

Psychological Issues in Education and Health

Proceedings of the 1st Scientific Meeting in
Psychology of the University of Evora and the
University of Leipzig,

Evora, 13th May, 2016.

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Berichte aus der Psychologie

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Mental Health & Learning

School failure from a psychological point of view

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Abstract

School failure is an educational problem with multiple causes at different levels. In spite of a set of measures applied by educational agencies during many years, it remains a major problem in Portugal and in other countries, due to a variety of factors. The problem has social and political dimensions and consequently several solutions have been proposed. Nevertheless, solutions must take into account the individual level. This paper analyzes the contribution of Psychology to understand and propose solutions for individual children. A project is presented in which Applied Behavior Analysis techniques are applied to train 6-12 years old children with academic difficulties of very different origins. Training programs for Basic Behavior (precurrents), Social Behavior and Academic Behavior are explained. Results are evaluated in terms of % of attained objectives, time, and (subjective) teachers' satisfaction.

Keywords: Applied Behavior Analysis, disadvantaged children, school failure, academic problems.

School failure is a major problem in Portugal and in many countries, including some of the most developed nations in Europe. For instance, in a study about the topic in Spain, Fernandez, Mena & Riviere (2010) note that in the Spanish school the proportion of children who repeated during primary education is 15 % of the total (18% boys and 12% girls) with rates of repetition of 2.3 percent in the first cycle (which in Spain includes the first two years of primary school), which means for many children the beginning of a long way of failures in their life. There are several definitions of school failure (see for instance Fernandez, Mena & Riviere, 2010, p. 18 and Faubert, 2012, p.4). Some of these definitions stress the role of the educational system, others the achievement of the child.

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