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Children-educators communication and affective behaviour in an experimental play situation

Portuguese Team – Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa

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German “Tandem-team”

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Introduction

Although most workers and educators (preschool teachers) in early childhood education (ECE) are women, previous research indicates that male educators bring novelty to daily pedagogical practices and ECE routines (e.g., Rohrmann, 2009).

German Tandem team (Brandes, Andrä Wenke Röseler & Schneider-Andrich, 2015) states that educators gender affects their behavior and interaction with children, namely the authors found that:

- female ECE workers were more likely to produce subjects whereas male ECE workers produced more objects;*
- male workers where more likely to use tools than materials;*
- female ECE workers tend to use more fantasies with girls and to speak in objectively-concretely manner with boys.*

Aims of the Present Study

Following the original Tandem study, **we aimed to compare Portuguese female and male educators** regarding their:

- **Style of work with the child** (types of products manufactured and the ability to work together).
- **Interactive behaviour** (empathy, ability to challenge the child, dialogical interaction, communication contents and cooperation with child).
- **Communicative behaviours** (e.g., instructions, questions, positive feedback, negative feedback).

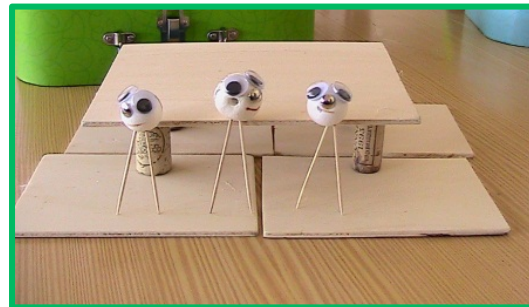
What can we do?

Types of products made with female and male educators

Subjects - living organisms (real or imagined), such as humans or animals (operationalized as 'having eyes')

Objects – things, such as cars, buildings or aeroplanes ('without eyes')

Both - objects and subjects



What can we do?

Types of products made with female and male educators

In our study 29 products were subjects, 7 objects and 6 included both objects and subjects.

Regarding to educators gender, no significant differences were found.

		Products			Total
		Subject	Object	Both	
Child with	Male-Educator	13	5	2	20
	Female-Educator	16	2	4	22
	Total	29	7	6	42

Lets work together?

Products made by the child, the educator or by both in cooperation

		Made by			
		Child	Togheter	Adult	Total
Child with	Female educator	9	8	4	22
	Male educator	8	9	4	20
	Total	17	17	8	42

Most products were performed mostly by the child or by the child working together with the adult. No significant differences were found for the authorship of products according to the educators gender.

Do we act differently?

Mean differences in male-educator versus female-educator interactive behaviour during the activity

Almost no gender differences were found for educators as well for children gender. ***Male educators acted in a more competitive manner with the child than female educators.*** [$t(40) = -2.623; p < .05$; Female educators Mean = 1.36; $DP = .58$ vs Male educators Mean 2.25; $DP = 1.25$].



The contribute of educators years of professional experience on interactive behaviour

The educators years of professional experience was significantly correlated with the scores of the following items:

- *The adult waits patiently for the child decisions* [$t(40)= 2.059; p<.05$];
- *The adult observes the child and her/his involvement is only verbal* [$t(40)= 2.059; p<.05$].

Moreover, the most experienced professionals **used a wide range of materials** in the product manufacture ($Rho= .327; p<.05$) and in the course of the situation **introduced more verbal** teaching indications ($Rho= .329; p<.05$).

Learning how to communicate?

It is well established that the way adults communicate with children affects their linguistic and cognitive development (e.g., Alves, Fuertes, & Sousa, 2014; Bruner, 1981; Snow, 1989; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The adult ability to reframe, expand, and support children language offers new senses and opportunities to the child speech and communication.

In this study, we describe and compare educators verbal communication in their interaction with children.

Talk to me or Talk with me?

Mean differences in verbal communication of Female-educator versus Male-educator

	Female educators		Male educators		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Questions about contents	21.05	11.39	4.95	5.16	5.797	.000***
Suggestions	4.95	4.731	10.80	2.91	4.868	.000***
Instructions	2.18	2.11	9.25	4.7	6.401	.000***
Orders	3.72	3.88	10.5	6.94	3.925	.000***
Positive Feedback	6.09	4.03	13.75	9.07	3.592	.001**

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .005$

Female educators were more oriented to a teaching behaviour whereas Male educators were more concerned with the tasks realization and offered more positive feedback.

Because I am a parent?

Mean differences in verbal communication of educators that are parents versus educators that are not parents

	Educators that are parents		Educators that are not parents			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Questions about contents	6.50	8.583	5.92	10.82	-2.653	.013*
Suggestions	9.72	4.98	5.33	4.01	2.548	.017*
Instructions	8.89	5.19	3.17	3.76	3.280	.003**
Positive Feedback	14.83	8.94	3.58	3.15	4.170	.000***

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .005$; * $p < .05$

Educators that are parents were more oriented to a teaching behaviour whereas other educators were more implicated in the task making instructions, suggestions and positive feedback.

Discussion

Within regard to the interactive behavior of educators, findings barely indicate gender differences between male and female educators. Nevertheless, educators of both genders communicated differently with children.

We speculate that how educators communicate expressed their interactive goals (oriented direct teaching or task-oriented/indirect teaching)

Our results are considerably different from those found in Germany. We wonder if there is a cultural effect on gender issues.

Lets start again! - Limitations and future research

- For further results generalization, a larger sample is needed.
- Throughout the scoring process observers were getting “used” in their evaluation. Therefore, a constant reflection on the scoring process was necessary as well as on the interpretation given by each coder to the items.
- We note that during scoring process an important discussion in our team was brought out about educators and children behaviors – concerning *their shared inter-subjectivity*.
- For further research, additional samples with mothers and fathers were collected and results are being compared.

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Thank you for your attention

Gerês - Portugal

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