
EVALUATION OF READING PRACTICES IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a common ground in the academic community, that reading and writing skills are decisive in the psychosocial development of individuals (Martins & Valente, 2004). We can nevertheless affirm that, in the current paradigm, Reading assumes a determining role in learning and school achievement. It is by using such skills that individuals can have access to an almost inexhaustible source of knowledge, knowledge and experience accumulated over the ages and preserved, in said form, for posterity.

Given the undeniable relevance of this skill - reading - it is extremely important to know and to understand the reading practices of individuals, particularly, in their initiation to it.

Much has been written about Early Intervention in the most diverse areas, from health to education. The Decree-law 281/09 of October 6th, creates the National Early Childhood System Intervention System (SNIPI – Sistema Nacional de Intervenção Precoce na Infância), which aims to ensure the development of children aged 0-6 years old, with body functions or structures that limit the personal and social growth, and participation in age-typical activities, as well as children at severe risk of developmental delay. (Article 1, point 1). SNIPI is developed through the coordinated action of the Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity (MTSS – Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade Social), the Ministry of Health (MS – Ministério da Saúde) and the Ministry of Education (ME – Ministério da Educação), with the involvement of families and the community (Article 1, point 2).

It also seems to be consensual that, in the latter, exposure to a favourable environment conducive for reading from an early age is not only a facilitator, but also a catalyst for this process. The sooner and more frequent children contact with reading, or rather, with the pleasure of reading, the more evident the progress in the development of the individual's communication skills will become.

In the current communicational context, technologies have been widely and globally accepted as an educational tool. Espírito Santo and André (2013) point out that technologies are a daily presence in student's life and that this should be used by the teacher, and it is necessary for

the teacher to pay attention to that, be trained and use these tools as facilitators of the students' learning. The reader / teacher was gradually replaced by a digital approach to the human voice merely with memorized information. That is why, in our perspective, it urges to explore the skills in the initiation of reading process at ages when the presence and human voice are indispensable.

In this sense, “Pre-school education, although optional, is the first step in a long educational journey with a decisive weight on the school and social success of young people and kindergartens are configured as spaces of privileged time for decisive structuring learning in children’ development. In this process, the role and importance of language as a skill and vehicle for communication and access to knowledge about the world and about personal and social life are unquestionable.” (Sim-Sim, cit. by Matta, 2008)

1.1. Kindergarten teachers’ profile

We have selected 135 kindergarten teachers from the whole country that are currently working at João de Deus Kindergartens (Picture 1).

Analysing that data we conclude that the major part of those kindergarten teachers is female (91,1%) and their average age is between 36 to 45 years old. We also conclude that just 3,7% of younger teachers filled out this questionnaire. (Table 1).

Regarding their working experience (Table 2), we came to the conclusion that the most representative sectors are: 31,9% have more than 25 years of



Picture 1- João de Deus kindergartens’ location.

working experience and 23,7% have less than five years of working experience.

| Table 1 - Age | % |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Less than 26 years old | 3,7% |
| From 26 to 35 years old | 23,0% |
| From 36 to 45 years old | 31,9% |
| From 46 to 55 years old | 23,0% |
| More than 55 years old | 18,5% |

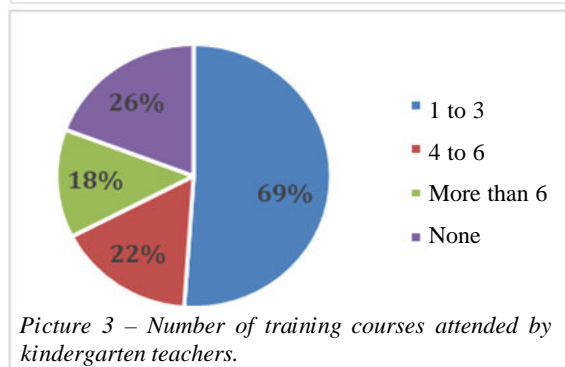
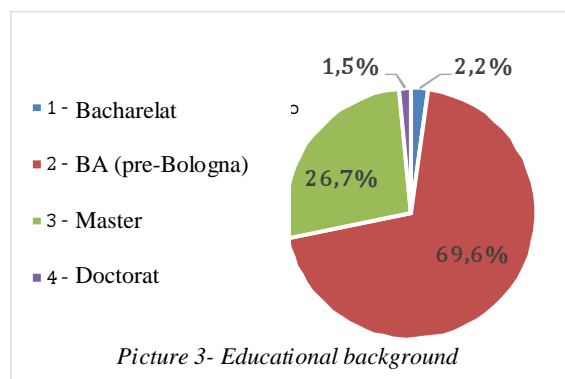
| Table 2 – Working experience | % |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| From 0 to 5 years | 23,7% |
| From 6 to 10 years | 5,9% |
| From 11 to 15 years | 15,6% |
| From 16 to 20 years | 11,9% |
| From 21 to 25 years | 11,1% |
| Counting more than 25 years | 31,9% |

Concerning the institutional typology, the questionnaire has only been put into practice in one institution of the private sector that manages several kindergartens in Portugal. In this matter, 72,6% of those who answered the questionnaire live in big cities and just 6,7% work in rural areas. Suffice to say that 0,7% work in a bilingual kindergarten and 2,2% work in educational compensation schools.

We are going to analyse next the educational background of the kindergarten teachers and the number of training courses they have attended in the last five years.

According to their educational background (Picture 2), we can affirm that 69,6% have a BA (pre-Bologna). Nevertheless, 26,7% have a Master degree (2nd cycle of Bologna or a pre-Bologna master especialization).

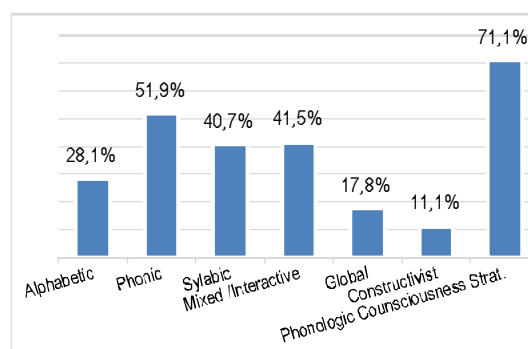
Bearing in mind that nowadays in Portugal that degree of pre-Bologna kindergarten teacher is now possible to achieve on the second of Bologna system (Master degree) and to complete the studies it is compulsory to have the concluded the BA in kindergarten teacher (1st cycle). Almost 70% of kindergarten teachers attended more than six training courses in their expertise field but on the other hand, one-third of them did not attend any training at all. (Picture 3).



The major part of kindergarten teachers is the teacher responsible for the classroom (90,4%); 9,6% are helping the kindergarten teachers and 1,5% have a master in Special Needs Education (one-third). In any case, other specializations are also representative such as Psychology, Psicopedagogy, Mathematics, Fine Motor Skills and Pedagogic Supervision.

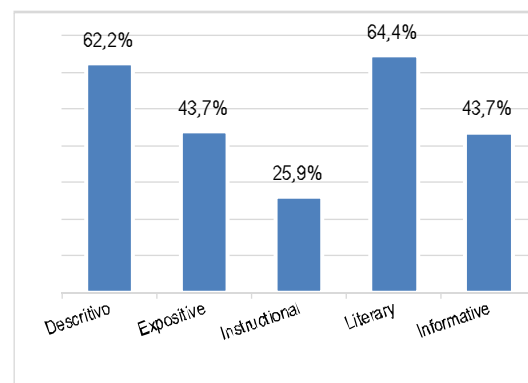
Portuguese kindergarten teachers that filled out this questionnaire make use of eclectic and diverse methodology in the classroom to motivate children to the reading learning process.

Analyzing the following graph, picture 4, we conclude that the phonologic consciousness is often used (71,1%). The phonic method is used (51,9%) and the mixed/interactive (41,5%). The less used method is the constructivist one because only 11,1% of the participants of this questionnaire mentioned that they use it.



Picture 4 – Learning reading methods

During the teaching reading process (Picture 5), most participants gave priority to literary texts (64,4%) and descriptive ones (62,2%). The less used is the instructional text (25,9%).

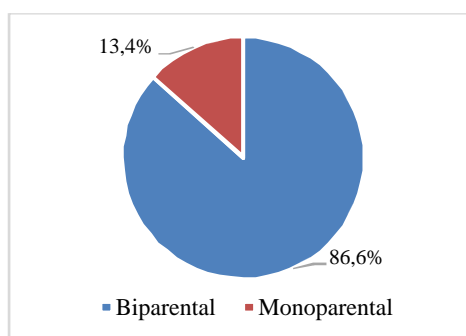


Picture 5 – Diversity of text types

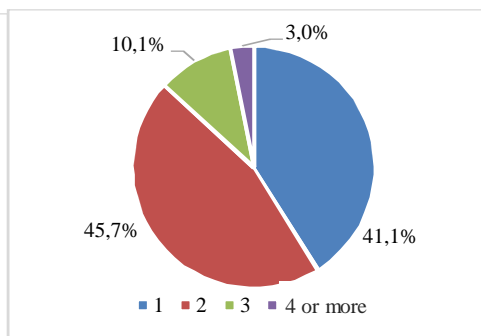
Most participants refer that have difficulties in speaking comprehension (51,1%) and in written comprehension (45,5%). A bit more than one-quarter of participants refer that have difficulties using reading technics and only 14,1% have difficulties awakning the interest in reading. Most kindergarten teachers mentioned that make use of books that children bring from home to promote reading (92,6%) and a significant number of them prefer books from the school library or even from the classroom library. The school manual is the less preferable by the participants (17%) and more than half of them (54,1%) make use of other educational reading materials that were not named in this questionnaire, such as “Cartilha Maternal”, mobile letters and other games (from 10% up to 13%), or make use of the computer (6%).

1.2. Families with pre-school children

722 families having children attending pre-school education in João de Deus Kindergartens filled out the questionnaire. From this figure, 86,6% are biparental families (Picture 6). Each family has an average ratio of: only one child 41,1% and two children 45,7% (Picture 7).

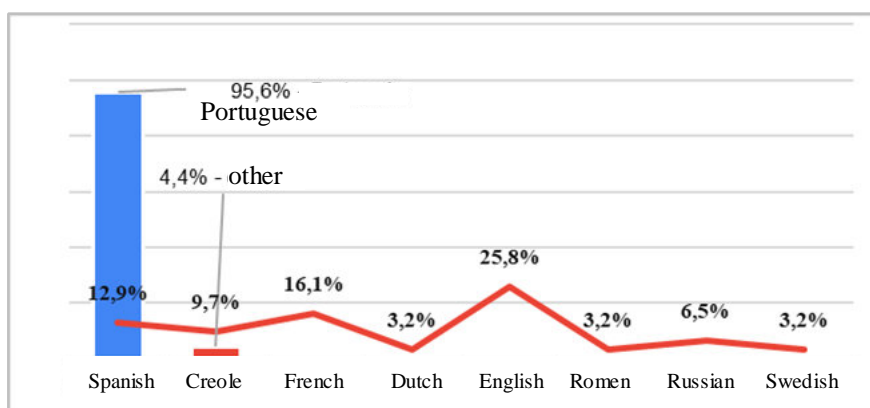


Picture 6 – Family type



Picture 7 – Number of children

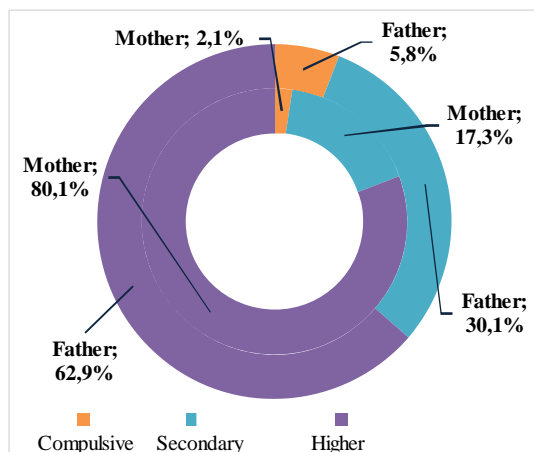
Regarding their nationality, 97% of mothers and 98% of fathers are Portuguese. It was impossible to determine the nationalities of those who are not Portuguese. Nevertheless, it was possible to identify their mothertongue. In that sense, 95,6% of parents speak portuguese (being native speakers) and 4,4% speak other eight languages (Picture 8).



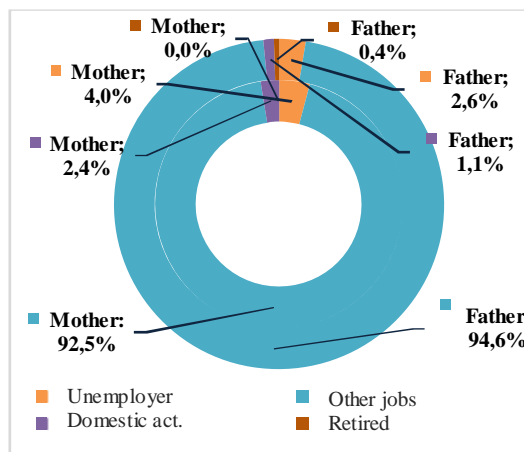
Picture 8 – Parents native languages (considering a total of 4,4%).

Most parents have university educational background (Picture 9): 80,1% mothers and 62,9% fathers. Only 2,1% of mothers and 5,1% of fathers have primary school background studies. According to their working activities (Picture 10) it is possible to identify how many parents dedicate their time to housekeeping activities, as well as the percentage of unemployment affecting the family relationships. Therefore, 4% of mothers are unemployed, contrasting with 2,6% of fathers that are unemployed. 2,4% of mothers are housekeepers but only 1,1% of

fathers are housekeepers. On the other hand, 0,4% of fathers are retired but no mothers are in such situation, most probably due to the fact that retired women are, in general, no longer fertile.



Picture 9 – Educational background



Picture 10 – Working status

2. LEARNING READING' METHODOLOGIES

The early childhood education methods used to teach children how to read, which are mentioned in the questionnaire answered by the educators, are: The Alphabetical Method, which favours the combination of consonants with vowels to produce direct syllables, then inversed and finally mixed syllables; The Phonic Method, which focuses on teaching the vowels, diphthongs and lastly consonants in a close relationship with phonemes; The Syllabic Method in which students learn to combine the consonants with each of the vowels - ta, te, ti, to, tu... (method created by Feliciano Castilho in 1830); The Mixed Method, which focuses on, almost simultaneously, the teaching of the letter and of the word, the phoneme and the image; The Global Method, that favours the teaching of reading starting with macro-structures descending into micro-structures which are the letters, resulting in a descending cognitive processing of text: text / sentence / words / syllable and lastly the letter. Finally, there is the Constructive Method which has the characteristics of the Global Method; however, it is inserted in a collaborative work project in which students build up their own knowledge. Kindergarten teachers knowing well their students and knowing how they perform to the meaning and functionality of the written language, use different types of text, develop educational experiences in the classroom and mediate work projects on themes chosen by children.

Concerning the shared work between pre-school education and primary school education (1st cycle), (Table 3), we verified that more than 90% of teachers answered that both kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers used to share information, goals, schedules and resources with their peers. But 24,4% said that do not design activities for multi-level students.

| Table 3 – Promoted sharing ideas to develop the reading learning process | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. We design projects and material curricula based on joint actions. | 91,9% | 8,1% |
| 2. We share goals, work methodologies, routines, evaluation and resources. | 94,1% | 5,9% |
| 3. We do plan the periodical meetings, along the year, to unify criteria and actions between several steps. | 93,3% | 6,7% |
| 4. We share reading experiences with students of different ages. | 92,6% | 7,4% |
| 5. We do share activities among students of several school grades. | 75,6% | 24,4% |

2.1. Teaching Methodologies

Taking into account the responses to this questionnaire to kindergarten teachers, we verify that they use several different strategies to engage students in the reading process. In this case, the results of the Table 4 show us that the Phonologic Consciousness is largely the most common method (71,1%). Only the Phonic Method is over 50%. Cognitive Strategies (11,1%) and Global Method (17,8%) are the most used methods by those who filled out the questionnaire. We show up now the results of Table 4' topics, categorizing the answers according to the YES responses. The table shows a N for the number of responses for each question, each method or each strategy. Each table will be listed in decreasing order obtaining YES as an answer.

| Tabela 4 – Method/s and/or strategies used in classroom | Yes |
|--|------------|
| 1. Phonologic consciousness | 71,1% |
| 2. Phonic | 51,9% |
| 3. Mixed / Interactive | 41,5% |
| 4. Syllabic | 40,7% |
| 5. Alphabetic | 28,1% |
| 6. Global | 17,8% |
| 7. Constructivist | 11,1% |

Table 4.1 shows us that 99,1% of kindergarten teachers make use of games and rhymes. This activity has great pedagogical value because open children's minds to the phonetic and end sound of the words. 90,4% of kindergarten teachers mentioned that do phonologic consciousness exercises whenever they ask children to start naming a word, containing or

ending a certain sound. Only 57,7% of kindergarten teachers refer that make exercises in order to make children to identify a picture or to omit the syllable that was previously combined.

| Table 4.1 – Used method/s and /or strategies [Phonologic consciousness] – N = 112 to 117 | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 38. I propose rhyme games. | 99,1% | 0,9% |
| 37. I make games of counting syllables and phonemes (clapping or not clapping). | 97,4% | 2,6% |
| 46. Children mention aloud words that begin, contain, or end up in a particular phoneme. | 90,4% | 9,6% |
| 42. I propose activities for students to isolate and manipulate the initial and/or final sound of a word. | 89,3% | 10,7% |
| 40. I propose activities in which syllables are contained for children to learn to distinguish long and short words. | 86,8% | 13,2% |
| 43. I propose activities for students to pronounce the sound of each phoneme that constitutes a word. | 86,7% | 13,3% |
| 49. I present words for children to indicate whether they start or end up in a particular phoneme. | 86,7% | 13,3% |
| 51. Children compare words that begin and/or end with a particular phoneme. | 86,0% | 14,0% |
| 50. Children divide words into phonemes. | 77,7% | 22,3% |
| 41. I propose activities for students to isolate and manipulate initial and final syllables. | 77,0% | 23,0% |
| 47. Children classify images according to their syllabic structure (number of syllables per word). | 76,8% | 23,2% |
| 39. I perform activities related to joining, omitting, reversing, changing the order of syllables and phonemes. | 71,7% | 28,3% |
| 44. I perform activities related to joining, omitting, reversing, changing the order of syllables and phonemes. | 70,8% | 29,2% |
| 52. I show phrases for children to indicate which words have joined, changed and/or been withdrawn. | 66,1% | 33,9% |
| 45. I do activities in which the position of phonemes within words must be distinguished. | 61,1% | 38,9% |
| 48. Children say the word referring to an image, omitting the syllable that has been previously indicated (initial, middle or final). | 57,7% | 42,3% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

Analysing Table 4.2 we concluded that kindergarten teachers use methods/strategies from phonic methods mentioned on the questionnaire, and the answers differ between 83,5% and 88,8%. These activities are of great importance to obtain learning skills.

| Table 4.2 – Used method/s and /or strategies [phonic] - Number 107 to 109 | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 09. I combine syllables to create words and then phrases. | 88,8% | 11,2% |
| 07. I begin by teaching the sound of vowels, then the sounds of diphthongs and finally the sound of consonants. | 86,2% | 13,8% |
| 08. I combine the sound of phonemes with onomatopoeias, gestures and/or kinesthetic. | 83,5% | 16,5% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

Table 4.3 mentions the strategies used in the Mixed/Interactive Method. These are the *top-down* and the *bottom-up* ones. These are highly complex methods once they simultaneously develop ascendent and descent cognitive processes, such as micro-structure to macro-structure, namely the decoding paradigm of comprehension, that make them quite complete. 83,9% of

kindergarten teachers responded that teach the syllable as part of the word (ascendent process) and 34,0% responded that students learn the letters starting from a word that their initial letter is the one that students are currently learning, accompanied by their illustration (descendent process in terms of comprehension).

| Table 4.3 – Used method/s and /or strategies [Mixed / Interactive] - Number 93 to 95 | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| 18. I teach the syllable as a part of the word. | 83,9% | 16,1% |
| 16. To understand the sound of each letter we use onomatopoeic examples (for example, for the letters "s" we use the sound of the snake "ssss"). | 72,6% | 27,4% |
| 19. I show the words at the same time as the letters, so students can recognize words and letters. | 71,6% | 28,4% |
| 17. know the syllables from the analysis of a word that contains it. | 62,4% | 37,6% |
| 15. Students learn the letters from a word that its initial letter is one they are learning (shown by the order of the alphabet), accompanied by its illustration. | 34,0% | 66,0% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

Table 4.4 identifies syllabics method strategies - a system created in 1830 by Feliciano de Castilho – this system is used by 60,8% of kindergarten teachers.

| Table 4.4 – Used method/s and /or strategies [Syllabics] - Number 100 to 105 | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 10. I start by teaching vowels simultaneously with their sound and spelling. | 82,9% | 17,1% |
| 14. I perform activities in which students can join and/or suppress syllables. | 76,5% | 23,5% |
| 13. Students begin to combine consonants with vowels (syllables) and then introduce language units with meaning (words, phrases...). | 71,6% | 28,4% |
| 11. Students learn how to combine the alphabet consonants with each of the vowels (ta-te-ti-to-tu...). | 42,2% | 57,8% |
| 12. Students begin their learning process by the first syllables, then by the inverted and finally by the mixed syllables and diphthongs. | 31,0% | 69,0% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

Table 4.5 shows us the kindergarten teachers' reactions regarding the use of the Alphabetical Method. 87,6% of the inquired people say that they combine syllables to let children form words. Only 14,4% say that do not use the alphabetical order while teaching how to read. As a matter of fact, in João de Deus Kindergartens children do not learn from the conventional alphabetical order. In fact, in João de Deus Reading Methodology the letters are introduced the following way: i, u, o, a, e, v, f, j, t, d, b, p, l, q, c, g, r, z, s, x, m, n, h. It is clear why most responses were negative regarding to the first question (85,6%).

| Table 4.5 – Used method/s and /or strategies [Alphabetical] | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 5. I combine syllables to create words and then phrases. | 87,6% | 12,4% |
| 6. I make use of features such as card games, mobile letters and iconic correspondence while I am teaching letters. | 86,1% | 13,9% |
| 3. The teaching-learning process of reading and writing is done simultaneously. | 73,6% | 26,4% |
| 2. Each letter is studied by pronouncing its name. | 71,4% | 28,6% |
| 4. Once the child has already learned the alphabet, consonants are combined with vowels to elaborate first direct syllables, then inverse syllables and finally, mixed syllables. | 52,0% | 48,0% |
| 1. I follow the alphabetical order for learning reading. | 14,4% | 85,6% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

Table 4.6 shows us the methodologies used to teach how to read and write through the strategies of the Global Method, which is the most common method used on public schools. However, it has been gradually losing support by the Ministry of Education, since in 2015, it was designed the new Portuguese Programme and Curriculum Goals for Primary Schools, where is mentioned that the reading and writing learning process should lead, from its beginning, children to comprehend the written alphabetical rule. Letters represent sounds – for that reason should be conscious of that the spoken language can be described as a sequence of sounds, sound units that fit certain articulated patterns (pp. 5-6).

Considering the answers, we can assume that 95,6% of kindergarten teachers put themselves in situations that lead to students' creativity. These criteria can be used in any kind of reading methodology.

| Table 4.6 – Used method/s and /or strategies [Global] - Number 88 to 94 | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 27. I propose situations that favour the creativity of the students. | 95,6% | 4,4% |
| 26. I reinforce the proper intonation of short stories, as well as the rhythm of the songs. | 94,5% | 5,5% |
| 29. Written language's exercises are related to the development of oral language. | 92,1% | 7,9% |
| 23. I do exercises to recognize the isolated phonemes of a certain word. | 77,8% | 22,2% |
| 28. I introduce texts to help children understand words and phrases so that they are able to assimilate what they are reading. | 75,0% | 25,0% |
| 22. I do activities to identify the syllables of a word as a whole. | 74,7% | 25,3% |
| 25. Students identify and recognize playful texts (short stories, songs...). | 73,6% | 26,4% |
| 24. I reinforce the linguistic scope with vocabulary, grammatical structures, words' order... | 68,2% | 31,8% |
| 21. I start the first teaching contact by writing words and phrases, working with children graphomotricity. | 67,8% | 32,2% |
| 20. I introduce several words and phrases that refer to the elements that surround the child and take part of their daily environment and routines. | 63,8% | 36,2% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

Finally, Table 4.7 speaks about the most recent reading method: the constructivist one. It follows a methodology centring all learning process in the child itself. It is a knowledge builder and the kindergarten teachers only have to lead, promote and increment research and analyse strategies that allows children to build up their own know how. 94,7% of kindergarten teachers said that they promote the communication skills among students and 76,1% underline that they divide the previous children' knowledge to the sense and function of written language. In fact, it is an innovative and recent methodology.

| Table 4.7 – Used method/s and /or strategies [Constructivist] - Number 92 to 94 | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 35. I promote among students their communicative skills (active listening, empathy, dialogue, assertiveness, argumentation...) | 94,7% | 5,3% |
| 36. I promote activities in which students use different types of language (body, gesture, musical, plastic...). | 93,6% | 6,4% |
| 31. I use meaningful words for my students (their first names, personal tastes...). | 88,3% | 11,7% |
| 30. I use reading in situations where it is carried out, so students can find its functionality (leisure, learning, news...). | 84,8% | 15,2% |
| 33. I work different types of text, such as descriptive (lists, menus), informative (notes, posters), literary (poems, songs, short stories...), expository (project dossiers, biography) | 80,4% | 19,6% |
| 34. I develop educational experiences in the classroom, through work projects on themes chosen by the students. | 78,3% | 21,7% |
| 32. I start by the students' previous knowledge regarding the meaning and functionality of written language. | 76,1% | 23,9% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

2.2. Psychopedagogical principles and methodology to develop reading skills

The psychopedagogical guiding principles and methodological approaches for learning how to read and write constitute a very complex process, in which students acquire essential skills for their primary schooling and subsequently future life. Quoting Sim-Sim (2001), “Reading and writing are secondary uses of language, they are not skills acquired naturally or spontaneously contrary to the spoken language, meaning that they have to be taught, leaving the school with this enormous responsibility.”

In this complex and time-consuming process, motivation, effort and practice on the part of the child and systematic explanation on the part of those who are teaching are required, the teacher plays a fundamental role, and must guide his/her practice in an appropriate way. For this, “the choice of good examples or models and the sequence of skills to be taught, from the simplest to the most complex, are fundamental elements in this approach” (Gaitas, 2013).

Following Silva (2012) and Pereira's (2011) perceptions, in order to consolidate these newly-learned skills it is essential the use of adequate strategies that provide students with motivating and challenging activities. This way, it will be possible to increase the quantity and quality of synaptic connections, causing good brain activity, resulting in a positive outcome in the learning process.

The authors Sim-Sim, Duarte & Ferraz (1997), Sim-Sim (1998) and Villas Boas (2002) claim that using a method during formal and direct teaching of reading is essential to structure and systematize the process of acquiring this skill. Therefore, approaching the different teaching methods of reading and writing involves not only dwell on the methods themselves (procedures, strategies, materials), but also on the teacher's role in this process of initiation to reading and writing.

According to Dias (2013), several teachers adapt methods and tools used to teach literacy, and it is up to them to have multiple tools to teach their students how to read and write. The use of a method and its choice will help the organisation and orientation of the pedagogical practice to be developed in the teaching-learning process. The use of different pedagogical methods will favour learning and will encourage the student to acquire the learning scheduled for their level of education.

According to the psychopedagogical principles and the reading learning methodology more than 90% of teachers use all presented aspects in this questionnaire. On the table 5, we analyse now the questions and achieved percentages, in decreasing order of affirmative answers.

It is important kindergarten teachers to be role models when it comes to put into practice reading and writing learning methodologies. On the Table 5 it is shown that 99,3% of kindergarten teachers answered to two important questions: "Do I motivate children to interpret text illustrations, when children still do not know how to read?" and, "Do I exhibit children's works in the classroom?"; 93,3% of kindergarten teachers answered that they "I organise the classroom space with several different workshops and learning corners, according to the children's needs. These strategies are crucial to create the right motivation and to engage children in the learning process and to consolidate their knowledge.

| Table 5 - A: Psicopedagogical principles and reading learning methodology | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| 02. I motivate children to interpret the text illustrations, even if they cannot read. | 99,3% | 0,7% |
| 04. I exhibit in the classroom the work done by the children. | 99,3% | 0,7% |
| 01. I ask children questions while they are reading the texts to ensure that they are understanding the content. | 95,6% | 4,4% |
| 05. I introduce to children texts which contents are related to their past-experiences. | 95,6% | 4,4% |
| 06. I take advantage of the inputs that children give while reading a text, even if they cannot relate to their lives the theme we have been addressing. | 92,6% | 7,4% |
| 03. I establish links between written language and oral language. | 98,5% | 1,5% |
| 07. I establish dynamic reading animations (change of characters, change of endings, creation of short stories with images...) | 96,3% | 3,7% |
| 08. I organise the classroom with different workshops and learning corners, according to childrens' needs. | 93,3% | 6,7% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

2.3. Activity planning (programming or scheduling, timing, student groups)

The organisation of activities dedicated to the reading and writing learning process is extremely relevant. We know children need routines to be emotionally balanced. On the Table 6 we can easily verify that 94,8% of answers underline that the fact that they have daily routines when it comes teaching how to read. In fact, only 15,6% say that take advantage of classroom assemblies in order to plan the reading learning activities, in order to make them more attractive and meaningful.

| Table 6 - B: Activity planning | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 19. I have as daily routine a specific time for learning reading (assembly, corners ...). | 94,8% | 5,2% |
| 16. I change the schedule according to the needs of children's needs throughout the school year. | 92,6% | 7,4% |
| 14. I take advantage of situations rose by children in the classroom to perform reading activities. | 88,1% | 11,9% |
| 10. I promote reading activities in small groups. | 86,7% | 13,3% |
| 12. Children learn how to read by following a publisher's spelling reading. | 85,2% | 14,8% |
| 11. Individual reading activities are carried out. | 78,5% | 21,5% |
| 09. Reading activities are carried out in large groups. | 77,8% | 22,2% |
| 17. I organise groups according to children's different levels of reading. | 72,6% | 27,4% |
| 13. I articulate reading activities with the group through a notebook that we prepare taking into consideration children's interests. | 71,9% | 28,1% |
| 15. Activities begin from a project, teaching unit and/or centre of interest. | 26,7% | 73,3% |
| 18. The subjects debated at the assembly help me to plan more meaningful and motivating reading activities. | 15,6% | 84,4% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

2.4. Physical, material and human resources (typology, organisation, attendees, type of attendance).

Managing the physical, material and human resources properly is extremely important. The space and tool materials selection can determine the learning mood. Table 7 shows us that 98,5% of kindergarten teachers make use of tools to increment reading and writing activities; 80,7% to 78,5% answered that they use several communication and information technology resources (TIC) in order to draw reading activities and to allow children to create their own short stories. 54,8% say that they use the interactive board. Unfortunately, this tool is still not often used in pre-school education. The participation and the interaction between families and educational professionals (therapists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, trainees, etc.) are referred by a significant number of teachers: 85,9% engage families in home readings; 77,8% invite parents reading in the classroom; 71,9% engage other expert professionals in classroom reading activities. All these human resources empower kindergarten teachers whenever they face uncommon classrooms consisting of students that require special educational needs or one-to-one teaching methods.

| Table 7 - C: Physical, material and human resources | Yes | No |
|---|-------|-------|
| 23. I use reading materials as an addition to reading learning (cards with images and/or words). | 98,5% | 1,5% |
| 20. Children use a room corner for activities that promote reading learning. | 94,8% | 5,2% |
| 21. The classroom has a quiet place dedicated to individual reading (classroom library). | 91,9% | 8,1% |
| 22. I use several types of texts in the classroom (illustrated albums, short stories, newspapers, magazines, cookbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries...). | 91,9% | 8,1% |
| 30. I coordinate myself with other teachers to programme and/or perform activities with children about reading. | 88,1% | 11,9% |
| 28. I provide information to families to promote the learning of reading at home (workshops, quarterly meetings, tutorials, parents' school...). | 85,9% | 14,1% |
| 25. I use various ICT resources to perform interactive reading activities (internet, interactive whiteboard/projector, ...). | 80,7% | 19,3% |
| 24. I use ICTs to create short stories. | 78,5% | 21,5% |
| 27. Families participate in activities connected to reading in the classroom. | 77,8% | 22,2% |
| 31. Other teachers of the educational center or other professionals participate in my classroom to perform actions that promote children's learning reading skills. | 71,9% | 28,1% |
| 26. I use the interactive whiteboard /projector to perform selected reading activities from the internet (videos, games, children's websites...). | 54,8% | 45,2% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

2.5. Evaluation

Evaluation of pre-school education assumes an important formative dimension and it is an on-going process. Diverse techniques and classroom observation instruments should be taken into consideration when it comes to bold children development and give them the importance they have. (ME, 2020). It is also necessary to consider the formative principle of reading skills' evaluation written in the programme issued by the Ministry of Education. Table 8 shows us that the major part of kindergarten teachers (97,0%) evaluates children duties; 86,7% mention that children think about their own reading learning process and only 48,9% affirm that use specific moments along the school year to evaluate children with a certain reading text.






| Table 8 - D: Evaluation | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| 36. I evaluate the tasks done by children. | 97,0% | 3,0% |
| 32. I make a first students' evaluation at the beginning of the school year (diagnostic evaluation). | 87,4% | 12,6% |
| 33. I analyze different moments during the school year to evaluate the learning of children's reading. | 86,7% | 13,3% |
| 37. After finish a reading task, children think about what they have just learned. | 86,7% | 13,3% |
| 35. I use a specific rubric on reading skills to evaluate children. | 49,6% | 50,4% |
| 34. I use specific moments during the school year to evaluate children with a reading test. | 48,9% | 51,1% |

Note: Table with numbered items according to data shown at questionnaire, displayed in decreasing order of percentage of YES as answered.

2.6. Text types

Table 9 shows us that there are multiple text types used on pre-school education aiming to diversify the learning process and to increase children passion towards reading. It is crucial to pass on the idea of the importance of reading: it is fun, for example, reading a good story, a recipe, a message, a birthday invitation or an advertment.

Comparing among some given answers we understand that literary texts are widely used (87,1%), followed by the instructional (73,3%), descriptive (67,7%), expository (61,5%) and, finally, informative texts (59,3%).

| Table 9 Text types and question number | | Yes (%) | Average deviation |
|---|--|---------|-------------------|
| Descriptive (Q01 a Q09) |  | 67,7% | 0,09 |
| Expository (Q10 a Q14) |  | 61,5% | 0,12 |
| Instructional (Q15 a Q17) |  | 73,3% | 0,15 |
| Literary (Q18 a Q24) |  | 87,1% | 0,10 |
| Informative (Q25 a Q31) |  | 59,3% | 0,19 |

The next Table shows us, in increasing order, from the less to the most used text types. Therefore, the results are shown in this Table, in decreasing order, according to the given answers.

Table 9.1 shows us the percentage of literary texts used during the reading learning process. It shows us that most kindergarten teachers use several formats to explore sounds and words to allow the development of language consciousness. 97,0% of kindergarten teachers use folk literary texts such as proverbs, songs and riddles; 96,3% use short stories, narratives and legends; 95,6% use theatre and drama, while 91,1% use picture albums and poetry to achieve their learning reading goals. As OCEPE (2016) refers “rhymes, chants, tongue twisters, pastimes and odd bits of news are aspects of folk portuguese culture, often present in the classrooms and on children dailylife and are means to build up language consciousness” (p. 67). According to the Table, comics is the less used text format (63,7%).

| Table 9.1 – Text types used to develop reading skills (Literary) | Yes | No |
|--|-------|-------|
| Q 19. Proverbs, songs and pastimes. | 97,0% | 3,0% |
| Q 18. Short stories, narratives and legends. | 96,3% | 3,7% |
| Q 23. Theatre and drama. | 95,6% | 4,4% |
| Q 20. Illustrated albums. | 91,1% | 8,9% |
| Q 22. Poetry. | 91,1% | 8,9% |
| Q 21. Flip books, poetry, proverbs, song books... | 74,8% | 25,2% |
| Q 24. Comics. | 63,7% | 36,3% |

Table 9.2 shows us instructional texts containing a minor percentage of YES answers. Rule games and behaviour are more widely used. (91,1%).

| Table 9.2 – Text types used to develop reading skills (Instructional) | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Q 16. Rules (of games, of behaviour...) | 91,1% | 8,9% |
| Q 17. Prescriptions. | 77,8% | 22,2% |
| Q 15. Instructions. | 51,1% | 48,9% |

Table 9.3 shows us descriptive texts, when 87,4% of kindergarten teachers recognise that make use of flyers and posters and 82,2% make use of recipes. The question 8, catalogues, telephone books and agendas, got lowest percentage of answers (49,6%).

| Table 9.3 – Text types used to develop reading skills (Descriptive) | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Q 06. Flyers and posters. | 87,4% | 12,6% |
| Q 09. Cooking recipes. | 82,2% | 17,8% |
| Q 01. Lists (shopping, games, classroom, story' titles...). | 74,8% | 25,2% |
| Q 02. Labels (clothing, food...). | 66,7% | 33,3% |
| Q 05. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases... | 63,7% | 36,3% |
| Q 04. Index (books, magazines, short stories...). | 62,2% | 37,8% |
| Q 03. Horários (de programas de televisão, de atividades escolares e atividades domésticas...). | 61,5% | 38,5% |
| Q 07. Menus (school menus, restaurant menus...). | 61,5% | 38,5% |
| Q 08. Catalogues, telephone books, agendas... | 49,6% | 50,4% |

The expository texts, namely, texts to develop oral skills, show a percentage of 74,8% of YES answers (Table 9.4). Under the age criteria, from 3 up to 6 years old, according to the OCEPE (2016), oral communication is the most relevant skill to achieve language proficiency. Therefore, using this text typology has great pedagogic value.

| Table 9.4 – Text types used to develop reading skills (Expository) | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Q 13. Texts to develop of oral skills. | 74,8% | 25,2% |
| Q 11. Biographical reviews, study visits, experiences... | 71,9% | 28,1% |
| Q 10. Project work dossiers. | 65,2% | 34,8% |
| Q 14. Reference books. | 63,7% | 36,3% |
| Q 12. Textbooks or school manuals. | 31,9% | 68,1% |

Table 9.5 show us the percentage of YES answers to the use of informative texts. 89,6% of kindergarten teachers use pictures to help them teaching children how to read; 83,7% explore newspapers and manazines, being less used by kindergartens teachers.

| Table 9.5 - Text types used to develop reading skills (Informative) | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Q 29. Illustrations. | 89,6% | 10,4% |
| Q 25. Newspapers and magazines | 83,7% | 16,3% |
| Q 30. Publicity books, flyers... | 71,1% | 28,9% |
| Q 27. Epistolary correspondence (letters). | 56,3% | 43,7% |
| Q 26. Commercials and propaganda. | 54,8% | 45,2% |
| Q 31. Emails addresses and social networks. | 31,9% | 68,1% |
| Q 28. Conceptual maps. | 27,4% | 72,6% |

3. THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN DEVELOPING READING SKILLS

Some studies (Marques, 2002; Szymanski, 2003; Polonia and Dessen, 2005; Gasonato, 2007) emphasize the need for the school and the student's families to be, seeking to carry out a partnership between the two. This approach can allow the school to break down prejudices towards families and a greater understanding on the part of the school's important role and its way of working. When this proximity and intertwined relationship occurs, research results show (Marques, 2002; Polonia and Dessen, 2005), the consequences are quite satisfactory. Parents feel valued and become powerful allies of teachers, who, in turn, start to implement forms of monitoring and systematic assistance to students, allowing them to develop their full potential.

The parent's involvement and monitoring of their children's school life, is by all means, an important factor in the child's success in learning how to read and write (Polonia and Dessen, 2005; Marques, 2002). Moreover, there is research highlighting the need for the school to encourage and favour family participation and involvement in school life, because it was identified that a healthy family-school relationship is one of the factors that improve learning conditions (Lopez, 2002; Marques, 2002; Paro 2000; Bhering and Blatchford, 1999). Other research also shows that, even in a prestigious school institution, with exceptional curricular programmes, students' learning is only seen when they have parental support (Polonia and Dessen, 2005).

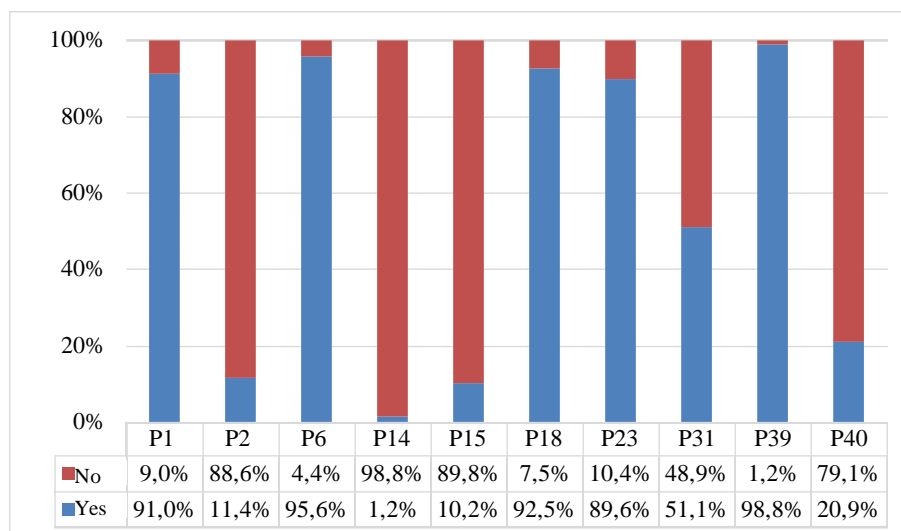
Parents' beliefs about their involvement in the teaching-learning process can influence their children's education, the perception of their role in the child's development, the parents' beliefs in which the school wants their help and the feeling of comfort related with school, have been referred to as important factors of parental support an involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1994). The more parents feel confident in their intellectual abilities and motivated to perform certain tasks, the greater their children's involvement in school activities is, specifically in the areas of Literacy and Mathematics (Eccles and Harold, 1994).

Dimension 1: Family behaviour regarding reading

Table 10.1 clearly shows us that a significant number of parents collaborate with the school professionals to increase the reading skills. 98,8% of them consider that reading skills help solving daily problems; 95,6% mentioned that reading is essential in daily life. This allow us to assume that most parents help their children to overcome difficulties. Only 1,2% of parents say that reading is indeed a waist of time.

| Table 10.1 – Family behaviour regarding reading | Yes | No |
|---|-------|-------|
| Q 1. I find pleasure going to a bookstore or to a library. | 91,0% | 9,0% |
| Q 2. I usually read the subtitles of television shows. | 11,4% | 88,6% |
| Q 6. Reading is essential in everyday life. | 95,6% | 4,4% |
| Q 14. Reading is a waste of time. | 1,2% | 98,8% |
| Q 15. I prefer to browse videos on the internet and to avoid the website pages that have many letters. | 10,2% | 89,8% |
| Q 18. Reading should be one of people's favorite entertainments. | 92,5% | 7,5% |
| Q 23. I like sharing information I have read on the internet, in books or in magazines. | 89,6% | 10,4% |
| Q 31. I take every moment to read throughout the day. | 51,1% | 48,9% |
| Q 39. Reading helps solving everyday situations (such as cooking or taking a medicine). | 98,8% | 1,2% |
| Q 40. When I am buying an electronic device, it is more useful to use the device directly rather than reading its instructions. | 20,9% | 79,1% |

On picture 11, we can analyse the percentage of answers given by parents regarding reading.



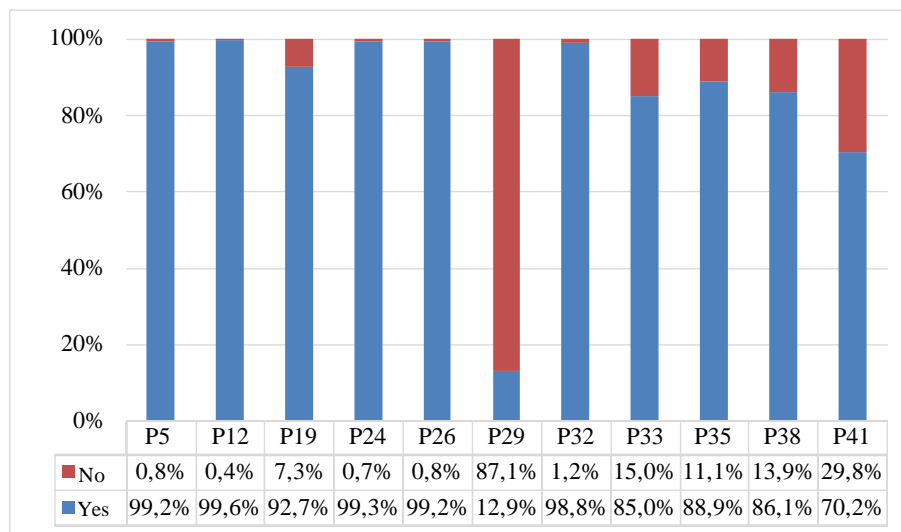
Picture 11 – Dimension 1: Family attitudes regarding reading

Dimension 2. Family behaviour to developing their children reading skills

Table 10.2 shows us families' behaviours to developing their children reading skills. In that sense, 99,6% of parents refer that books are surely a good children gift; 99,3% recommend parents to explain the reading benefits to their children; 98,8% recognise parents' role in their children learning reading process; 99,2% parents identify several different moments of daily life that can be used to engage reading such as during a meal, while traveling, before falling asleep, just to mention some. Only 12,9% of parents say that teaching how to read is not their responsibility but school responsibility instead.

| Table 10.2 – Family attitudes to developing their children reading skills | Yes | No |
|--|-------|-------|
| Q 5. Reading should be an important activity done in family. | 99,2% | 0,8% |
| Q 12. A book is always a good gift for children. | 99,6% | 0,4% |
| Q 19. It is advisable that family devote an established time per week to reading at home. | 92,7% | 7,3% |
| Q 24. It is advisable for parents to teach their children the advantage of reading. | 99,3% | 0,7% |
| Q 26. There are many moments in family life that are suitable to teach children how to read (at meal, on the go, in bed before they fall asleep...). | 99,2% | 0,8% |
| Q 29. Parents are not responsible for teaching their children's reading, because that what school is for. | 12,9% | 87,1% |
| Q 32. Parents should show some interest helping their children learn how to read. | 98,8% | 1,2% |
| Q 33. It is advisable to family to select or recommend educational programmes (television, mobile phone, computer) to their children to learn how to read. | 85,0% | 15,0% |
| Q 35. It is important to have a space at home dedicated to the use and maintenance of a family library. | 88,9% | 11,1% |
| Q 38. It is advisable that family encourage the correct use of readings performed with new technologies (computer, mobile phone, television...). | 86,1% | 13,9% |
| Q41. I participate in the activities of stimulating reading that the educational center organises. | 70,2% | 29,8% |

The graph of picture 12 show the distribution, in percentage, of family given answers regarding the behaviour toward their children' reading learning process.



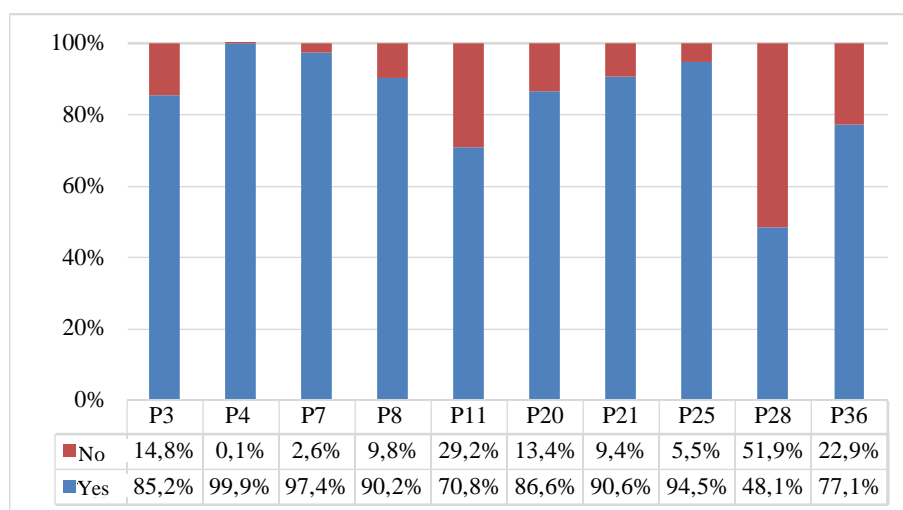
Pictures 12: Dimension 2. Family behaviours benefiting their children reading habits.

Dimension 3: Family behaviours to motivate their children

Table 10.3 shows us the parents' answers about their attitudes to motivate their children reading. 99,9% of inquired people say that they talk with their children about daily events. We know a good oral communication helps reading and to comprehend the functionality itself. Children who verbalize their thoughts describing daily events tend to be children who also like to listening to short stories as well as reading them. Later on in life, they possibly would like writing. Learning new vocabulary and enrich their active lexic will allow them in future construction/creation of creative narratives. 97,4% of inquired people also mentioned that they flip books as well as on online book format with their children. This particular activity allows children learning the orientation of the written text. In addition to that, let them to be familiar with paratextual elements, knowing auctors and illustrators. Only 48,1% say they select reading educational programmes to their children to use on their smartphones, on television or on their tablets.

| Table 10.3 – Family behaviours to engage their children reading through daily situations. | Yes | No |
|---|-------|-------|
| Q 3. I read at home in places where my children can see and follow my example. | 85,2% | 14,8% |
| Q 4. My kids and I talk about things we have recently done. | 99,9% | 0,1% |
| Q 7. My children and I flipped through a printed or digital book together (cookbook, a short story...) | 97,4% | 2,6% |
| Q 8. In case we come across with a different language from my children' mother tongue, I usually answer to their questions. | 90,2% | 9,8% |
| Q 11. I watch with my children children's programmes that teach them how to read (on television or on the internet) | 70,8% | 29,2% |
| Q 20. I do with my children some activities to engage them with reading habits. | 86,6% | 13,4% |
| Q 21. My children and I tell or make up oral short stories. | 90,6% | 9,4% |
| Q 25. My children and I sing songs or recite poetry, tongue-twisting, riddles together. | 94,5% | 5,5% |
| Q 28. I select educational reading programmes for my children to use on my mobilephone, televisio, tablet... | 48,1% | 51,9% |
| Q 36. I look at and/or select with my children books that are in the bookstore or in a library. | 77,1% | 22,9% |

The graph of picture 13 show us the distribution percentage of answers given by parents to engage their children in several different daily situations.



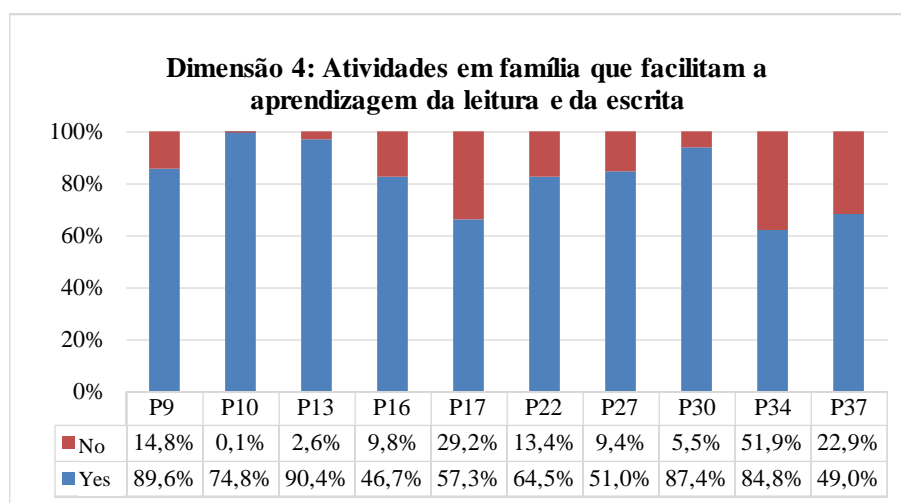
Pictures 13: Dimension 3. Family behaviours to motivate their children in daily routines.

Dimension 4: Family behaviour benefiting how to read and write

Table 10.4 show us family behaviour benefiting how to read and write. As we can see, 90,4% of parents say that they pay with their children playing alphabetical games; 89,6% say that they read books and children websites containing pictures to children interpret them; 87,4% say that they identify book pictures with their children, from a website or from a museum or library. Only 46,7% say that they check the television programming in order to better choose children programs suitable to their children age such as a film or a competition programme...

| Table 10.4. – Family behaviour benefiting how to read and write | Yes | No |
|---|-------|-------|
| Q 9. My children and I read children's books or websites with illustrations for letting them to interpret the images. | 89,6% | 10,4% |
| Q 10. My children and I read or write notes (shopping list, messages, notes not to forget...). | 74,8% | 25,2% |
| Q 13. My kids and I play games that contains the alphabet. | 90,4% | 9,6% |
| Q 16. My children and I read television programming to choose a children's film, a contest.... | 46,7% | 53,3% |
| Q 17. My kids and I play guessing or saying words that contain a syllable we choose. | 57,3% | 42,7% |
| Q 22. My children and I read aloud product labels, logos of well-known brands, road signs. | 64,5% | 35,5% |
| Q 27. My kids and I play composing and decomposing words. | 51,0% | 49,0% |
| Q 30. My children and I have identified images from a book, a website or a place (museum, library...). | 87,4% | 12,6% |
| Q 34. Me and my kids read together aloud (a short story, a game' instructions, a cooking recipe...). | 84,8% | 15,2% |
| Q 37. My children and I read or write together the shopping list with symbols/icons or words. | 49,0% | 51,0% |

The graph of picture 14 show us a different data interpretation, emphasising the major percentage of affirmative given answers towards a great family consciousness regarding learning reading process.



Picture 14 – Dimension 4: Family behaviour benefiting how to read and write.



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