TRAINING OF EDUCATORS IN CHILDREN´S SHELTERS IN MÉXICO. RISK FACTOR FOR ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN

LA FORMACIÓN DE LOS EDUCADORES EN ALBERGUES INFANTILES EN MÉXICO. FACTOR DE RIESGO PARA LA CONDUCTA ANTISOCIAL DE LOS NIÑOS

A FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES EM ABRIGOS INFANTIS NO MÉXICO. FATOR DE RISCO PARA COMPORTAMENTO ANTI-SOCIAL DE CRIANÇAS DAS FAMÍLIAS.

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ABSTRACT: In Mexico, children´s shelters are required as a measure to guarantee minimum levels of well-being for abused or neglected children. At these shelters, the presence of educators is fundamental. Therefore, the objective of this study was to analyze the training educators working at shelters for children and its relationship with the shelter's environment and the antisocial behavior of children. ELES was administered to 117 educators at the shelter in the North part of Mexico and Conners for Teachers Scale to the school teachers of 233 children living at those shelters at that time. According to the results from the tested model, the Environment factor had a direct and negative influence on antisocial Behavior, and the Educator's Competences factor had a direct and positive influence on the Environment. However, the educators' competences had no significant effect on the children's antisocial behavior, but affected it indirectly through the environment.

RESUMEN: En México, los albergues infantiles son requeridos para garantizar niveles mínimos de bienestar a niños(as) víctimas. En estos albergues, los educadores adquieren mucha importancia. Por esto, el objetivo general del estudio fue analizar la formación de los educadores de albergues infantiles y su relación con el ambiente y comportamiento antisocial de los menores. Se aplicó la Escalas ELES a 117 educadores de albergues infantiles al Norte de México y la escala Conners para Profesores a los maestros de 233 menores albergados. El modelo probado mostró que el factor Ambiente influye de manera directa y negativa sobre

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	el de Conducta Antisocial del menor y el factor de Competencias de Educadores produce un efecto directo y positivo sobre el Ambiente. Sin embargo, las competencias del educador no afectaron directamente la conducta de los(as) niños(as), como se esperaba, sino que lo afectan de manera indirecta a través del ambiente.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Proteção à criança Colocação residencial criança maltratada comportamento anti-social educadores	**RESUMO:** No México, os abrigos infantis são necessários para garantir níveis mínimos de bem-estar às crianças (vítimas). Estes abrigos educadores adquirem muita importância. Portanto, o objetivo geral do estudo foi analisar a formação de educadores em abrigos de crianças e sua relação com o meio ambiente e comportamento anti-social de menores. A escala ELES foi aplicada a 117 educadores de abrigos de crianças no norte do México e a escala de Conners foi administrada a professores de 233 crianças alojados em abrigos infantis. O modelo testado mostrou que a influência de fator de ambiente é direta e negativa sobre o comportamento anti-social dos menores e a competência de fator de educadores produz um efeito direto e positivo sobre o meio ambiente. No entanto, as competências do educador não afetou diretamente a conduta das crianças, conforme o esperado, mas afectam indirectamente através da ambiente

1. Theoretical Approach

Around 100 million of children and adolescents who work and live on the streets. Approximately 40 million of these children are in Latin America, and Mexico ranks second place (Hernández, 2014). Nevertheless, according to different sources, (Gaxiola & Frías, 2008; González, 2010; INMUJERES, 2006; UNICEF, 2009a, 2009b) the lack of reliable statistics is an issue in relation to minor children living at risk.

When referring specifically to abused children, the figures vary significantly since there is no available reliable data that show their extent, especially since most of the violations to children´s rights are difficult to measure (UNICEF, 2009b). The number of reported cases of child abuse received in Mexico between 1995 and 2007 went from 15,391 to 43,985, and just from 2006 to 2008 there were 23 thousand child and adolescent (of both sexes) homicide cases reported nationally (INEGI, 2010a). In another study conducted in 2002 by the *Sistema de Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF)* (National System for Integral Family Development) and the Abused Children Prevention Program it is stated that 23,585 reports of child abuse cases were received this year from which just 13,332 were proven (Gaxiola & Frías, 2008).

The laws that make up the Mexican legal framework under which these institutions must work range from the Organic Law of the Office for the Defense of Children and the Family (1971) to the Official Mexican Standards for the Provision of Services for Social Welfare for Children and Senior Adults (1997). Although the national standards apply to private institutions as well as government institutions (Social Assistance Law in the State of Sonora, 1986), they do not establish guidelines related to the use of social rehabilitation programs, educational performance of personnel, or its selection process. This, in addition to

the lack of reliable data and research carried out in children´s shelters in different places around the country has caused some States to seek to amend their own legislation.

In Mexico, operating shelters with unhealthy working conditions, non-qualified personnel, high student-teacher ratio, and a lack of working programs have been found (CEDHJ, 2006). Some authors consider that children in these institutions could suffer physical, psychological and sexual abuse. The lack of adequate protection or attention due to the working dynamics of the shelter or negligence is also considered abuse (Redondo, Muñoz & Torres Gómez, 1998). This lack of provision of basic needs, in addition to the overcrowding and defenselessness "about arbitrary and abusive measures and procedures by the personnel in terms of unjustified sanctions or limitations" (Fuertes & Fernández del Valle, 2001, p. 48) is known as institutional abuse.

The role of the Educator

One of the most serious deprivations experienced during the institucionalization is the lack of a consistent and responsive caregiver with whom the child can be able to have a healthy and secure attachment (Gribble, 2007) that ensures positive emotional bonds (Barudy, 2005b). This person is also known as significant adult (Barudy, 2005a, Melendro, 2007), alternative adult (Arruabarrena, 2001) or reference person (Bravo & Fernández del Valle, 2009). However, this is not always taken into account by administrators or the judicial system (Barudy, 2005b).

In an assessment carried out to the centers by former residents (García-Barriocanal, De la Herrán & Imaña, 2007), the following aspects were considered positive: the support and good treatment given by the educators, the education received, the similarities among the shelter and

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a family environment, a structured environment with clear rules, and personalized spaces.

For these children in order to get involved in a dynamic of closeness and affection that would help them to establish a long-lasting relationship with their educators, it is necessary to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect (Melendro, 2007). One that is warm and welcoming (Bravo & Fernández del Valle, 2009; Nesmith, 2006) and which facilitates "situations that allow and encourage interpersonal relationships which contribute for cared children to build a positive and true image of themselves" (Cruz, 2009, p. 589). The child or adolescent should feel the value of stability and consistent caregiving from the educator (Papalia, Wendkos & Duskin, 2001). Moreover, they should receive healthy and spontaneous reactions towards their behavior in such a way that he or she is able to make the necessary personal or behavioral adjustments to achieve a rewarding cohabitation that allows him or her to generate, from this point, "new and usable social relation schemes" (Mondragón & Trigueros, 2004, p. 196) for the future.

For some, what makes a person a professional is the training that the person has to carry out the task and a solid formation (Núñez, 1993). When an educator lacks knowledge and the technical resources, "he or she acts (without knowing) as a barrier. The person uses the body instead of an appropriate conceptual framework." (Núñez, 1993, p. 136). Hence, for Petrus (1997, p. 9) an important number of failures in intervention are due to an "inadequate personal training to face social problems". From this, it can be said that one of the future tendencies at a global level is the one related to the changes in terms of personnel, the profession of the workers who care directly for these children, and giving more importance to their continuous professional development (Fernández del Valle & Fuertes, 2007).

In this respect, some countries in Europe and Latin America have made the effort to delimit a capable and well trained professional to care in a direct way for vulnerable groups, which include children, adolescents, and adults (AIEJI, 2007) from an education for life perspective known as "social educator". Associations such as the International Association of Social Educators (AIEJI) founded in Germany more than a century and a half ago and the State Association of Social Education (known in Spanish as ASEDES) in Barcelona, among others, have worked very hard in the creation of a theoretical, methodological, and legal framework for an education intended as "a theory of how the psychological, social, and material conditions and different value orientations promote or hinder the development, growth, quality of life, and the well-being of an individual or group of individuals" (AIEJI, 2005, p. 5), known as *social education* that, according to Camors (2005), it is a "particular perspective of general education" (p. 14).

Social Education

In general terms, Social Education can be thought of as a phenomenon, reality, and profession, while Social Pedagogy is a scientific reflection and discipline (Cruz, 2009) "that considers, conceptualizes, and researches social education" (Ortega, 2005, p. 114).

The Latin American experience of Social Pedagogy and Social Education has not been "able to define and divide "formal" from "non-formal" in its practical setting" (Vélez, 2006, p. 14). The Central European and Germanic influence that these countries have had have been diverse as seen by each of them. One can mention Freire in Brazil in regard to education for emancipation and Ander-Egg in Argentina for socio-cultural animation (Sáez, 2007). Nonetheless, and even though Social Education work has been developing for years, the professionalization and professional recognition of social educators have been more recent.

Gradually, and relatively quickly, the global recommendations and the actions taken to adapt them have reached America. In Mexico, however, educators in children´s shelters do not have a professional recognition (Núñez, 2008). Some of them do not have a higher education degree and, in the best case scenario, they have varied academic backgrounds grouping them by a designation that has to do more with their position in the institutional chart than with the tasks that they perform.

2. Methodology

The general objective of this research work was to conduct a study about the training of educators in children´s shelters and their relationship with the environment and the children´s behavior. The first specific objective was to identify the general characteristics related to the training of educators. The second objective was to determine the characteristics of the environment in each shelter in relation to language and personal satisfaction. The last one was to identify the main behavioral problems of sheltered children. The main hypothesis were: 1) an adequate training for the educator in regard to the boundaries of their roles and responsibilities, as well as their abilities and attitudes will have a direct and positive effect on the institutional environment, and 2) an adequate training for the educator in regard to the

boundaries of their roles and responsibilities, as well as their abilities and attitudes will have a direct and negative effect on the children´s behavioral problems.

2.1. Sample

The research design is non-experimental, cross-sectional, retrospective with 10 independent samples that were taken from 7 private social assistance institutions and 3 public social assistance institutions dedicated to provide shelter for children at risk or living in poverty in Hermosillo, Sonora, in Northwest Mexico. The participants were in two different groups: all educators (117) from the shelters that provide care to children in Hermosillo and one third of the population from each of the shelters. The personnel of each of the institutions vary according to the budget and the number of their beneficiaries. The study considers all social educators that each of the shelters had at the moment of data collection. The average age of educators was 38 with a standard deviation of 10.93. However, in some shelters the average age exceeds 50. Most of the educators (77%) were women and only 27 were men.

The children population in all institutions taken into account in this study concentrated on elementary school; however, it was not exclusive to this school level. The children were also chosen from middle and high school levels with a total of 233 children of both sexes, ages ranging from 5 to 17. With the aim of knowing their behavior in the school environment, the Conners Scale was administered to one of their teachers.

2.2. Data collection instruments

For the training of educators study, an evaluation scale was developed based on the indicators established in the Pedagogy and Social Education White Book (ANECA, 2005) with some modifications. Some of the competences were chosen within the 19 selected by the three profiles that converge in the work done with the children in the shelters: a) Educator in social intervention processes; b) Educator of care institutions and social inclusion and, c) Educator in welcoming and adoption processes. The reason for the reduction of competences was twofold. First, the instrument could not be excessively long due to the time limitations the educators had and, second, those competences are based on the training received in European courses. In Mexico, since there are not Bachelor´s programs with similar characteristics and that current educators have not been trained in them, it is meaningless to try

to evaluate competences. Therefore, only two of the cross-sectional characteristics and a specific one were chosen.

The development of the instrument "Evaluation of the Social Educator Work" (known in Spanish as ELES) was carried out in different stages. The first one was a survey conducted in the ten children´s shelters in Hermosillo. The data collection was done through visits and telephone calls to each of the institutions in which general information was collected in regard to the number of educators, hiring requirements, professional background and training courses taken. Based on this information and the competences proposed by ANECA, the instrument was developed with the following five areas or dimensions:

Attitudes. The scale has 4 items based on the Questionnaire for Teachers (Doménech, Esbrí, González & Miret, 2004) with an internal reliability of .66. The questionnaire is designed to measure the attitudes of the teachers towards children with special education needs due to disability; for that reason, some modifications were made to the items.

Roles. Seven of the Social Educators roles proposed by Aneca (2005) and Vallés (2009) were taken as they were used in the inventory used by Escarbajal (2009) in his Questionnaire Model to measure the objectives of professional performance that reported an alpha of .86.

Perception. Eight items were taken which were used by Escarbajal (2009) in his Questionnaire Model to measure the objectives of professional performance with a reliability of .93.

In a second time, the test was administered to 32 elementary and pre-school teachers from four schools in Hermosillo. The test included the previously mentioned areas and 13 more items with the following dimensions:

Commitment with own identity. It consists of 4 items taken from the Organizational Environment Scale (Franco, 2008) with some modifications and an alpha of .60. The scale used is a Likert type from 0 to 4 where 0 is the same as the previous dimensions.

Abilities. Nine items were taken from the Interpersonal Communication Competences Scale (Rubin & Martin, 1994) with an alpha of .77. The items are designed to measure the abilities of empathy, assertiveness and expressiveness with the same Likert scale.

Environment. Five items were added from the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005) with an alpha from .86 to .90 according to the population to which it is administered. The Language and Reasoning Dimensions were chosen, from

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which half of the items were excluded leaving a total of 2. Four items were taken from the Satisfaction of Needs Dimension to which minor modifications were made with the purpose of measuring the degree of satisfaction that the educator has towards the institution. All items were structured to be measured in a scale from 0 to 6, where 0 corresponds to Inadequate and 6 to Excellent.

The final scale resulted in a self-report instrument of 24 items distributed in two factors: the educator ́s competences factor composed of the abilities, educational responsibilities, administrative responsibilities, attitudes, perception and commitment with own identity, and the education environment factor consisting of the personnel satisfaction of needs, language, and reasoning variables.

The Conners Questionnaire for Teachers was also used in a shortened version (Conners, 2008) from which 9 items were used. Originally, this scale has 28 items and has demonstrated an internal consistency of .87. Each question describes a characteristic behavior that the teacher assessed according to the intensity in which this characteristic is present in a scale of 4 levels where 0 corresponds to nothing, 1 to little, 2 to sufficient, and 3 to very much.

2.3. Procedure

In each of the institutions an interview was carried out in order to request permission to conduct the study and explain the objectives. The educators set up a time and place to individually answer the Scales ́s questions, which took them around 25 minutes.

For the evaluation of the children ́s behavior, one third of the population of each institution was selected randomly. The Conners Scale for each child was answered by one of his or her teachers and took 15 minutes to complete. A total of 20 schools were visited. All of them were informed about the objective of the research and were asked for their informed consent and were told that they could leave the questionnaire unanswered at any time if they felt any of the questions was inappropriate. The instruments were administered by a student in the Educational Innovation Master Program.

2.4. Data analysis

Using the SPSS Statistics software package, univariate analyses were carried out which included mean and standard deviation for the continuous variables, frequencies for the categorical variables, and Cronbach alphas to determine its reliability (internal consistency). With the purpose of grouping the variables, indexes were created with the average of each item of the scales included in the study.

As a final step, a structural equation analysis was carried out. In order to determine the appropriateness of the proposed model, goodness of fit indicators were used. Two indicators were used in this study: the statistical *Chi Squared* (X^2) and the practical indicators. X^2 determines the difference between the proposed model and an inclusive model. If the hypothetical model is relevant, the X^2 will have a low non-significant value (p>.05). The practical indicators derive from X^2 and are the Bentler-Bonnett nonnormed fit Index (BBNNFI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) that have an acceptable minimum of .90. The Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) must have a value lower than .08.

3. Interpretation of results

Even when 42% (of a total of 50) of the educators have technical careers or Bachelor Degrees related to their jobs in the shelters, only 38% of them have academic degrees that are directly related to providing care to children. The rest have Bachelor degrees in Law, Nursing, and Social Work.

Although only 4 of the shelters are mixed-sex institutions, they have the largest population (67.9%), therefore, from a total of 233 children, 104 are girls, even when 4 institutions take care of boys exclusively and only 2 institutions take care of girls only. The greatest concentration of children is in elementary school (83.5%) with an average age of 10 and a standard deviation of 2.8.

Table 1 shows the alphas of the scales and the means and standard deviations for each of the items of the ELES Scale.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis and frequency of ELES administered to Educators				
Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Alpha
Attitudes				.39
My warm behavior towards children promotes their development.	116	3.83	.40	
Children in the shelter have no ability to learn.	117	3.67	.79	
The children cannot face the challenges posed by the social system.	115	2.63	1.49	
Social integration benefits children in the shelter.	115	3.70	.80	
Educational Roles				.62
Educational	117	3.50	1.03	
Informative, counseling, orienting.	115	3.64	.77	
Entraintainment and group dynamics.	115	3.74	.72	
Administrative Functions				.86
Organization, planning, programming, development and evaluation.	113	1.22	1.64	
Management and administration.	115	.37	1.00	
Relation with other institutions.	113	.71	1.35	
Curriculum development.	115	1.06	1.59	
Commitment to own identity				.46
I feel my work is well accepted by my coworkers.	117	3.49	.83	
I tell my family and friends how much I like my job.	115	3.65	.81	
I feel that belonging to this area of work gives me something more than just money.	116	3.90	.30	
I believe that my coworkers and I feel identified with our area of work.	117	3.68	.67	
Interpersonal Skills				.67
I really do not understand what others feel.	116	3.50	.91	
I have problems standing up for myself.	116	3.28	1.33	
I have problems finding the right words to express myself.	117	2.98	1.42	
I have good verbal communication	117	3.56	.83	
Perception of Modifying the Child´s Development				.65
Preventing and compensating for social adaptation dificulties in children.	117	3.59	.84	
Foster children´s autonomy.	117	3.55	.86	
Foster children´s participation.	117	3.71	.72	
Foster socio-cultural, socio-labor, institutional, and community development.	116	3.48	1.00	
Perception of Modifying Child´s Competences.				.63
Assisting in strengthening the search of information and understanding the social environment of children.	117	3.47	.97	

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Table 1. Reliability Analysis and frequency of ELES administered to Educators				
Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Alpha
Develop a critical mind, a comprehension ability and reality analysis of children.	117	3.49	.93	
Improve the competences and attitudes of children.	117	3.65	.75	
Language and Reasoning				.91
Encouraging children to communicate is:	116	4.47	1.34	
Using the language to develop basic thinking is:	114	4.14	1.61	
Personal Satisfaction				.84
The willingness of the personnel to care for individual needs is:	116	3.99	1.71	
The support for the professional needs of the personnel is:	115	3.68	1.89	
The opportunities of growth and having a professional career within the institution are:	115	3.43	1.92	

The results of the application of the Evaluation of the Social Educator Work showed a reliability of .80 (table 1). Even when the alphas of the two dimensions reported in the ELES application were lower than .60, it was decided to keep them.

The alphas in the Conners Scale are shown in table 2. As it can be observed, they are all higher than .60.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis and frequency of Conners for teachers				
Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Alpha
Aggressiveness				*.91*
Behaves arrogantly.	232	,92	.99	
Has unpredictable, bad temper outbursts.	232	1.03	1.05	
Has an angry unsocial look.	232	.78	.86	
Argues and fights for anything.	232	1.08	1.07	
Does not accept well the teacher´s indications.	232	.90	1.01	
Oppositional Behavior				*.74*
The child is impulsive and irritable.	231	,98	1.03	
Denies his/her mistakes or blames others.	231	1.12	1.06	
Learning Problems				*.80*
His/her efforts are easily frustrated, he/she is inconstant.	233	1.00	1.03	
Has academic learning problems.	233	1.16	1.11	

Figure 1 shows the results of the model. It can be observed that the Institutional Environment factor consisting of the language and reasoning variables with a .56 factor loading and personal satisfaction (PF = .58) had a direct and negative influence on the child´s behavior problems which

was observed on a structure coefficient of -.34. The Educator´s competences consisted on six of the seven assessed dimensions: a) educational responsibilities (factor loading = .75); b) abilities (PF = .47); c) attitudes (PF = .38); d) commitment to own identity (PF = .51); e) perception to modify the child´s development (PF = .89), and f) perception to modify the child´s competences (PF = .95) and had a direct and positive influence (structure coefficient = .30) on the Institutional Environment. However, the effect is indirect and negative on the Behavioral Problems through the Institutional Environment Factor since the direct relationship was not significant.

The goodness of fit indicators were appropriate; the CFI and BBNNFI values were higher than .90, the BBNFI was .89 and the RMSEA value was .07. The *Chi Squared* value was 122 based on 61 degrees of freedom and an associated probability of .00. The R^2 of the model was .11, which means that the model predicts 11% of the variance of the dependent variable, that is, of the Educator´s Competences.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The objective was to evaluate the effects of the training of educators in children´s shelters with the environment and children´s behavior. Contrary to what was expected, the training (which was operationalized as the Educator´s Competences factor) seems not to affect the child´s behavior in a direct way. Nonetheless, and according with theory, it is affected in an indirect way through the environment within the shelters, the educator´s training directly affects the environment and, in turn, the children´s behavior. This relationship between the environment and the behavior can be explained with the contribution of Cuevas del Real (2003) when the environment is referred to as a contextual factor associated to the onset of anti-social behavior, in which the context consisting of the personnel and the environment is proposed as a risk factor. It must be kept on mind that the ambiguity of the role of the educator has an influence on professional stress. The lack of clarity of tasks and responsibilities limits and the institution´s resource limits may influence the environment in a positive or negative way through the satisfaction of the personnel´s needs (Fernández-Millán, Hamido & Fernández-Nava, 2008).

In relation to the first hypothesis in which it was expected that the educator´s training had a direct and positive effect on the institutional environment, it was verified with the results of the study. However, in relation to the second hypothesis in which it was expected that the adequate training of the educator had a negative effect on the behavioral problems of the children, a direct relation was not found, but an indirect relation through the environment was in fact found.

The findings about the training of educators are consistent with Núñez (1993) when she states that the administration of shelters hire people with different professional backgrounds, or even without a professional profile. Nonetheless, 36.6 percent of educators have more than 5 years of employment seniority. This is, in a way, formative. One must just remember that the beginning of social education was practical more than a theoretical reflection (Sáez, 2007) and that the first educators were volunteers or professionals in need of training for such task (Fermoso, 1999).

The roles were considered one of the most important abilities of the Social Educator since the delimitations done from it defines the professional profile and the rest of the competences required (Vallés, 2009). Even though several authors list different and multiple roles for the Educators according to their area and population intervention, the ones chosen were the ones considered general for the roles performed in areas studied in this research. The Educators, however, indicated that their roles are more related to administrative functions. This may be due to the fact that in the shelters with more population of educators, there is a different type of personnel (educators, psychologists, or the director of the Institution) in charge of management, the relation with other institutions and the development of programs. While in small shelters the same educators must take care of all the other areas of the house (from academic matters to cleaning and the kitchen). Although the majority of the educators agree that their roles are educational, when answering the questions many of them mentioned that they do not feel as educators, but as caregivers. They have the idea that their job is to ensure that the children have their basic needs met but not to educate them continuously; they attribute such job to other professionals related to the children, which is reflected in the environment of the shelter. This is contrary to what some authors argue (Cruz, 2009; Fernández del Valle & Fuertes, 2007) since in the case of the shelters in Hermosillo, the intervention model does not seem to be changing from an assistance one to an educational one.

The commitment to own identity is one of the proposed cross-sectional competences by ANECA (2005). This ability helps the educator to "recognize and value him or herself as professional who provides a service to the community" (p. 146) and who cares for its continuous professional development. The educators, when answering

about their identity, report to feel identified with their jobs, that they do it more to receive an altruistic incentive than a monetary one, and that they feel that they are appreciated by their coworkers. However, during conversations that took place previously and subsequently to the application of the Scale, more than half agreed to feel little considered by their superiors in relation to the managing and decision making of the children´s lives, and also felt little appreciated and that they do not feel they are adequately remunerated economically or emotionally by the institution. This is not consistent with the results of the Scale application, but it is more related to what Cruz (2009) states in her study in which educators showed feelings of undervaluation, distress, and lack of protection, much of which originated in the lack of specific training. Coinciding with Ayerbe (2000), Educators showed stagnation, lack of promotion perspectives, and lack of self-confidence, all of which are mentioned as a result of a lack of professional identity and which can impact the quality of the environment.

Among the answers that need to have special attention are the ones related to attitude since the majority does not believe that the children in the Shelters have the ability to learn or that they are able to face the challenges posed by the social system. This can be harmful for their job performance because one of the basic characteristics of this type of personnel is acceptance of people and the belief that there is a need for social change (Touza & Segura, 2001). Without mentioning that educational work is linked to the ideology with which the educator interprets reality (Cruz, 2009) and that the type of relation that he or she develops with the children will depend on the image they have of him or herself (Melendro, 2007). It is important to note that between 40% and 44% of the educators who expressed a lack of belief in the children´s capacity were the ones that had Bachelor Degrees or technical careers related to education. Those who did not judge them that way were the educators who studied up to elementary school. This is consistent with the idea that a professional formation does not guarantee an adequate social educational work (Santibañez, 1999). It is worth mentioning that most of the educators with the least professional training have the most seniority in the institutions. Those with professional training were hired more recently.

Two different aspects can be observed. First, during the course of time, institutions started to hire educators with more professional training according to international recommendations (Gobierno de Brasil, 2007; UNICEF, 2009a) and later, they did it to attend to national recommendations as well (Cámara de Diputados, 2009; Castro, 1996; CEDH, 2006). Second, one might think that, since the educators with the least professional formation have more seniority, they also have more experience of successful stories of children that they have cared for. This will allow them to have a more positive attitude towards them; however, this hypothesis is open for future research.

Interpersonal abilities are also a cross-sectional competence defined, in general, as "the ability to positively relate to other people" (ANECA, 2005, p. 145) through empathy and assertive expression, both important to enable a relationship of trust and to build affective bonds with the children (García-Barriocanal, et al., 2007). As it can be observed in table 1, most Educators have problems to show empathy, and from these, more than 40% were educators with Bachelor Degrees associated to this job. This is a problem since inadequate communication is one of the characteristics that Cuevas del Real (2003) defines as institutional violence. It is also one of the elements that the social educator must possess in order to facilitate an appropriate interaction with the children (Redondo et al., 1998) and their adequate process of emotional adjustment (Gobierno de Brasil, 2007; Vallés, 2009).

A high percentage of educators stated that they did not understand what other people felt. This is an important finding since the sensitivity that the educator has to become aware of the needs of children, he or she can perceive and alleviate the challenging behavior, and even anti-social behavior of children (Cuevas del Real, 2003). In addition, an emotional implication helps establishing bonds that make a lasting impression (AIE-JI, 2005). Not to mention that the lack of social abilities in educators, as well as the managing of own emotional life interferes with the child and adolescent´s ability to develop appropriate relationships in the future (Booth, Spieker, Bernard & Morisset, 1992).

Most of the educators consider that the shelter does promote communication in the children and uses language to develop their thinking skills. This reinforces Mondragón and Trigueros´ belief (2004) when they state that the evolutionary potential of an environment increases when participation is allowed and encouraged in educators as well as in children. A healthy environment might be a factor that reduces the appearance of behavior disorders in children (March, 2007).

The personnel satisfaction indicator was believed to be important since some specialists consider that inadequate working conditions may have a negative effect in the development of educational practice (Cruz, 2009). This situation may

make the environment unwelcoming and children vulnerable (Melendro, 2007). Educators also need to feel respected in their working places and their needs, as well as their difficulties and achievements recognized (Barudy & Dantagnan, 2005). In the end, this is what will prevent professional strain and the indirect effects that these could have in children. Most of the educators described the willingness of the institution to meet their individual needs as Good to Excellent.

The fact that the educators regard the institutional environment as more than good could explain the reason why there were relatively few behavioral problems in the children found. It cannot be said that this data matches the findings of other studies because there is no reference of the sheltered children´s behavior of previous years. Neither did this study analyzed emotional problems or criminal behavior. However, this data can be used as reference for future research.

It is important to remember that this population, due to its characteristics, arrived to the institution with a lower academic adjustment, deficiencies in their social skills, post-traumatic stress disorder, damaged self-esteem, aggressiveness, among others (Gómez, 1996; Gaxiola & Frías, 2008). The training of educators and mainly their specialization becomes more urgent in order for them to, not only contain challenging behavior, but also prevent it and correct it.

The profession of the social educator reflects its own history (Vallés, 2009). It did in Germany, Spain, and does it in Latin America. The results of this study are proof of this since the specialization of the educator in this area of education does not come from the universities, but from the practice of hundreds of people willing to learn to educate and care for institutionalized children and adolescents. They also indicate that the shelters have limited staff, of old age, and with minimal academic preparation. In addition, as a result of this study it was found that the educators' population is not distributed evenly in relation to gender since there are more women than men.

Since Social Pedagogy is considered a reflection and scientific discipline (Cruz, 2009), the opinion of the researchers of this science, as it has happened when introduced in South American countries, is that it will be enriched when operated as a theoretical apparatus on which the work of the professionals will be supported; professionals who have years of experience but that up to this moment have not been recognized. Once Mexican educators have the needed educational foundations to continue performing their jobs in the children's shelters, they will be able to be recognized as such and not just as caregivers. From this point, they are going to be able to contribute to Social Pedagogy the wealth of knowledge learned during their years of experience and analyzed by means of an appropriate theoretical framework.

Although this study did not go deeper in all competences suggested by ANECA, their study and deepening as content of a training course for educators is suggested. We support the idea that these educators could have more tools for the effective performance of their jobs being trained in an educational theory (AIEJI, 2005; ANECA, 2005; Sáez, 2005), possibly through the creation of a Bachelor Degree in Social Education or postgraduate academic degree.

In this study, all types of shelters were included in just one category; it is recognized that these variables could have influenced the results. The time the children stay in the shelters was not taken into account either because some shelters register re-entries as first admission, which does not allow having the actual statistical data. Despite all this, it is consider that all initial research objectives were attained. The characteristics of training of educators, as well as the children´s behavior, and the way in which training and the environment affect such behavior were identified. In the interest of improving educational work in the shelters, the results of this study allow establishing the need to continue conducting research that answers all pending questions.

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