

Analysis of Primary School Teachers' Opinions on Family Diversity

Análisis de ideas de docentes de educación primaria sobre diversidad familiar

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Received on 16-04-16

Approved on 17-08-16


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How to cite:

Capano, A., Massonnier N., & González, M. (2016). Analysis of Primary School Teachers' Opinions on Family Diversity. *Propósitos y Representaciones*, 4(2). 15-69. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20511/pyr2016.v4n2.119>

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Summary

This article aims to do an analysis based on the opinion of primary school teachers on family models that are different from the traditional nuclear family. We worked with 60 teachers from Montevideo and the metropolitan area. They answered the Questionnaire: Teachers' Opinion on Family Diversity (CIDF for its Spanish acronym) (Morgado, Jimenez-Lagares & Gonzalez, 2009). The data indicate that teachers do not share a homogeneous point of view regarding the different household types. Adoptive families, divorced parents families, and single-parent families headed by single mothers had a better acceptance among teachers than homoparental families or those headed by single fathers. Items related to homoparental families were answered by fewer people. Teachers with postgraduate education were more tolerant and flexible towards family diversity. These results are discussed in light of the necessary adaptations in primary education with respect to the diversity of families existing there.

Keywords: Family Diversity, teachers' opinions, primary education.

Resumen

Este artículo intenta indagar en las ideas de los docentes de educación primaria sobre los modelos familiares que se apartan del tradicional de familia nuclear. Se trabajó con 60 docentes de Montevideo y zona metropolitana respondiendo el Cuestionario de Ideas de los Docentes sobre Diversidad Familiar –CIDF– (Morgado, Jiménez-Lagares & González, 2009). Los datos obtenidos refieren que los docentes no mantienen una visión homogénea de los distintos tipos de hogares. Las familias adoptivas, las de progenitores divorciados y las monoparentales bajo responsabilidad de madres tuvieron mejor aceptación entre los docentes que las homoparentales o las encabezadas en solitario por un padre. Los ítems relativos a familias homoparentales fueron respondidos por menos personas. Los docentes con formación de posgrado se mostraron más tolerantes y flexibles ante la diversidad familiar.

Se discuten estos resultados a la luz de las necesarias adaptaciones en la educación primaria con respecto a la diversidad de familias que allí asisten.

Palabras clave: Diversidad familiar, ideas docentes, educación primaria.

Introduction

The identification of the teachers' beliefs on different topics related to their relationship with their students and the evaluation of these beliefs have been taken into account in the Educational Sciences since the famous investigation of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), known as the Pygmalion effect. Since his pioneering studies, it has been verified how significant are the teachers' expectations of their students' achievement or failure when evaluating them.

These expectations may be related to the type of family children are raised at. At times when we are talking about educational inclusion and diversity acceptance, the different types of the students' families should not be excluded from this inclusion concept.

Therefore, taking into consideration the increasing family diversity, both in their configuration and its internal dynamics, it is important to study the teachers' opinions on the variable existing since the beginning of the relationship with the families, which is the family configuration.

Family diversity is often among the topics that teachers reported as one of the most demanding topics when relating to the students' families. It influences the teachers' daily practices in relation with these families (González Tornaria, Wagner & Saraiva Junges, 2015). When talking about daily practices we refer to facts like calling for a meeting, scheduling an appointment, asking for cooperation to monitor a course or helping the student with his/her studies at home. These types of communication require teachers to know who the student lives with, what degree of commitment the parents have, and what types of support network the student counts on.

From the children's perspective, school is the first scenario where they have the opportunity to meet family realities different than theirs; and this is a variable that should be managed by the teacher.

Today we are facing a more complex familiar scenario. We have clearly gone through a path that takes us from "the model family to the families'

models” (Lopez, Díez, Morgado & Gonzalez, 2008, p. 112). If we consider that in our society primary school is an obligatory step for all children and their families, we should ask ourselves: What is the educational institution currently doing and what it should do regarding families’ diversity? (Lopez et al., 2008). As Pichardo (2011) points out, today in Uruguay educational institutions seem to ignore that not all adult references are heterosexual, not all children live in households of nuclear families. In this way, educational institutions are underestimating the unconventional families and assuming the existence of a hegemonic model that embraces all students (Lopez et al., 2008). An example of this is the absence of this subject matter within the teacher training programs.

Notwithstanding the above, in recent years school-reading materials have attempted to explain the family diversity in order ensure its study in everyday life. While this fact reflects the intention of addressing the issue, teachers lack resources in their classroom since they have not received the necessary information during their training about subjects related to families and the relationship with them (National Administration Public Education, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Therefore, one of the most significant changes to be made in primary schools is to evaluate the teachers’ opinions on family diversity, as referred by Morgado, Jiménez-Lagares y Gonzáles (2009). Based on these data, we think it is appropriate to consider the importance of working not only with primary school teachers but also, for example, with students from the teacher training institutions. In that sense, international teacher training courses, that include the subject of families, begin with the identification of beliefs of the registered participants, not only about their family configurations but also about the potential biases they may have regarding the cooperation between families and schools (Deslandes, 2005).

The pioneering studies on teacher beliefs about family configuration belong to Santrock and Tracy (1978). In this study teachers had to create a story based on the same video of an 8-year old child. Those who assumed that he was the son of divorced parents rated him lower in happiness, stress

coping ability, and emotional adjustment than those who believed that the child grew up in a nuclear family.

Based on these studies, others have been developed using different methodologies and techniques. Those studies have tried to identify these beliefs and how they can influence the relationship that teachers have with their students. It has been found that teachers' willingness to intervene in case of a problem with a child, can vary according to their belief that it is possible to introduce a change or that the problem is due to a special family configuration. Thus, the ability to relate to students' families healthfully, in circumstances such as keeping them informed or the creation of opportunities for participation, has been highlighted as one of the essential skills teachers should have nowadays (Perrenoud, 2004).

Among recent investigations on the matter, Triana and Rodrigo (2010) reported a study conducted by his team in 2007, in which teachers expectations on the students' emotional, social and academic adaptation were explored, according to the family configuration which they belonged to. The team worked contrasting the expectations regarding students from nuclear families, single-parent families headed by women as a result of separation, reconstituted, adoptive and homoparental families. They found that those with the best predictions in all areas were the children of nuclear families, followed by those belonging to adoptive families. Children living in households headed by women and reconstituted households had more favorable expectations than those belonging to homoparental households. The authors attribute the unfavorable expectations regarding the latter type of families to the fact that those are the least common, both at school and in social context. This study clearly shows the need to identify these expectations since they can affect the interaction and assessment that teachers make of their students.

Studies concerning the relationship between schools and families (Comellas, 2009; Nunez, 2003; Oliva & Palacios, 2005) have made clear the importance of teachers' perceptions about students' family configuration,

not only when evaluating the students, but also when interacting with the students' families and in the evaluation of the family education curriculum, known as the educational project that parents materialize based on their perceptions and beliefs about parenting (Rodrigo & Acuña , 2005).

Meanwhile, Petricone (2009) has studied the influence of family history of teachers in their beliefs and professional styles. He worked with 170 teachers from Madrid and found that the parenting styles identified in their families of origin were grouped into functional (63.7%) and dysfunctional (36.3%). These styles determine the educational styles of teachers. There are three types: flexible and democratic, tending to rigidity and autocracy, rigid, and autocratic. In this study, 69.5% of teachers reported that the educational style of the families of origin influenced significantly their own teaching style, while 30% reported it influenced it a little and 0.5% reported no influence at all.

The investigation by Morgado, Jimenez-Lagares and González (2009) is one of the most interesting investigations regarding the subject of teachers' opinions on family diversity. The authors report that, in most of the studies, teachers associated a better academic and social competence and emotional adjustment in children coming from married-couple households. Moreover, the same research shows that some teachers are unaware of some unconventional family models or have a substantial prejudice against them.

However, recent research (Oliva & Arranz, 2011) conducted with families of different configurations: nuclear, single-parent, homoparental, reconstituted, with multiple pregnancies and adoptive, contradicts the beliefs reported before. Techniques such as interview, observation and questionnaires were used. Results clearly show that the diversity of family configuration is not significant in the child's development, unless other variables intervene. These variables are related to the family environment, such as marital conflict management, coping with stress and educational styles. These have been proved to have the greatest influence on children's adjustment.

Meanwhile, Golombok (2006) states that the fundamental family characteristics for a healthy psychological development are: the emotional security, a low level of marital conflict, a democratic educational style, the quality of interaction and stimulation between the child and his/her parents, and the optimal frustration. The author states that if the above characteristics are given in a family context, then reliable upbringing conditions are met, despite the family configuration. Also, Arranz, Oliva, Olabarrieta and Antolin (2010) came to the conclusion that it is not the configuration, but the sociodemographic variables and interactive variables, which influence the quality of the family context.

One might ask then, what are the factors that ensure a good development and learning at a family level?. Rodrigo (2001) mentions the need for a significant level of affection at home, supportive, safe and reliable relationships, good communication, a socialization style appropriate to the situation and behavior of children, an environment that stimulates learning, parental involvement in the education at home and at school; and finally, stimulation for the development of education during leisure time, and encouragement for healthy lifestyles. Likewise, in the list of contextual variables that enhance the psychological development, Arranz and Oliva (2010) highlight the following: job stability, access to resources for development stimulation, familiar and social support network, adequate physical spaces at home and neighborhood, as well as positive relationship at school and absence of stressful situations. When listing the interactive variables, they put emphasis on the parental presence, stimulation and interest on matters concerning the child, a practice of democratic educational styles and a low level of conflicts. No type of family configuration is mentioned at all.

In Uruguay, inquiring about the position of teachers and future teachers in regard to family configurations becomes critical, considering the big changes in families over the past decades.

Divorces increased from a rate of 18.7% in 1985 to a rate of 33.7% in 2002 (Cabella, 2007). Single-parent households had an increase too: from a rate of 9.6% in 1996 to a rate of 11.1% in 2011. Households composed of couples with children decreased from 34.1% in 1996 to 31.4% in 2011, and extended households decreased in the same period from 20.1% to 14.9% (National Institute of Statistics, 1996, 2011). According to the last census, 2778 people live with a partner of the same sex (INE, 2011). During the first decades of the XXI century, 80% of young people preferred free union to marriage. In 2010, 70% of births occurred outside marriage.

In the 2011 census, 14.1% of the population were aged 65 years and over. It was the highest figure in South America (Cabella, Fernandez Soto & Prieto, 2015). Women between 25 and 62 years have increased their employment rate, which reached 75%, with variations according to the age group and educational level (Nathan & Zerpa, 2015). According to the Family Situations Survey of 2008, conducted with 1399 children under 22 years of age, 16.7% live with their mother, even though their fathers are alive; 33% of them never see their fathers, while 40% never received child support transfers (Bucheli & Vigorito, 2015 (Bucheli & Vigorito, 2015)). In terms of legislation, there have been several changes that have implied the recognition of the diversity of parental situations: Law 18246 of Concubinary Union in 2008, and Law 19075 of Equal Marriage amending provisions relating to adoption in 2013.

Taking into account the aforementioned data, it becomes necessary to implement changes at the level of teacher training, and at the level of the relationship with families in schools.

It is important to state that in Uruguay there are not previous reports in the line of this work. Therefore, the preparation of this study is, in itself, a novel contribution that could significantly contribute to the educational system, enriching reflection and discussion, and providing elements for a change in the educational programs and teaching practice.

Objetives.

- To analyze the opinions of primary school teachers about unconventional families.
- To find out whether there are differences in the teachers' opinions about family diversity in terms of age, teaching age, type of school where they teach, family configuration and their level of education.

Methodology

Participants.

Participants are a total of (n = 60) teachers from private and public educational institutions. Schools for this study were chosen based on existing contacts within these institutions, known from previous investigations performed by the same team. With respect to teachers, the sample was incidental. From these teachers, 98.3% are female and 1.7% male. The average age of teachers in the study is 39 years and 6 months, reaching a maximum age of 65 and a minimum of 23. As for the teaching experience, the average for the 58 teachers who answered is 16 years and 8 months.

In relation to family constitution, it should be noted that 6.7% of women cohabitate with their partner, 36.7% have formed a nuclear family, 25% live with their families of origin, and 3.3% live in extended families, 13.3% in single-parent households, 10% in single-person households and 3.3% do not answer. As for the male teacher surveyed, he lives in a nuclear family.

With regard to institutional affiliation of teachers, 41.7% of them work exclusively in catholic private education, while 33.3% share their work between catholic private education and public education, 8.3% work exclusively in laic private education and 16.7% share their work between secular private education and public education.

Table 1.*Characteristics of the sample of teachers.*

| Sample of teachers studied (n = 60) | | | | |
|--|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age | \bar{X} = 39.67 years | SD = 12.25 | Minimum: 23 | Maximum: 65 |
| Teaching years | \bar{X} = 16.78 years | SD = 12.25 | Minimum: 2 | Maximum: 44 |
| Gender | Female 98.3% (n = 59) Male 1.7% (n = 1) | | | |
| School | Private catholic 41.7% (n = 25) Private secular 8.3% (n = 5) Public school/Private catholic 33.3% (n = 20) Public school/Private secular 16.7% (n = 10) | | | |
| Family | Nuclear family 38.3% (n = 23) | | | |
| Configuration | Nuclear family 13.3% (n = 8) Single-parent family 3.3% (n = 2) Family of origin 25% (n = 15) One-person family 10% (n = 6) Cohabiting couple with no children 6.7% (n = 4) No answer (n : 2) | | | |

As shown in Table 1, participants are mostly women, coinciding with what is stated in the census conducted in 2014 and 2015, where 9 out of 10 students of education were female. As for their professional experience, in 2007 the number of teachers exercising their career reached 93.1% of all primary teachers (National Public Education Administration, 2015). The averages indicate that, in terms of age, participants are mature, and as for their professional practice, they have experience and have already passed the early stages of working life.

Instruments and Procedure.

This study has replicated the design of the exploratory investigation presented by Morgado et al. (2009) and we have used the instrument: Teachers' Opinion on Family Diversity (CIDF, for its Spanish acronym) of Morgado et

al., (2009) with their authorization. It is a self-administered scale consisting of 15 items, which are answered based on the Likert scale, ranging from “1” (strongly disagree) to “4” (strongly agree), this scale forces the teachers to answer. The analysis of the internal consistency of the scale in the Spanish study reported that item 14 had an inverse correlation with the total, so we proceeded to its elimination. The reliability index obtained for the scale, once such an item was eliminated, was medium-high (Cronbach’s alpha based on standardized values = 0.75).

The analysis of the internal consistency of the scale for our study was medium high (Cronbach’s alpha based on standardized values = 0.71. We did not eliminate item 14 as in the Spanish study since the modification in the index of Cronbach’s alpha based on standardized values was not significantly affected, being = 0.73 without item 14). Besides having taken into account the aforementioned characteristics, we decided to work with this instrument because it addresses various forms of family diversity and it is easily applied. It is completed in a few minutes and can be administered in groups. Also, this instrument was chosen because our intention is to replicate the above mentioned investigation.

Data collection was carried out between the second semester of 2013 and the first semester of 2014, in Montevideo and the metropolitan area. In all cases, participants completed an informed consent. Once this document was completed, and questions were asked, the participants filled out the questionnaire accompanying the CIDF. This questionnaire also asked for their socio-demographic information.

Results

In order to achieve the first objective of analyzing the primary teachers’ opinions on unconventional families, all ‘agree’ answers were grouped, both ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. As for item 6, it is in line with the Spanish study (90.5%), reaching a higher number: 96.7% of teachers agree or strongly agree that what matters is not the family configuration, but how happy the

child feels at home. As in the study of Morgado et al. (2009), it seems that, during a first analysis, teachers value more the family relationship over the family configuration. In the same vein, we find investigations carried out by Arranz and Oliva (2010), Arranz et al. (2010), Golombok (2006), Oliva and Arranz (2011).

As shown in Table 2, in relation to adoptive families, 98.3% of teachers acknowledge that adopted children can be as loved as biological children; while 15.3% think that adopted children will suffer from irreparable problems. There is a high similarity with the Spanish study in both items (93.4% and 14.6%, respectively). Regarding the fact that adopted children are as loved as biological children, Bernedo, Fuentes Fernández-Molina and Bersabé (2007) report a high perception in adoptive families, both in affection and in communication; and an inductive parental style, less critical and indulgent.

In that sense, the study of Triana and Rodrigo (2010) indicates that adoptive families had the best teachers' predictions about children's development, immediately after nuclear families.

With regard to the items related to divorce, 61% of teachers agree that children of separated parents are marked by such a separation, while in the Spanish study it reaches 77.4%. We can clearly see a difference in this item. This is an important point if we consider the significant divorce increase in our country (Cabella, 2007). In addition, we can see that 79.3% of teachers think that, some time after the separation, children reach normality. In the Spanish study, that percentage reached 63.7%, having a difference in this item too. Meanwhile, 96.6% think that, after the separation, children can keep a close and warm contact with parents, while in the Spanish study, this figure was 85.4%. We must remember that, in Uruguay, 33% of those under age 22 have not seen his father after the separation and 40% do not receive any economic support (Bucheli & Vigorito, 2015).

As for single-parent families, 58.6% of teachers think that the absence of the mother creates problems in the children's development, while in the Spanish study, the percentage reaches 61% of the sample. In this regard, we

note that 87% of single-parent households in our country are female-headed (INE, 2011). It should be noted that in the study of Triana and Rodrigo (2010), single-parent families headed by women were considered risky for the emotional, social and academic adaptation of children. Meanwhile, 10% of teachers think that the father's absence has negative effects on the children's development. The Spanish study reached 22% in this regard. Also, according to the sample of Uruguayan teachers, the necessary presence of a father figure for a boy to grow up properly masculine, reaches a percentage of 25.5%. This percentage is higher than the Spanish study that reaches 10.7%.

Regarding homoparental households, and according to the consulted sample, it should be noted that 16% of teachers believe that children should not be adopted by homosexuals as it would be more likely for children to have developmental problems. While 58.8% of the surveyed teachers think that children of gay and lesbian people are not different at all from children of heterosexuals. Meanwhile, 42.6% of teachers agree that children living with gay and lesbian people experience a social rejection. Regarding homoparental households, we should remember that in Uruguay, since the enactment of Law 19075 of Equal Marriage (2013), adoption provisions have changed, giving identical rights for adoption and assisted reproduction to couples of equal and different sex.

The result of the Hispanic study in relation to the first item, homoparentality, is considerably far from the result obtained in the present study, reaching 42.4%. The other items obtained closer results of 53% and 37.6%, respectively.

As for the items related to two-parent households, 15.3% of teachers believe that households with working parents and a stay-at-home mother are the best development environment for children. Also, 15.3% agree that when mothers work outside, children are more likely to have school problems. In the Spanish study, figures match for both items, where one of every four teachers agree. Therefore, regarding the consequences on the children's development, our teachers see fewer risks compared to Spanish teachers.

This can be explained by the large employability of women, reaching 75% in women between the ages of 25 and 62, but increases to 90% in the case of the population with higher education (Nathan & Zerpa, 2015). This is the case in our sample, which has a female composition of 98.3%.

As in the study of Morgado et al. (2009), it is clear that teachers do not have a homogeneous view about the different types of households.

Table 2.

Results of the 'agree' percentage, the average score, standard deviation (SD) and the percentage of answers to each item of the Questionnaire: Teachers' Opinion on Family Diversity (CIDF).

| | Items | % Agree or Strongly Agree | Average | SD | % Answers |
|---|--|---------------------------|---------|------|-----------|
| Family Dynamics | Item 6: The important thing for the child is not who lives with but how happy the child feels at that home. | 96.7 | 3.62 | 0.61 | 100 |
| Families where Both Parents Work | Item 5: A working father and a stay-at-home mother are the best environments for the children's development (i) | 15.3 | 3.19 | 0.73 | 98.3 |
| | Item 13: When mothers work outside the home, children are more likely to have school problems (i) | 15.3 | 3.17 | 0.77 | 98.3 |
| Adoptive Families | Item 2: Adopted children have irreparable problems (i) | 15.3 | 3.08 | 0.62 | 98.3 |
| | Item 9: Adopted children can be as loved as biological ones | 98.3 | 3.8 | 0.51 | 100 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|------|------|------|------|
| Separation or divorce | Item 1: Most children of separated parents are marked by the separation (i) | | | | |
| | Item 10: A period after the separation, children are back to normal | 61 | 2.37 | 0.72 | 98.3 |
| | | 79.3 | 2.93 | 0.65 | 96.6 |
| | | 96.6 | 3.59 | 0.62 | 98.3 |
| | Item 12: After the separation, parents and children can keep a close and warm relationship | | | | |
| Single-parent Families | Item 4: Father's absence has negative effects on the children's development (i) | | | | |
| | Item 7: The father figure is necessary for a child to grow up properly masculine (i) | 10 | 3.32 | 0.75 | 100 |
| | | 25.5 | 3.04 | 0.79 | 91.6 |
| | Item 11: Mother's absence inevitably affects the children's development (i) | 58.6 | 2.52 | 0.71 | 96.6 |
| | | 24.5 | 2.16 | 0.62 | 95 |
| | Item 14: Children who grow up only with their mothers mature earlier | | | | |
| Homoparental Families | Item 3: Homosexuals should not be able to adopt, their children are more likely to have developmental problems (i) | | | | |
| | Item 8: Children of gays and lesbians are not different in any aspect from children of heterosexual parents | 16 | 3.09 | 0.84 | 93.3 |
| | | 58.8 | 2.65 | 0.72 | 85 |
| | | 42.6 | 2.63 | 0.56 | 90 |
| | Item 15: Children living with gays and lesbians are usually socially rejected (i) | | | | |

Presence/Absence of Answers

Regarding the absence of answers, and according to Morgado et al. (2009), we can see that the items with a low rate response match these. These are the ones related to homoparental families, both item 8 and item 15. Percentages of both items are 85% and 90%, respectively. The results obtained in the study are not as low as those from the Spanish study; the response rate in that

study is 78.7% for both items. This low response rate may be due to what has been reported in other studies (Triana & Rodrigo, 2010), that is to say, it is an unusual and not well-known configuration within the school context, which could cause participants to refrain from responding.

Table 3.

Contrast between the frequency of answers in items related to homoparental families versus other items.

| | Presence of answers | | Total |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------|-------|
| | Yes | No | |
| Items Homoparental | | | |
| Families | 161 (89.5%) | 19 (10.5%) | 180 |
| Remaining Items | 703 (97.6%) | 17 (2.4%) | 720 |
| Total | 864 (96%) | 36 (4%) | 900 |

Differences between Teachers.

In order to achieve the second objective, with regard to teachers' age and seniority, there are not significant relationships. The correlation matrix informs us that the opinions about family diversity showed a negative relationship, which is not significant with respect to age ($r^2 = -0,167$; $p = 0.269$) and teachers' seniority ($r^2 = -0,128$; $p = 0408$).

With respect to the type of school where teachers work, no significant differences were found in the variable: teachers' opinion on family diversity, according to the type of school: Public - Private Catholic ($=42.19$), Public - Private Secular ($=44.57$), Private Catholic ($=43.85$) and Private Secular ($=41.33$), with an ANOVA result of ($F = 0.830$ y $p = 0.485$).

When comparing the teachers' opinions on family diversity among those who had postgraduate education ($=44.44$) and those who did not ($=42.83$), the differences found were not statistically significant, with the following results of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances ($F = 1.69$ y $p = 0.20$) and

for the T test ($t=0.98$ y $p=0.33$). When conducting the analysis by item, only significant differences were found among those with postgraduate education and those without, in Item 6 (“the important thing for a child is not who he/she lives with, but how happy he/she feels at that home”), with the results of the Levene test ($p = .001$) and the T-test ($p = .013$).

When comparing, using the ANOVA test, whether there are differences between the teachers' perception on family configuration, no significant differences were found ($p= 0.409$).

These results show differences from those obtained in the Spanish study, which showed highly significant negative relationship between the opinions on family diversity, and age and teaching experience of participants.

In that sense, we must bear in mind that the averages of the Spanish teachers are higher and more experienced than the Uruguayans, which may explain to some extent their reluctance to new forms of families which are emerging at a rapid pace in recent years. As for professional experience, they have an average of 21 years. Compared to Uruguayans it shows that they are further along in the four stage of professional life according to Day (2005), between 16 and 23 years which are marked by tensions over the motivation and professional commitment due mainly to the necessary balance they need to have in their work and personal life.

Discussion

It is interesting that teachers in this study think that the important thing for a child is not who he/she lives with, but how happy he/she feels at that home, highlighting the family context and not the family configuration. This is in line with multiple investigations carried out with other populations (Antolín, Oliva & Arranz, 2009; Arranz, Oliva, Olabarrieta & Antolín, 2010; Golombok, 2006; González, Chacón, Gómez, Sánchez y Morcillo, 2002; Oliva & Arranz, 2011).

As for teacher training, there is a significant difference in relation to item 6, where teachers with higher academic level are more flexible and tolerant towards family diversity. This fact opens an interesting door to the possibilities offered both at initial training and continuous education.

With regard to the answers about single-parent families, mother's absence, father's absence and the necessary father's presence for boys to be properly masculine, we noted that this creates a tension in relation to the significant growth these type of families have experienced in Uruguay, due basically to the increase of divorce (Cabella 2007). Let's also consider that teachers' answers regarding mother's absence, in a high percentage, as a factor that disrupts children's development, and father's absence, in a smaller percentage, generates an inconsistency in item 6 regarding the importance given to the fact of feeling happy because of who the child lives with and not because of the family configuration. These data are consistent with those stated in the study by Moliner and Francisco (2016).

In addition, as for the father's absence and its impact on the child's masculinity, this may relate to the teachers' concerns about the fact that in our country, at least one third of all children no longer see their father and do not receive financial support after the divorce. Our sample is largely female and it has been shown in studies on the subject in Uruguay that women, who are generally left with the responsibility of raising their children, are more strict than men when reporting data and evaluating the consequences of divorce in children (Bucheli & Vigorito, 2015).

While access to single parenthood can objectively express similar situations, from the subjective point of view it brings unique experiences (Jociles, Rivas, Moncó, Villamil & Diaz, 2008). We point out one of the instrument's limitations since the items related to single parenthood may reflect multiple situations, difficult to take into account in their complexity when answering.

In connection with the questions about divorced families, it should be noted that six out of ten teachers report that children of these families are

marked by the separation. In the study of Oliva and Arranz (2011) these families report that there were conflicts during the separation process, and expressed their concern about its impact on children. However, the authors did not find significant association neither with the level of conflict nor with child adjustment problems. Regarding homoparental families and their insertion in educational institutions, four out of ten teachers in our study are consistent with the possibility of social rejection towards these children. Precisely Arranz, Oliva, Martin and Parra (2010) indicate that these families inform the school about their homoparental family status in order to seek support from the institution and to prevent their children from being rejected or harassed by their peers. Omitting their homoparental family status can affect the children's identity formation and can cause a moral or psychological harassment (Mello, Grossi & Uziel, 2009).

Therefore, it is also expected things will change in our country in this regard, although it is still early to have data on the subject because of the recent approval of the Equal Marriage Law and the possibility of adoption by same-sex couples.

On the subject of the relationship between homoparental families and schools, there is an interesting study by Ceballos-Fernandez (2009) which refers to a discontinuity between educational experiences within these families and within the school. Therefore, the interaction between the formal education system and family education becomes imperative, a work with common goals, acknowledging the principle of shared educational responsibility (Marcondes and Sigolo, 2012, Torio, 2004) as a way to avoid a disconnection and an imbalance between the two contexts (Ceballos-Fernandez, 2009).

In a research on various aspects of the family life of children of homoparental families, it is concluded that these children have a normal life in terms of everyday activities and their family relationship is characterized by communication, affection, lack of conflicts, frequent and warm contact with extended family. (González & López, 2009). In this sense, we should

consider that the parents' sexual orientation is not an indicator to evaluate their educational role (Ceballos-Fernández, 2012).

Regarding children's adoption by homosexual couples (item 3), there is less rejection in the sample of Uruguayan teachers (16%) than in the Spanish teachers (42.3%). In this case, although this law was recently approved, we think that it may be influencing both in a change of opinions about this possibility and in the social desirability regarding the response. Our study and the studies of Morgado et al. (2009) and Triana and Rodrigo (2010) show that the answers about homoparental configuration indicate a current reluctance towards these families, which can be translated into rejection, the low level of expectations or the abstention when asked about them.

The more indulgent perception about women's work by Uruguayan teachers can relate to a perception somewhat more distant from the traditional nuclear family as compared to the case of the Spanish teachers. This is evidenced not only in the items relating to women's work, but also in the items referred to divorced families, father's absence and its impact on the children's development, and the possibility of adoption by homosexual couples. In the same vein, in item 6, which favors the family dynamics over the configuration, Uruguayan teachers rated six points more than the Spanish teachers.

We must not ignore the society in which the participants live, the history of some issues related to family diversity and its recognition at the legislative level. The responses indicating a greater acceptance of divorce by Uruguayan teachers in relation to the Spanish study may be linked to the long divorce history in our country, whose first law dates from 1907. In that sense, Triana and Rodrigo (2010) inform us about the effect of culture, which is the interpretation and individual attitudes towards certain family configurations, the existence of myths about the family dynamics and adaptability of its members a given historical moment. Let's consider the pioneering study of Santrock and Tracy (1978), already mentioned. In this study, the participants started from a deficit hypothesis, indicating in their stories that a son of a

family who had gone through a divorce was in disadvantage compared to children of nuclear families.

Considering the increase of family diversity in Uruguay that we have already talked about, and taking into account the universality and compulsory nature of primary education, the school becomes a particularly interesting field where inclusion of different family configurations can be worked on.

We think we can achieve it by readjusting the curricula and incorporating subjects that allow the review of teachers' opinions on families since their training. It would also be necessary to work on adapting schools from the subject of diversity, incorporating educational material, reviewing the communication with the families, modifying some celebrations in the calendar, among other changes, thus allowing all students to feel cared about. It seems important then to incorporate subjects about family diversity transversely, dialoguing with students, consistent with the level of class and respecting their right to privacy (Pichardo, 2011). All these initiatives need trained professionals who have had the opportunity to have access to the most recent investigations on the subject; but also professionals who have had the opportunity to examine their own stories and family experiences. (Deslandes, 2005; Petricone, 2009, Pichardo, 2011).

Continuing education seems to be a way for teachers to be updated and to strengthen their daily contact with families. It provides them with specific tools to deal with family diversity, which is remarkably common in schools today (González Tornaría et. al., 2015). In this regard, Madureira and Branco (2015) refer to the importance of including in the teachers' undergraduate studies sensitive subjects such as gender, sexuality, and diversity. The reason is that in the absence of training, teachers conduct themselves based only on their personal opinions and experiences.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the data presented here should be read with caution. This information allows us to approach the subject and it could serve as the first step for future research. It could be used as

representative samples of the teaching population and incorporate other designs and techniques. In this regard, it is an interesting contribution to the knowledge of teachers' opinions on family diversity, alerting us to the need for further study in order to highlight the importance of the subject and implement actions in our country.

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