Parents and schools that grow in the 21st century

**Padres y escuelas que hacen crecer en el siglo XXI**

**Abstract**

The University Pontificia of Salamanca a few years ago has offered a program of parental training for families who come to the Master of clinical intervention of Logopedia, by teacher Dolores Rivas Serrat. Children with disorders in language and development receive speech-language intervention. Parents participate in a training program every week and the children receive educational guidance, intervention in learning problems and study support. Some of the issues addressed between parents and education professionals are covered in this article and have to do with changes in the Spanish family, new family models or lack of authority in educational relationships established in the family And at school. The work we do is developed through a parent school. This methodology is indispensable in the family formation processes. They are privileged spaces of participation and learning, constitute an adequate methodology for educators, counselors and other professionals of education. Pedagogy, as normative science, explains the most adequate family models, the risks of certain educational styles or the importance of authority in family-school relations. These are some of the conclusions that we have reached and which we set out below.

**Keywords:** school of parents, family models, co-responsibility, educational problems, coexistence in school, crisis of authority.

**Resumen**

Desde hace unos años, la Universidad Pontificia Salamanca ofrece un programa de formación parental a las familias que acuden al Master de intervención Clínica de Logopedia, dirigido por la profesora Dolores Rivas Serrat. Los niños que presentan algún trastorno en la adquisición y desarrollo del lenguaje reciben intervención logopédica. El trabajo que desarrollamos a través de un modelo de escuela de padres es indispensable en el proceso de formación familiar. Son espacios privilegiados de participación y aprendizaje, constituyen un adecuado método para profesionales de educación. La pedagogía, como ciencia normativa, explica los modelos familiares más adecuados, los riesgos de ciertos estilos educativos o la importancia del autoritarismo en las relaciones familia-escuela. Estos son algunos de los conclusiones que hemos alcanzado y que exponemos a continuación.

**Keywords:** escuela de padres, modelos familiares, co-responsabilidad, problemas educativos, coexistencia en el aula, crisis de autoridad.
1. Introduction

For five years, the Universidad Pontificia Salamanca has offered a School of Parents program. Once a week, parents come together to voice some concerns about raising and educating their children. After the school day, in the afternoon, the children attend to receive support in the accomplishment of the school tasks, educational orientation or reinforcement in problems related to the learning.

The article includes some reflections about the new family models, childhood as a scarce good or the initiatives that some schools develop to improve coexistence. These are some of the contents that we discussed during the 2015-2016 academic year.

Using the school of parents’ methodology, we intend to improve parental work in the costly family educational task, to involve children in educational co-responsibility, to offer a first-class educational resource to the students and to recover the value of parents’ schools as privileged spaces of expression and training for families.

2. Some changes in the Spanish family

At the end of the sixties of last century, the western family underwent diverse changes. Alongside the so-called nuclear family, other forms of family emerged, including single-parent families and reconstituted families. Its importance was due not only to the increase in the number of families with these characteristics. The deep reasons had to be found in the incorporation of women to the workforce and in the new de facto ties. These causes, among many others, slowed the formation of nuclear families and new family models spread throughout European society. Today we find many types of family, and they are all different. One could mention families without children, families with adopted children, families formed by pairs without marital or same-sex pairs, as well as single-parent, reconstructed or transnational families (Martí, 2016).

If there is such a diversity of families, and none is equal to another, we must ask what minimum conditions should be given in each one of them. On the other hand, it has been found that, however different, they can perform their duties well. Another thing is, that the normative sciences tell us which family models are the most adequate, especially when there are minor children to deal with.

The presence of one or more adults and the ability to create family ties are two indispensable conditions. The presence of more than one adult does not ensure that the family situation is the most favorable or equitable. But, being more than one adult is a great relief for parents and the possibility of creating situations of reciprocity.

As regards the second issue, as Félix López (2008) has studied, all families, however diverse,
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can fulfill the functions assigned to them as family, but are less vulnerable and, more enriched, if there are more than one adult and more than one child. In fact, the most favorable family structures are those that have several adult caregivers and several siblings. This context, which provides support to families, is also changing. For example, family studies in Spain in 2016 provide some data. The Family Policy Institute (hereafter IPF) underlined the increase in single-parent families. In this same sense, the National Institute of Statistics also tells us that the number of households formed by two people, in which single-parent families are found, already exceeds by 19% the households formed by three people that is located in the 21.0%.

In the midst of this situation we wonder if the family will be able to take care of the functions that traditionally had played. If society changes, we cannot ask the family to carry out the same old responsibilities, with less personal and material resources.

In addition to these very diverse realities, we must add the difficulties that arise as a result of the limited help and protection of the family: “The family in Spain is currently a family without children, with solitary homes, with fewer marriages and more broken, with families increasingly unsatisfied by the lack of reconciliation of their work and family life” (IPF, 2016). The report notes “a direct relationship between the aggravation of the family problem and the low support and protection to the family, so that in those countries where a comprehensive family support policy has been applied its indicators have improved”. In fact, when families do not find these resources, the daily Heraldo (2017) points out, they put in place other initiatives such as the containment of consumption or, as stated in the newspaper (2017), ecological saving initiatives are implemented.

The family in the 21st century seems unprotected. This is clear from the results of the Family Policy Institute’s report of 2015 on the family. From other forums, voices such as that of Ricardo Martí Fluxá (2016) point to some of the strategies that can help sustain the family institution, such as guaranteeing its economic sustainability, facilitating access to basic services or creating frameworks that favor reconciliation between work and family.

The family can be the social area where the greatest contrasts and contradictions happen. But its contribution to the construction of personal identity, socialization processes, psychosocial adjustment of the children, the transmission of values or academic performance has been amply demonstrated (Santos, 2015). However, there are parents who are unable to exercise their authority. The lack of energy, constancy, serenity, reflection of decisions according to their circumstances, lack of resistance to adversity are limitations that do not help the exercise of authority or otherwise exceed their use.

Families who help grow up are grateful to those who preceded them, question their surroundings, fulfill their children’s education, trust them, and support them in the moments when they need them most. They are families that face difficulties with love, “because the certainty of knowing oneself loved makes us invulnerable.”

The family, says Alfonso Díez, “can be our refuge or the place where we feel most helpless; the environment in which love, generosity, understanding, forgiveness, good education ... or the most violent passions and hostilities are learned and developed; the most bitter conflicts, the most unhealthy rivalries, the most unsupportive selfishness and bad education.”

3. A country without children

More than fourteen years ago, sociologist Gosta Esping-Andersen wrote The Welfare State in the 21st Century. It was an article that anticipated how in the next decades Spain would be a country without children. In the year 2004 it was immersed in a process of adaptation to the new economic and social realities. Already in the late 80’s, the graphical representation of the Spanish
population was a great pyramid in regression. Esping-Andersen described what would happen, and, most importantly, he detailed how social risk would occur at an earlier age trapping young families with children. The familiar models that would arise would be different and would require resources very different from those that exist today.

It is impossible to think about the development of countries without a permanent, sufficient and quality investment in the areas related to children, as can be seen in several reports such as the The protection of children against poverty (Save the Children, 2013); The State of the World’s Children, prepared by Unicef in 2014; Childhood in Spain (Unicef, 2014) or The VII Report on exclusion and social development in Spain (Fundación Foessa, 2014).

Unicef titles precisely one of the chapters of the report quoted above with the following question: Towards a country without children? Among the many conclusions, there is one that we forget easily: children are very important, because they acquire a value that goes beyond the family, are not only a matter of their parents, but of the whole society.

The discovery of the child as a substantially different being from the adult (paidocentrism), and childhood as a stage of differentiated life, childhood as a social group, arises in the eighteenth century thanks to the contribution of Rousseau and his work Emile. Up to that time, the child was considered a project of man, who was educated to enter, as soon as possible, to be part of adult life, not as a being with their own needs and interests, completely different, to those of the adult.

Experts talk about how profitable it is to invest in children. So in terms of cost-effectiveness, it is already known that for every dollar invested in the fight against child malnutrition, profits can reach up to 16 dollars.

4. Coexistence, school and authority

All these changes come to the school where, according to reports, teachers and students express that one of the problems that most concerns are those related to indiscipline, disruptive behavior and, in some cases, aggression. During 2015 the calls due to harassment and violence in Spain increased 75% over the previous year. Unesco acknowledges school bullying as a global problem, as expressed in its study called Putting an end to torture: how to tackle bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace. Two out of every ten pupils suffer, which is to say that 246 million young people (children and adolescents) from all over the world suffer from this harassment.

The Ombudsman produced the document Violencia escolar en la Educación Secundaria (1999-2006). It was one of the first and most detailed studies to be drawn up in Spain on harassment and violence among adolescents of compulsory school age, whose definitive study was published in full in 2007. Among many other issues reference was made to the reactions of the students and the responses of the teaching staff. All agreed to underline the loss of authority. Parents and teachers explained that inappropriate behavior began in the family context. “Teachers think they have lost authority, while violence and indiscipline in schools has increased. The teachers and parents attribute to the family context more responsibility than any other, in the appearance of inappropriate behavior in students."

In 2008, the report of the Ombudsman for Catalonia recommended that schools “give classroom discipline the instrumental value that corresponds to it! And “to establish the minimum standards essential for the smooth running of the group”. To carry out this study, they interviewed 1200 first and fourth ESO (Obligatory Secondary Education) students from nine secondary schools. The same students demanded a teaching staff close to them and with authority.
In the same year, the Observatory for School Coexistence was part of a study that was completed in 2011. The sample comprised 23,100 students, 6,175 teachers and 10,786 families. Twenty-one percent of teachers stated that what most wore them down was lack of discipline in the classroom. Fifty-eight percent of families said teachers had lost authority. According to these results, Mª José Díaz Aguado, Professor of Educational Psychology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and director of the study, commented that the problem was no longer classroom-specific but of society as a whole.

Likewise, in 2015 a report on the state of the education system included the policies of some autonomous communities, and stated the actions of 16 autonomous school councils. Among them we highlight the initiatives of Aragon, Galicia and Andalusia for their relationship with the coexistence in the classroom, the authority of teachers and the project of School of Families.

The Autonomous Community of Aragon proposed to strengthen the teaching function and the authority of the teaching staff. A good part of the Aragonese professors demanded power to impose the order, capacity to sanction and to expel from the classroom or the center to the most difficult students. The origin of many of the problems are due to lack of discipline, lack of values, deterioration of families and insufficient recognition of the figure of the teacher.

The educational policy of Galicia has very present the notion to promote a climate that favors school coexistence and the existence of centers specialized in mediation. Many schools in Gaul are involved in European programs linked to the improvement of coexistence, such as the ARBAX (Against Racial Bullying and Xenophobia) Program.

Finally, the Junta de Andalusia promotes the involvement of parents from AMPA and School Councils. It also has created an electronic portal called School of Families. The purpose is to bring the school and the learning processes closer to the family environment. This website is open to all parents, is organized by educational stages, includes participation sections, responses to specific educational needs and other topics of interest. For pointing out some of the actions, we mentioned the figure of parents as classroom delegates, which is also applied in other communities such as Castilla y León.

Hannah Arendt stated more than 50 years ago this lack of authority in education. For the author, the problem of education had its origin in the crisis of authority. "Education could not leave aside either authority or tradition.

In education, authority was always accepted as a natural imperative, both for reasons of child protection, and for reasons of preserving the continuity of cultural heritage "(Sanabria, 2009).

According to Arendt, the modern questioning of forms of authority in the political led to question the forms of educational authority that govern the link between parents and children or teachers and students. This fact gives us an idea of the seriousness and depth of the crisis in education.

Perhaps the problem comes because the meaning of the concept of authority has been misunderstood. In our country, the term has remained closely linked to a political model that seems not to have been overcome.

At times, students deliberately act to be recognized as different. They test the authority of teachers and that is where they can act with authority or resort to their power. The deeper meaning of discipline has little to do with the application of punishment or with authoritarian rule.

Etymologically authority comes from auge- which means “to make grow”. Carlos Diez (1998) explains the concept of authority that links the word bienquerer (to desire the well-being of others):

(...) who knows how to give you his/her affection becomes for you authority, a word that comes from the Latin verb augere (hence boom and held up), whose perfect past is auxi
(from which derives auxiliary, to help) and whose supine is auctum (Authoritative) from which authority already arises. It is only desirable that authority that helps, the one who serves, the one who holds up, the one who raises you on its own shoulders; this will not prevent her/he from being able to tell you in a prudential moment a hard word, but without fuss or hysteria, with good manners, though firmly (p, 28).

In this year 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Lorenzo Milani. It is difficult to think of Milani and not recognize him as a figure of authority. How else would the kids go to school on Sunday? Milani, moreover, said that the essential thing in the experience of teaching was starting from oneself. The secret of his school was the love of the students themselves and personal and concrete love for their environment and vital context. In the letter to Nadia Neri on January 7, 1966, he claimed that he had lost his head after a few dozen children and that he lived by them; and in another letters openly confessed that he loved his students in a total and radical way (Manara, 2016). A few guitar chords start the song that Alejandro Baldi dedicated to Lorenzo Milani. It is titled I care. Two words written in the small classroom of the school of Barbiana are a statement: I care, I care. The students of Barbiana were able to read it daily in the school that made them grow.

5. Parental training

Parents often feel tired because they find it very difficult to reconcile work, parenting and family life. If there are also school problems related to learning, coexistence, misuse of new technologies, lack of respect or situations of harassment, they may feel overwhelmed.

Parent schools are an indispensable methodology in family training processes. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, to the present, they have developed according to one of these five trends: academic school, proselytizing, group, participatory or bureaucratic. With the passage of time the name of parent school has changed for others, such as parental training programs such as ASOCED. Even so, the purpose for which they arose remains unchanged. There are strong reasons that support them: they are privileged spaces for participation and learning, they constitute an adequate methodology for educators, counselors and other professionals of education.

Not all parents accept the need for lifelong learning. At times, they are considered definitively trained for the educational task. But there are needs that will never be completely covered, even if only for keeping up to date, knowing the society in which they live and that imperatively conforms to their children.

We cannot say that many parents are not trained or do not have the resources to carry out the educational task. On the contrary, the educational task is so blurred, that sometimes parents cannot approach it with certainty.

Initially it was authoritarian security: one knew very well what one wanted and also how to achieve it. One had a history of generations that had wanted and accomplished the same thing. And one even appealed to that factor of wisdom that could magically carry with it the simple fact of becoming parents. Values and, above all, clear, indisputable principles (ASOCED, 2013).

Some educational decisions are conditioned by a society that does not guarantee ethical values. If the values of the welfare society were success, pleasure, immediacy or comfort; the values of society in crisis remain the same, what has changed is how to reach them.

In the first formative sessions the parents express that they are in a sea of doubts because they have to face choices that seem to be contradictory: Do I educate my child to be competitive or supportive? Do I pass on the value of the savings, or do I insist on living day to day? How do we tell them that the future is important if everything around us is a Carpe diem ?. I demand them and I do not one slip, and then I see that other parents let them do everything. And mine are carried away!
I can no longer tell you that things are achieved with effort because they always find examples that take the argument away from me. In this social context, the tendency to delegate responsibilities prevails, because among all of us we have created a society of rights, of demands, without the corresponding correlation of duties. As Moratalla (1993) says, parents and educators should not give up “in the teaching of things that deserve to be preserved, of what is valuable and, what is not,” independently of social trends or fashions. It is so insistently that children should be autonomous, have critical reasoning, and decide on their own, but we forget to ask ourselves about what and how they acquire it.

6. Conclusions

Consequently one of the premises is to review the educational styles with which parents are identified, and the models that follow in the educational process of their children. Parents are concerned about how to keep daily the basic rules to meet daily responsibilities, whether school or out-of-school. These norms are indispensable for personal and family functioning; and consequently help to create habits that facilitate the good progress of each and every member of the family. But above all, the pedagogical horizon of our task must start from a reflection of the educational changes that have happened in a very short time, to clarify the education that we want for our children in the society of the 21st century.

Thus we could point out some basic recommendations that have been addressed in our program:

1. Family life is governed by basic rules. The parents must establish and prioritize the necessary rules according to the age of the children and the moment in which the family is. They must be important, realistic and adapted to each child.
2. Family obligations should be exercised through co-responsibility. The family belongs to everyone. Everyone can collaborate and perform one of the many family tasks, from the smallest to the oldest. And if we go wrong, we know that we have the option to try again.
3. Authority is a necessary requirement in the exercise of paternity. Parents want their children to grow. It is an authority that is imposed with appreciation and respect. Because the relationship between parents and children is an unequal relationship; If it were not so, it would cease to be a paternal-filial relationship.
4. The family, as a group united by close ties, meets many requirements to strengthen the people who belong to it. The family holds us in the face of adversity. Things do not happen as we want, but our attitude can help us deal with life with integrity.
5. Value and appreciate those around us. They are our greatest fortune.
6. Recognize our mistakes. An “I have been wrong, sorry” can be very effective.
7. Stay informed, aware of what is happening today and that can affect our children. Parental training programs provide tools for these challenges.
8. It is convenient to appreciate the work done by other educational institutions. Education is not limited to the family. As children grow, educational relationships are expanded: school, peer groups, school or extracurricular activities.
9. Parents should support the teacher’s decisions. Teachers or pedagogues are professionals in education. Teachers teach our children, and teaching is an important part of education. If our children observe that we value and support their decisions, they will learn to respect and value community life. First in their school, then in the society of which they are part.
10. We want to emphasize two essential characteristics in the educational process of our children: optimism and hope. Education...
requires enthusiasm. You cannot educate with pessimism or hopelessness. Neither of these two qualities inhabits childhood. That is why Fernando Savater (2008) says:

As educators we have no choice but to be optimistic, alas! (...) Because to educate is to believe in human perfectibility, in the innate capacity to learn and in the desire to know that encourages, in that there are things (symbols, techniques, values, memories, facts ...) that can Be known and deserve to be, in which men can improve one another by means of knowledge. Of these entire optimistic beliefs one can very well disclose in private, but as soon as he tries to educate or understand what education consists of, there is no choice but to accept them. With real pessimism it can be written against education, but optimism is essential to study it ... and to exercise it. Pessimists can be good tamers but not good teachers (pp. 18-19).

Notes

1. Single-parent families in 2016 already reach 68%. IPF (2016). Evolution of the family in Spain 2016. p. 26. The report on the evolution of the family in Spain in the year 2014 already indicated the vacancy that was occurring in households with a figure of 2.5 members per household. Households are increasingly lonely and there are fewer children: 8.3 million households (44%) have no children. It was also forecast that by 2025 there would be only two members per household. IPF (2014). Family Development Report in Spain 2014, p. 6.

2. On 1 July 2015 the UN Human Rights Council approved an historic resolution in favor of the family. The text, which did not go unnoticed, called for the recognition of the family as the fundamental nucleus of society, as the place where children grow up and are educated and, therefore, deserving of special protection by the State. It acknowledged with concern the growing vulnerability to which the family is exposed. “Conditions have worsened for many families due to economic and financial crises, lack of job security, temporary employment and lack of regular income and paid employment, as well as measures taken by governments which seek to balance their budget by reducing social spending.” (Retrieved from http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/d_res_dec/A_HRC_29_L25.docx).

3. It should be noted how Pope Francis in Amoris Laetitia gathers biblical references that break the life of the family. His reading helps us to see how throughout history there have been family tensions because love relationships can become relations of power and domination. Cf., Francis, Pope. Amoris Laetitia: post-synodal apostolic exhortation on love in the family. Madrid: BAC, 2016, pp. 17-19.

Bibliographical references


