

Intervention with a socio-communicative approach for students with behavioral disorders

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ABSTRACT

The research presented is of experimental type. It is aimed at responding to the inadequacies presented in the educational teaching process in schools for the education of children with behavioral disorders. The objective is the proposal of a strategy with a socio-communicational approach. The results are materialized in the significant progress shown by the students, both in behavior and in learning. Empirical and theoretical methods were used in the research, among them: analysis and synthesis, historical and logical, observation, interview, pedagogical tests, quasi-experiment and document analysis.

Keywords: Behavioral disorders; Socio-communicational perspective; Comprehensive care strategy; Educational teaching process.

Introduction

Behavior disorders generate serious problems in the personal, family and social life of the children who suffer from them, provoking in them, feelings of hopelessness and frustration, which, in most cases, assume school life with a negative perspective, both children and their families; hardly a child who does not adapt to school and social norms will achieve success in the future.

In this sense, there is a social need for these children to compensate or correct these problems in the shortest possible time under an educational process that allows such purposes, either in a special school, in a regular school or through the different Specialized Centers of Educational Services.

In principle, these behaviors begin as behavioral inadequacies that:

...have to do with those attitudes that are inappropriate for the context in which the child finds himself and show maladjustments, the child's maladjustment to the situation or requirement, according to what is socially expected of him (Martínez Hechavarría et al., 2023).

However, the advances and studies carried out, the intervention strategies that are developed do not meet the expectations in terms of efficiency in the educational process, which results in the fact that the advances obtained in behavior and learning do not last in children, where the involvement, participation and mobilization of those involved (child, family) for change is unsystematic.

As part of this research, a diagnosis of the current state of the educational intervention strategy was made through the application of an instrument developed for this purpose, and the following shortcomings were found in educational practice:

- Spontaneity in the conception and development of the intervention strategy.
- Only the characteristics of the child are considered for the intervention strategy.
- Poor participation and collaboration between school and family as a fundamental element in the education of vulnerable students with behavioral disorders.

The aforementioned allowed posing as a scientific problem how to achieve greater efficiency in the intervention strategy developed with schoolchildren with conduct disorders at the Osvaldo Socarrás Martínez School in Santiago de Cuba?

The objective is determined as follows: To propose an intervention strategy with a socio-communicative approach for the educational attention to children with conduct disorders.

Development

The categorization of "disruptive behavior disorder in childhood and adolescence" refers to the presence of a persistent, repetitive and age-inappropriate pattern of behavior. It is characterized by non-compliance with the basic social norms of coexistence and by opposition to the requirements of authority figures, generating deterioration in family or social relationships (Fernández & Olmedo, 1999) (Fernández & Olmedo, 1999).

Some authors: Ortega (1990), M. Pérez (2000), Fontes and Mevis Pupo (2005), coincide in proposing the element of persistence, intensity and frequency with which these behaviors must be present in order to classify them as a behavioral disorder.

Fontes and M. Pupo consider behavioral disorders as follows:

Varied and stable alterations of the affective-volitional sphere resulting from the dialectic interrelation of internal and external negative factors, which mainly cause difficulties in learning and interpersonal relationships, all of which are expressed in deviations of personality development that have a reversible character (Fontes Sosa & Pupo Pupo, 2006, p. 39).

This concept includes essential elements such as the variability and stability of abnormal behavior and the necessary relationship between the internal and the external.

The authors of this article define behavioral disorders as:

Detrimental in the behavioral capacity of a child who deviates significantly from the appropriate social behavior of his age group in a stable, varied and systematic manner, making his school and social integration difficult, which is motivated by conditions of communication, learning, lack of affection in different contexts, associated or not with unfavorable internal personal conditions, resulting in various forms of negative social behavior that affect the child's ability to learn. (Duvalón Ramírez, 2003, p. 23).

The theory of L.S. Vygotsky and his followers constitutes the fundamental theoretical core of this research. This theory considers learning and behavior as social activity. The child assimilates social norms and modes in activity and interaction under conditions of adult guidance. The learner is an active, conscious and goal-oriented subject, who internalizes processes that go from the intrapsychic to the interpsychic level.

The followers of the Socio-Historical-Cultural approach start from a dialectical-materialistic position on development, proposing, as an initial position, the recognition

of the interactive character of psychic development, taking as a basis the dialectical relationship established between biological and social factors.

This postulate makes it possible to penetrate the dynamics of the teaching-educational process that takes place in education, since this is a social process and guarantees, due to its communicative essence, that children, through this cultural content, restructure their way of thinking and acting.

Vygotsky considered the so-called fundamental genetic law of cultural development, which formulates: "Every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the scene twice, on two planes: first in the social, then in the psychological, first among men, as an interpsychic category, then within the child, as an intrapsychic category" (Cited by Wyszengrad, 2020, p 78).

This law is of utmost importance for the development of the educational intervention strategy with a socio-communicative approach that is developed in the education of minors with behavioral disorders because, according to this law, individual consciousness has its origin in the social interrelationships that the child establishes with the people around him/her.

The theory of the zone of proximal development also constitutes another important element within the educational process and especially in the conception of the educational intervention strategy with a socio-communicative approach. With respect to the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky states that social factors are the source of psychic development and learning, where development unfolds in two planes: Zone of Actual Development (hereinafter ZDA) and Zone of Proximal Development (hereinafter ZDP).

The zone of actual development according to Vygotsky is that which the child is already capable of doing independently. On the other hand, the zone of proximal development is what the child is not yet capable of doing alone, but can do with help in collaboration with others.

This conception allows inferring the importance for the intervention of those aspects that children are capable of doing (ZDA) in order to, starting from that level, be able to organize a collaborative process that allows the production of zones of proximal development in the child as an expression of the assimilation of cultural contents within which are the norms, values and the way of behavior accepted by our social project,

emphasizing the definition of each activity, each task, each objective capable of awakening the interest of the students and their environment.

For learning to occur, according to Vygotsky "the activities must be within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) of the students, that is, neither too easy (not involving any cognitive challenge), nor too difficult (unrealizable in a successful way)". (Espinosa Meneses et al., 2019, p. 26)

For his part, Valsiner (1984):

...evokes a series of approaches that distinguish the ZDP that conceptually advance the understanding and role of interaction, positing the Zone of Free Movement (hereinafter ZML) which is socially constituted, in that it is a product of the child's interaction with his social environment. It is a cognitive structure that organizes the child's relations with the environment (quoted by Anatolievna Akudovich, 2013).

When within the ZML concrete subzones are specified, parents, the teacher, the school can try to provoke concrete actions, concrete learning through homework, observation, manipulation of objects and the elaboration of specific problems, we are talking, according to this author, about the Zone of Promoted Action (hereinafter ZAP). This PAZ is key, since it constitutes the area in which adults act, trying to expand development with what will be possible, and is located in the Zone of Proximal Development.

The approaches of this author turn out to be very important, within this proposal, since there is a key element in education; for the Zone of Free Movement and the Zone of Promoted Action to take place it is necessary that both are seated in what this research defines as the Zone of Mobilization (hereinafter ZM), which is understood as:

.... the interactive space that provokes the dynamics of psychic processes and makes the child emotionally available for social learning on the basis of involvement and meaningful communication, with the use of external mediators (teacher, family, other child and the process that develops). (quoted by Pérez Peralta, 2020, p. 7)

In this ZM, children, whether they have limitations or not, are in an emotional disposition to learn and acquire new forms and ways of acting, which allows that, under the collaboration with adults or other children, they can irradiate the cerebral cortex for a

greater productivity in learning. This has to do not only with the mobilization of internal resources by the child, but also of external resources that become mediators for learning.

The ZM, as defined in this research, has a social base that is the product of interaction, where adults and, fundamentally, parents and teachers play an important role.

The student should be able to mobilize his reserves, be motivated, express his interests, needs and expectations, on the basis of the mobilization of the educational process as a whole, making the latter more attractive for the assimilation of culture.

In this research, a quasi-experiment was carried out in its single case variant, which made it possible to record the state of the dependent variable: improvement of students' behavior and learning, before, during and after introducing the experimental factor or independent variable: intervention strategy with a socio-communicative approach through three fundamental stages.

The population is made up of 80 first cycle students enrolled in the "Osvaldo Socarrás Martínez" school for the education of children with behavioral disorders in Santiago de Cuba; The sample was selected intentionally, it is made up of 30 students, 10 females and 20 males, 10 second graders (6 males and 4 females), 11 third graders (8 males and 3 females), 9 fourth graders (6 males and 3 females), which represents 100% of the enrollment of these grades, all diagnosed with conduct disorders category 1.

The selection of these grades for the quasi-experiment was for pedagogical and psychological reasons. In the pedagogical order, these children, despite their problems, come with better preparation than those of previous levels, which favors the assimilation of knowledge, in addition to entering the behavioral school with fewer failures because they are from category 1. In the psychological order, students in these grades go through an important stage for the development of their psychic processes, which is manifested in their emotional disposition to participate in the task, as well as their motivation, which contributes to the efficiency of the educational work. Eleven teachers were chosen, 3 for classrooms and 8 for educational work, belonging to the second, third and fourth grades, all of them graduated in primary education, with training courses in Special Education, having more than 8 years of experience (with the exception of 3 who have 5 years) in addition to the school doctor, a Physical Education teacher and 20 parents or persons responsible for the children.

In order to diagnose the current situation of both the intervention strategy carried out in the school and how it is reflected in the behavior and learning of the selected sample, the following instruments were applied: observation, survey, pedagogical tests, sentence completion, sociometric test, inventory of qualities and review of documents. The evaluation of the students' behavior was taken into account, which contemplates the categories of: Surpassed (S), Nearly Surpassed (NS), Slightly Surpassed (SS), Aggravated (A), Involuntal (I) and No Coincidence with Diagnosis (NCWD).

The application of these instruments led to the following conclusions:

- ✓ There is little involvement of the students in the process, limiting their participation in the activities, whether or not they are of interest to them.
- ✓ Little coordination between teachers and professors regarding the treatment to be given to the child: lack of knowledge of the medium, short and long range objectives to be developed with the students and their environment.
- ✓ Insufficient participation of parents in the intervention strategy, which is limited to occasional visits by teachers to the home and parents to the school.

Twenty-four social communication activities and classes were observed, in 16 of them (66.6%) the students are not consulted or asked for their opinion about the activities being developed, in 20 (83.3%) the exchange and collaboration among students is not encouraged, an issue that does not favor the educational action, since this element has an important influence on the learning and behavior of children, taking into account that one of the most affected areas in these students is communication and interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, 24 students (80%) consider that they should remain in the school institution to solve their shortcomings, which is an element that helps the educational process and favors the emotional disposition of the students to put into practice what they have learned and to participate, jointly, in their own transformation and development.

The instrument applied to 27 parents showed that 90% of them consider that they attend school and only receive complaints from their children, while 10 (33.3%) attend and receive guidance on the treatment to be given to their child; on the other hand, 26 (86.6%) do not feel involved in the treatment given to their child at school. Of the 30 parents surveyed, 24 (80%) do not rate as very positive the consultations or exchanges made with them to contribute to their child's education.

The pedagogical test showed that 12 students (40%) achieved the category of Good, 7 (23%) Fair and 11 (33%) Poor in the subject of Spanish Language. On the other hand, in the subject of Mathematics, 10 (33%) reached the category of Good, 8 (27%) of Fair and 12 (49%) of Poor, respectively.

In the review of the clinical-pedagogical records, it was found that in the last behavioral evaluation of the students in the sample, before the quasi-experiment, 19 (63%) were in the category of Slightly Overcome, 6 (20%) in Involutional and 5 (16%) in Aggravated. Based on the above results, an intervention strategy was introduced with a socio-communicative approach aimed at obtaining greater efficiency in the teaching-educational process with these students who present behavioral disorders.

First, several workshops were held with teachers, parents and students to socialize the fundamental aspects of the intervention strategy with a sociocommunication approach, in which they are a fundamental part. In these exchanges, the practical demonstration in the realization of all the activities contained in the strategy, both educational and corrective and compensatory, with emphasis on the Social Communication program, predominated.

Aspects considered for the development of the intervention strategy with a socio-communication approach.

The fundamental characteristics of the strategy were determined:

1. Flexible and progressive

The intervention strategy is not definitive; it must be sufficiently open to integrate those objectives, tasks or activities that are prioritized according to the needs of the students and their environment, even when the child graduates from the special school. It cannot and should not be bureaucratic, rigid, but adequate to the changing conditions of the process and of the students who are constantly evolving.

2. Negotiated

This aspect explains the interactive nature of the intervention strategy, which involves all those involved in its development and implementation, including students, thus highlighting the mobilization of both internal and external processes.

This is possibly the feature that presents the greatest difficulties in the strategy. The complexities in which these families have developed and the relationship they have established with their children and school, negotiation can be complex, but school and,

specifically, the teacher must find the means to do so and succeed. This is why it is necessary to teach students and educate them in dialogue and negotiation culture.

2. Accessible and linkable

The intervention strategy with a socio-communication approach is developed taking into account the social and school context and the possibilities available to the participants (individual access route). The activities proposed and elaborated collectively should motivate all participants, especially the child. Work in a coordinated manner on the basis of regular contacts. The actions to be taken to the school or work center should be easily carried out.

Taking into account the above, 3 stages were established in the intervention strategy with a socio-communication approach.

First stage: Meeting

The objective of this stage is to build a communicative base with the student and his/her family members, to provide an affectionate encounter with the school, the students, the teachers and the staff in general. It is necessary that in all cases the students are accompanied by their parents or legal representatives.

Fundamental aspects that are taken into account at this stage.

1. To start from a personal contact with the child where the following objectives are taken into account:

- a. To recognize the difficulties and the possibilities that the child has to solve these problems and reach higher steps.
- b. To look for all the disposition of the schoolboy to put it in function of the compensation and correction.
- c. To achieve that the student has absolute confidence in the teachers, based on the respect, the collaboration and the exigency.

2. Contact with the child's parents or person responsible for the child with the objective of:

- a) Make them recognize and accept the problems presented by their child and the possibilities that the child has to solve them, if working in collaboration.
- b) Exchange on the main causes that originated the child's problems. In this aspect it is necessary to handle the situation with deep respect, we only open

the way for the parents to reach their own conclusions and propose what can be done together.

- c) To exchange on the possibilities of the family and how to put them in function of the educational work that is developed in the education.
- d) To seek that the family members have absolute confidence in the teachers and the process that is being developed.
- e) To exchange on the fundamental aspects that must be mutually cooperated and how the work done will be evaluated.

3. Contact with the network of educational agents and agencies (community leaders) where the child lives, in order to seek understanding and collaboration in the intervention developed with the child and his family, specifying the activities to be developed.

Second stage: Affirmation

This stage has essentially a therapeutic function: the objectives are aimed at eliminating, diminishing and devaluing negative modes of behavior, developing the capacity to resist frustrations, creating and increasing self-control mechanisms, developing the child's language, enhancing the student's learning, etc.

Fundamentally, techniques such as brainstorming, dramatizations, modeling, games and everything that is feasible to make explicit the behavior that is desired and that the student also wishes to assimilate, in correspondence with his/her needs, are used.

At this stage the activities are intensive, the participatory algorithm is fully used in the different compensatory and corrective activities, so that students learn to develop strategies with greater perspectives, in addition to exploiting to the maximum the possibilities of the contents to influence all aspects of the child's personality and its context, although in the latter, the influence is indirect.

At this stage, active, meaningful learning, negotiation of objectives, demonstration, practice, feedback, support (not only from the teacher to the students, but also from student to student) and continuous evaluation are intensified.

Regarding meaningful learning, it should be kept in mind what Ausubel stated "meaningful learning is the type of knowledge where a student relates new information with the one he already has, readjusting and reconstructing both in this process" (Espinosa Meneses et al., 2019, p. 21).

The following activities are worked in this stage:

1. Assign individual tasks to students and small groups as independent work derived from classes or extracurricular activities with the use of technology.
2. Exchange individually with students.
3. Allow students to choose what activities they wish to do based on their interests.
4. Praise the children's efforts even when they do not achieve all the expected results.
5. Systematic relationship with parents.
6. Practical use of varied didactic materials that allow mobilizing the child's reserves where technology is used intensively.
7. Ensuring that each child, based on his or her efforts, is successful in the teaching task.
8. Encourage students to use language to organize their thinking, to talk about what they are doing or trying to do.
9. Provide positive models for students to identify themselves and give them the opportunity to put into practice the qualities or actions of that model with their individual particularities.

Third stage: Reaffirmation

The activities of the second stage, if they were efficiently conceived, and took into account the objectives as a fundamental element and the systemic and systematic work of all specialists, lead to this stage of Reaffirmation, which is very important in the education of children with behavioral disorders; here occurs the true recognition of the internal and external change of behavior where complex personality processes are involved.

The student, at this stage, becomes aware of his real possibilities, makes individual and social motivations his own, satisfactorily assumes the forms and ways of coexistence and shows willingness to work together and perform tasks.

At this stage, children are given tasks to check and evaluate their degree of resistance to difficult and conflictive situations, they are shown different situations so that they can look for alternatives, stimulating them to operate with those that have greater prospects for them, their group and their family.

The results after the quasi-experiment are shown below in table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Behavioral Assessment after the quasi-experiment.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Overcome	10	33,3	33,3	33,3
	Almost surpassed	13	43,3	43,3	76,7
	Slightly exceeded	4	13,3	13,3	90,0
	Aggravated	3	10,0	10,0	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Source: Self elaboration

The above shows that, although the students still have some problems, the results obtained were a step forward, both in behavior and learning, showing efficiency in the process developed with these students.

At the end of the school year 2018- 2019 the 10 students who reached the category of Overachievers and left the school to their schools of origin (where the follow-up was maintained). The elementary school teachers showed their satisfaction for the joint work done. The 13 Near Successful students graduated the next school year.

Ninety-three percent of the students stated that they felt that the school helped them to solve their problems, which shows significant progress compared to the diagnostic stage (53%). These results favored, in a remarkable way, the effectiveness of the educational teaching process that is developed in the education of these students.

100% of teachers and parents evaluated as very positive the degree of coordination established among all members for the definition of objectives and the concretion of actions through activities.

Regarding the parents' preparedness to jointly and collaboratively face the intervention strategy, 95.3% stated that this preparation was quite positive and 4.7% evaluated it as positive, which is a reflection of the significant progress in relation to the previous stages. The results of the pedagogical test were significant in relation to the previous stage, in the subject of Spanish Language 23 students (77%) reached the category of Good, 4 (13%) of Fair and 3 (10%) of Bad as shown in the table 2. On the other hand, in Mathematics, 25 students (83%) reached the category of Good, 4 (13%) of Fair and 1 (3%) of Poor as shown in table 3.

Table 2. Results of the Spanish Language pedagogical test after the quasi-experiment.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Good	23	76,7	76,7	76,7
	Fair	4	13,3	13,3	90,0
	Poor	3	10,0	10,0	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Source: Self elaboration

Table 3 Results of the pedagogical test in Mathematics after the quasi-experiment.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Good	25	83,3	83,3	83,3
	Fair	4	13,3	13,3	96,7
	Poor	1	3,3	3,3	100,0
	Total	30	100,0	100,0	

Source: Self elaboration

All these results were made possible, to a large extent, by the implementation of the intervention strategy with a socio-communication approach designed and by the type of organization that was carried out, which took into account the active involvement of students and parents in the process, based on their real potential.

Conclusions

This research contributed to increase the efficiency of the educational teaching process in the education of children with behavioral disorders, through the proposal of an intervention strategy with a socio-communicative approach characterized by promoting: the mobilization of external and internal processes, the improvement of the school organization as a reinforcer of positive behavior, the active involvement of those involved in education based on the change in the style of communication and the follow-

up to the objectives of the intervention and the constant self-improvement of the pedagogical group.

The intervention strategy with a socio-communicative approach constitutes an alternative to achieve greater efficiency in the educational teaching process developed in the education of minors with behavioral disorders in any context.