. It is a boy and a girl". And she leads the child to her place, who stays a few moments sitting on her legs and with the back to the circle.   | Field Notes              |  | 4- Sitting, forming a circle, the children wait for the children of the other room to share the projects. But, as the waiting is getting too long, the pre-school teacher asked: "what are we going to do?". The children's opinions divide themselves, some defended the idea that they should keep waiting and the others suggested to do the revision. Then, a child proposed a vote. The vote is done: only eight votes to keep waiting. The pre-school teacher asks again: "do you want to do the revision altogether or on the tables? In a big group is very confusing", says a child. A new vote is done. It was decided to do the checking in small groups. | Field Notes              | References related to pedagogic dimensions.<br>-Observation  |

The analysis of the trainee's sensitivity reveals the absence of active listening of the child and the presence of a reduced respect for the voice and actions of the child, as the footage shows. On the other hand, the analysis of the trainee's sensitivity in a constructivist context shows interactions which respect children, listening to their choices, ideas and decisions.

## References:

Bardin, L. (1979). *Análise de conteúdo*. Lisboa: Edições 70;  
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## Analysis of autonomy in multiple sources:

| Example of a traditional context  |                          |   | Example of a constructivist context   |                          |   |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| Examples  | Sources                  | Subcategories   | Examples  | Sources                  | Subcategories   |
| 1- When I am working in an area I usually say: "Look, you are going to do this and then I will be back to see it, or when you finish you come to show me. Don't tidy up without showing me" - I didn't use to give this much autonomy, I think that now I do. | Interview to the trainee | References centered on the trainee:<br>-Appeal to the authority and the maintenance of the order<br>-Dependence of the trainee in relation to the supervisor/pre-school teacher | 1- I also place myself as a member of the group and I let the child take the lead.  | Interview to the trainee | References centered on the trainee:<br>Sharing control  |
| 2-The organization of the areas and the materials were set in a logical way (...) allowing more autonomy and initiative for the children.   | Portfolio                | References centered on the children:<br>-Supervision of the children's works<br>-Interference with the children's decisions (plans)   | 2- The children start activities which meet their personal interests and intentions: they chose the place, the materials and they decide what to do with them. The children already have a deep knowledge about the sequence of each moment of the routine. They know how to manage their space, because when the area has already reached the limit number of children, they reformulate their plan and they change the area.  | Portfolio                | References centered on the children:<br>-Offers the possibility to make decisions and to take responsibilities<br>-Allows the child to choose<br>-Encourages the children's ideas and initiatives<br>-Encourages the appropriation of the routine times |
| 3- Having knowledge about the routine sequence, the children can organize their time and their activities independently.  | Footage                  | -Limitation of the children's initiatives<br>-Guidance of the children<br>-The trainee doesn't encourage the child to take responsibilities (conflicts resolution)              | 3- In the planning, the trainee asks: "who is in charge? I am", answers a child: "Ok, you are going to give each child a piece. Then, we are going to build the puzzle. How are we going to build the puzzle? From the top to the bottom or from the bottom to the top?", asks the trainee: "From bottom to top", answers a child. The trainee broadens the approach: "So lets start from the bottom, turn the pieces around".  | Footage                  | -Encourages the appliance of rules<br>-Offers leading opportunities to the child  |
| 5- Warn the children that they must always finish the tasks that are incomplete. You have to remind them that they must finish their tasks. You have to show more authority.  | Field Notes              | References related to pedagogic dimensions.<br>-Space<br>-Time<br>-Group organization   | 4- Because the trainee was filming the inter-room projects exchange in another room, during the revision the teacher suggested the small group to name a leader... immediately they accepted who offered first. The responsible asks: "What area are you going to?", being in the following moment corrected by the colleague: "Are you going or did you go?" the responsible smiled and corrected: "What area did you go to?" the responsible accepted, as well, to do her checking and she asked: "who does it with me?" Many children put their fingers in the air, but a child retorted: "I said first". The leader wanted this, as well as the rest of the children. | Field Notes              | References related to pedagogic dimensions.<br>-Space<br>-Materials<br>-Time<br>-Activities<br>-Projects  |

In the field of autonomy, the trainee of a traditional context reveals an isomorphism experience at the heteronomy level, while the trainee in the social constructivist context encourages children to be confident towards their own ideas, decisions and initiatives.

## Analysis of stimulation in multiple sources:

| Example of a traditional context   |                          |   | Example of a constructivist context  |                          |  |
|--|--------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|--|
| Examples   | Sources                  | Subcategories   | Examples   | Sources                  | Subcategories  |
| 1- They are not paying attention, they are talking to the child next to them and I have to keep drawing their attention, constantly.   | Interview to the trainee | References centered on the trainee:<br>- Didactic stimulation   | 1- With the diversity of areas and materials in this room there are multiple possibilities to develop an enriching work with the children. I am asked to go to the areas by the children, I follow them and play with them.  | Interview to the trainee | References centered on the children:<br>- Follows the children's intentions<br>- Stimulates experience sharing<br>- Encourages thought, action and communication<br>- Stimulates mutual help |
| 2- In order to enrich their knowledge regarding professions, the planning of my activities for the last weeks of traineeship aimed at that purpose.  | Portfolio                | References centered on the children:<br>-Deficit compensation<br>-Academic skills<br>-Intrusive in self-initiated activities<br>-Error-correction | 2- The space and materials are potential choice indicators for the children, (...) stimulating them to make their own options. There is an environment of ideas sharing, learning and mutual help.   | Portfolio                |  |
| 3- Sitting in the circle, the trainee calls each child individually to analyze the work related to the subject "feeding". The trainee calls the child who keeps its back to the other children, and she says: "Why is the juice here? Why did you put the juice here? It is wrong, you have to correct it, all right? Let's put it aside". | Footage                  | References related to pedagogic dimensions:<br>-Planning<br>-Activities<br>-Projects  | 3- "What book did you see?" asked the trainee during the checking time: "I will get it", says Ana. "So, have you seen this one that says: individual processes, what's in it?" asks the trainee, showing the book to everyone. "The images and what the children made", answers a child, asking: "Is about the soap experience?". "And what else?", asks the trainee, showing another page. "About the clay and the paint", enumerates a child. "Hmmm! So this book has the works that the children made", says the trainee. | Footage                  | References related to pedagogic dimensions:<br>-Space<br>-Materials<br>-Projects<br>-Documentation   |
| 4- Don't forget the rhythmic beat, there are children who don't know the syllables. Have you worked on laterality with Maria? And the colors, did you work the colors? Luis and Carlos don't know the colors. Work on this with them, here are plenty of games for that.   | Field Notes              |   | 4- During the work time, a child approaches the construction area and seeing the trainee with the carpenter case, calls three friends. The trainee encourages the children to explore the materials and then she widens the children's knowledge about the emergency of writing. They go to the computer and each child writes the name of the material, printing it on a sheet given by the trainee, thus sharing the labeling of new materials.  | Field Notes              |  |

Regarding stimulation, the trainee of a traditional context values the didactic stimulation, which means, that she values the compensation of the deficits and the acquisition of academic skill. On the contrary, the trainee in the constructivist context pursues the children's goals, actively participating in their games and encouraging their thoughts and actions.

**Conclusions:** Among the conclusions draw from data, we should highlight the interactivity between the learnings of pre-school teacher training and pedagogical grammar adopted in the training context. Results show the absolute need for thinking the institutional importance given to the role of supervisor over again and, as consequence, to the continuous training offered in child pedagogy as a support to the changing of daily practice.

