

# Educational Function and Parental Function

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## Introduction

Teachers in early childhood and primary grades constantly hear complaints from our students about one of the biggest challenges of their work as teachers: “why should we teach children appropriate behaviors, healthy routines, rules of conduct, affection and communication... if their parents are going to teach them the opposite?”

The prevailing idea in society is that abuse must be avoided. First, because it is punishable by law and, at best, because it is known to be inappropriate for the healthy developmental growth of children, leaving cognitive scars that undermine self-esteem, empathy, and relationships with peers.

But the absence of abuse does not guarantee good treatment (good treatment), that is, it does not ensure the satisfaction of children’s needs at each stage of their evolutionary development. It is common to find children growing up without rules – because their parents had too many rules when they were kids –, without the affection so necessary for establishing secure attachment [1] – because parents consider that to be baby stuff – or without having space and daily moments dedicated to play – because parents consider it a waste of time.

Who is the teacher to tell parents what to do when they are the ones with parental authority? No one, as long as they don’t cross the line into abuse.

Thus, we often find teacher-training students feeling discouraged and frustrated by the experiences they have encountered during their practicum periods. And I’m talking about experiences with teachers trained in a teaching model focused on the future, on the competencies children “must” acquire to become productive adults, but also about experiences with parents who, without knowing it, try to educate their children “their way,” which is almost never the best way to raise children.

But the teacher must be very familiar with parents’ disciplinary styles [2], what distinguishes one style from another, and what the consequences are for the child of each of these disciplinary styles. And they must be aware that these parents have the final say in their children’s education, which is why they must turn parents into allies of objectives centered on children’s present needs, not just on the competencies needed for adulthood.

A teacher, however, is an expert in education (early childhood, primary, or secondary) who knows children’s needs and therefore knows what is most appropriate for them based on their age and all the theories and research established in professional practices carried out for decades.

A teacher is trained to know about children, to be in contact with them and know how to interact with them in the practices carried out during their degree. A teacher is knowledgeable about the best theories and interventions for each of the problems at every developmental stage, including those cases of children with special educational needs [3].

But, indeed, teachers should never tell parents what to do; that is not their job. The teacher’s task is to do what they know how to do:

- First, explain to parents the possible causes of their child’s disruptive behaviors and possible developmental delays.
- Second, inform parents about the needs children have [4] at the developmental stage their child is in.
- Third, communicate to parents the guidelines and interventions that will be carried out in the classroom to meet those needs and improve their development and/or behavior.
- And fourth, invite parents to join in, also at home, this change of attitude toward the child’s behavior to strengthen con-

sistency and achieve a rapid recovery from the deficits or problems found.

For a teacher, to “throw in the towel” is never the solution within the school educational framework, nor will it resolve a situation that is already not good in parents’ home education. Maintaining, at least in the classroom, healthy rules, routines, and customs – not only physically but also emotionally and cognitively – is the minimum we can give the child. If we also manage to get parents to contribute, even minimally, to strengthening the child’s proper development from home, we will have done a good job.

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