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The Voice of Educators: Perceptions and Aspirations in Early Childhood Education

Dulce Maria Franco, Micaela Fonseca, Maria Neves Gonçalves, Esmeralda Santo

ESEL-IPLUSO, Ci-Luso, CeiED, Portugal,

Universidade Lusófona, HEI-Lab: Laboratórios Digitais de Interação Homem-Ambiente, Portugal

ESEL-IPLUSO, Ci-(CeiED, Portugal

CeiED, Portugal

Abstract

“Education for All” is UNESCO's first Development Goal and learning is the specific difference between ‘development and backwardness’. It was therefore necessary to devise a comprehensive, transversal, and recursive frame of reference for the organization of the education system. To respond to these national and international, local, and global challenges, the Portuguese education system has a diverse, comprehensive offer extended to the entire national territory, which should be as inclusive as the ideals that shape it (CNE, 2023, pp. 22-24). However, the need for early childhood educators/teachers is a reality in Portugal in this decade of the 21st century (Nunes, Reis, Freitas and Conceição, 2022). Given this framework, the research question of this study was: 1) to find out the expectations, motivations, and desires of students who entered the master's programme in Pre-School Education and Primary School Teaching in the 2022-2023 academic year; 2) to construct the life stories of these master's students in teaching. The methodological option for answering these questions was to administer an open questionnaire to master's students and to analyze the discourse of their letters of motivation for entering the master's programme. This research is part of a longer-term project (2022-2025), and we can only present preliminary data at this research stage. This study has already allowed us to conclude that the reason these master's students enrolled in a teacher training course is mainly because of their love of caring for and educating children and the desire to be an educator since childhood and their school career.

Keywords: early childhood educator; education for all; life stories; master's degree in teaching; primary school teacher