

THE APPROACH OF SOCIOSCIENTIFIC ISSUES THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A SURVEY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE GIVEN BY PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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The approach of socioscientific issues, some of them controversial, has led teachers to look for educational resources that help them in this task. Children's literature has been one of this resources, as several books have been incorporating these issues. Some emerging issues are those related to sexuality and parental reality as well as the ones addressing environmental themes.

The present study is part of a broader project that sought to assess the importance of children's literature attributed by pre-service teachers in various dimensions. With that purpose, 92 students were inquired through a questionnaire, mostly female (94.6%), with an average age of 23.3 years, from two professional master's degrees in a Portuguese state higher education institution, which qualify for teaching in primary education.

The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms and had the following three parts:

- i) Personal experience about children's literature;
- ii) Children's literature and the curriculum;
- iii) Selection of works dealing with socioscientific issues.

This abstract only gives cover to the third part of the results of the questionnaire where it was asked what is the most correct option, the choice of works with neutral ideas or works that transmit values; and also what is the relevance of 14 themes that can be included in children's literature using a Likert scale with 5 terms (1 "Nothing Important" and 5 "Very important"). The themes were from the following domains: Environment (Global warming, Pollution, Waste and 3Rs policy, Extinction of species, Environmental conservation), Relationship between humans and animals (Animal welfare, Vegetarianism and veganism, Animal production, Cultural Manifestations with Animals, Unpopular Animals, Zoos and other parks), and Sexuality and Individual Options (Sexual Orientations, Contraception and Family Planning, Drug Use).

As results, 85.9% of the pre-service teachers opted for works that transmit values, arguing that they contribute to children's development and their education as citizens. They also considered all the issues relevant to be approached, selecting values 4 and 5 mostly. However, among them all, environmental issues were selected as "very important" by more than 79% of the respondents. Issues related to sexuality and individual options, although considered important, did not receive the same recognition. The themes that reflect the relationship between humans and animals had different trends. For instance, the animal welfare issue received a similar adhesion as the environmental themes, but the vegetarianism and veganism received less support (41% of the respondents did not consider it important). The justifications for the different choices highlighted the importance of environmental issues nowadays; the themes of sexuality received less preference, given the children's age and the interest they arouse on them. The themes of humans relationship with animals were considered less important in comparative terms, as they can be addressed in later years of schooling.

This study allowed to check the relevance attributed by pre-service teachers to various issues. In terms of teacher training courses, the results can call attention to the need to work the potentiality of children's literature addressing different works and issues, including those that seem to be less valued by the students, to allow them to expand the range of choices in their professional future.

keywords: children's literature, socioscientific issues, higher education.