

Playing and Producing: the workshops of game as an educational proposal in the initial grades of Elementary School

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Abstract: Considering the historical difficulties of the Brazilian children that attend public schools to learn the basic contents, we suggest a pedagogical practice with more power to improve this learning quality. Starting from the idea that the ludic activity constitutes a favorable learning environment, the main purpose of this study was to verify the potential of the Workshops of Game as a pedagogical practice able to reverberate in the other school learning processes, as well as produce learning in other plans unforeseen by the traditional school. The Workshops of Game are a pedagogical practice within the Physical Education discipline, in which in playing, the children learn the basis of knowledge (thinking, body motor function, sociability, morality,

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affectivity, etc.), and do it so as to reverberate in other school subjects. The investigational method adopted was the Research-Action.
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1 Introduction

There have never been so many children enrolled with the Brazilian schools; however, their difficulties to learn the school contents remain insurmountable in great part of the Brazilian schools. The Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica - SAEB, 2003 [National System for Evaluation of Basic Education – SAEB, 2003] revealed a grievous situation: for a significant percentage of our children with four years of school-days, reading and writing are the tasks considered as the most difficult ones. Neira and Nunes (2006), in a work recently published, remember that, “[...] at each time, the school subjects were configured as a singular space, where the privileged sectors of the society imprinted their mark, formatting men and women to meet and perpetuate their interests”. (NEIRA; NUNES, 2006, p. 105). It is understood, however, why the most affected by non-learning go to schools that serve the economically impoverished communities. Thence, the importance, for the groups that remain in power, to prevent a curriculum made from the students and teachers, that means, from the overwhelmed people, from Paulo Freire’s standpoint (2005a), or from the

victims, according to Henrique Dussel (2000). The lucidity of Prof. Manuel Sérgio (2005) synthesizes this issue: “Thinking about the new, inquire about the unlikeness, learn how to learn – are behaviors that Power abominates and its corner or cabinet subordinates prevent, both through the “law of force” and the “force of law”. (SÉRGIO, 2005, p. 52).

Physical Education is a secular practice, bearer of a strong cultural load. According to Soares, *et al.* (1993, p.61), “Physical Education is a subject that pedagogically deals, at school, with the knowledge of an area hereinafter referred to as body culture”, represented, according to the curricular proposal for the State of Santa Catarina (SANTA..., 1998, p.153), in such a way “[...] that, within any educational process, it can be perceived as a curricular component neither more nor less important than the others, and that seeks, jointly with them, to enable all the educational purposes to be met”.

It’s in the commitment of knowledge reestructuralization, and in the challenge to break with the secular difficulty of learning and the child’s progressive disinterest (who craves for the first day at school, but that soon becomes disenchanting) that other fundamentals, like the aesthetic and the ludic one, not only those referred to by the educational tradition, are inserted in our pedagogical program called Workshops of Game.

Such workshops provide as didactic materials objects made of recyclable materials, transformed into pieces that can be used in countless different games. The rich, beautiful, diversified didactic universe increases the possibilities of base knowledge constitution (learn how to think, learn how to do, learn how to

relate with people, learn how to deal with feelings, learn how to build rules, learn how to learn, learn how to live).

The beauty of the class scenery provided by the didactic material specifically developed for the Workshops of Game fascinates children, calls their attention, what solves a serious school problem: the lack of attention of students during the classes. The game, in its turn, constitutes the classes drive, the children's main stimulation. We understand the game as that activity that, among the human beings, is performed when basic needs don't need to be satisfied. When the child is not hungry, he/she plays at eating, when he/she is not sleepy, he/she plays at sleeping, for example. Arnold Gehlen (1987) said that:

Although it's impossible to establish a measure, one may suppose, in the first approach to this difficult problem, that the potential pulsatory energy, merely quantitative, considered from the energetic standpoint, is stronger in the man than in any other animal the same size (GEHLEN, 1987. p. 65).

Henri Atlan, when commenting about Winnicot, wrote something very similar to what Gehlen wrote. He talks about the game:

This potential space, is, actually, described as a “place of game and cultural experience” under all aspects. Culture, as the “extension of the idea of transitional phenomena”, which designates “that in which we devote most of our time when we enjoy what we do”, would have, thus, an existence that is not in the individual’s inside nor around him/her, in the world of shared reality. (ATLAN, 1994, p. 236).

In the Physical Education field, the doubts and mistakes regarding the concept of game are quite generalized. Some people refer to certain ludic activities as plays, others as games, and others even as sports. We tried to make this situation a little clearer by informing that game is the phenomena that expresses one the human being’s dimensions: his playful dimension. When he plays, the man performs activities that are not linked to objective commitments, that means, he does not play to fulfill obligations nor minds anticipating the results. In some cases, the game is manifested as a play (in children, teenagers or adults). It’s about a game less ruled from the social standpoint and more limited to small groups. In other circumstances, the game is manifested as a sport, when the rules are enough to integrate a large population group, coming to be universal. There are the cases where the game is manifested as fights, dances, parties, and even as purposeless conversations among people or merely as individual imagination games.

Piaget (1978, p. 188), in his lucidity, presents criticisms about the way how the authors, in a general manner, seek to comprehend the game: “[...] the large number of explanatory game theories developed so far show sufficiently that this phenomenon subsists to the causal comprehension. But the reason of this resistance is maybe due to the fact that the game tends to be turned into an isolate function”.

We close this complex issue about the comprehension of the game phenomenon by transcribing one of Freire, J.B.:

Therefore, a thing remains to be done: seek the meaning of game, no longer in the endless characterization of the parts that compose it, but in the identification of the contexts in which it occurs. Undoubtedly, there is an ecologic niche that comprises the game and allows it to be expressed, the only one to which it fits. It is within this environment that we have to penetrate in order to try to comprehend the game phenomenon (FREIRE, J. B., 2002, p. 58).

Breaking with the Physical Education traditional class, this study aims at verifying how children development occurs in various educational plans, and not only in the logic-mathematic (almost an exclusive concern of the traditional school project, except for the moral concern, a conservative moral, veiled, but present in the educational plans). Interposing between the Physical Education and other areas (like the Portuguese, Mathematics and arts subjects), through the inquiry, the

exchange of ideas, the observation, action and construction, the recreation activity, in the way it is practiced at the Workshops of Game, allows students to exercise crucial values and abilities as emancipation instruments, such as the aesthetics, respect, justice, solidarity, motor function, reliance and cooperation, among others, from the actions developed in the classroom.

According to Freire, J.B (1989, p.182-3),

It would be necessary to decharacterize the Physical Education's utility value. It can not justify its existence based on the possibility to help learning other subjects' contents – who practices Physical Education can learn Mathematics more easily. It would be desirable if it were like that, but Physical Education should not be practiced at school only for that purpose. On the contrary, even considering the interdisciplinarity, an essential component to teaching, Physical Education justifies itself, for the content it develops at school.

A democratic school is, as emphasized by Freire, P. (2005b p.6):

A school that, remaining as a knowledge production time-space in which teaching and learning occur, it involves, however, teaching and learning in a different way. Teaching cannot be this

effort to transmit the so-called accumulated knowledge, which a generation provides to another, and learning is not the mere reception of the transferred subject or content.

On the contrary, it is about a space built around the comprehension of world and, as concluded by the author (FREIRE, P., 2005b, p.6), “[...] the objects, the creation, beauty, scientific accuracy, the common sense, teaching and learning also depend on the production of that comprehension, as social as the language production, which is also knowledge.”

Piaget (1979) shows, from the psychological standpoint, the importance of the subject’s action over the environment along the learning process. What is seen at school, however, with a troublesome frequency, is the practice of a pedagogical action of immobilizing oneself and sepulchral silence.

In this Master’s degree dissertation, Feijó (2005) showed the efficacy that the pedagogy like that practiced at the Workshops of Game may have when applied to the children’s education. The researcher resorted to classes in which themes were suggested for the work with children. In the case of this research, the themes were not suggested by the teachers, but defined by the students themselves.

2 Purpose

Considering the historical difficulties of the Brazilian children that attend public schools to learn the basic contents, we presume that it’s possible to try a pedagogical practice with more power to improve this learning quality. Starting from the

idea that the recreational activity constitutes a favorable learning environment, when we deal with children, the main purpose of this study is to verify the potential of the Workshops of Game as a pedagogical practice able to reverberate in the other school learning processes, as well as produce learning in other plans unforeseen by the traditional school, from class themes generated by the students themselves.

3 Methodology

3.1 The research method

In this research, we consider the Research-Action as the one that best meets the researcher's needs, because it's about studying a problem from its dynamics. Our purpose was to put ourselves, as investigators, in the middle of the educational scene, living it both as teachers and students, and as investigators. What we are going to present here is this possibility to educate researching, and learn teaching. We do not mean, however, that we forgot that science is about an interpretation of facts. The Ortega y Gasset's lesson (1989 p. 26) remained: "In order to find out reality, we must take the facts out from around us for a moment and stay alone with our minds". This Research-Action was performed by two investigators, where one of them is the teacher that gave the researched classes. Such classes were directed by pedagogical principles

and procedures produced by the Workshops of Game project. The way how such classes evolved, and the knowledge children built in the relations generated were the investigations' main subject matter.

Being a pedagogical research, as defined by the Research-Action, creates a narrower harmony between the investigation and the educational scene. Franco (2006) defines it as follows:

Hence, I want to elucidate that the research-action, structured within its generating principles, is an eminently pedagogical research, within the perspective of being the pedagogical exercise, characterized as an action that makes the educational practice a science, from ethical principles that view the continuous formation and emancipation of all the subjects of the practice. (FRANCO, 2006, p.6).

A field notebook, easy to transport, constantly at hand so that records could be made, was indispensable. In this notebook, each class evolution was always registered and compared against the plan that preceded it. Besides, as it was necessary to investigate into the knowledge built during the classes, we observed the students' behavior and recorded their sayings (between students and students and between students and teachers), several of their gestures, and the practice of games (the particularities of each construction in the games).

The notebook is not the only important instrument for a Research-Action. There are others equally important. In this study, we opted, after a long period of classes, to ask students to write about a core issue on a sheet of paper: What have you learned in the Workshops of Game? It is interesting to emphasize that several of the children could not read or write when our classes started.

Some researchers of the Physical Education area have resorted to the Research-Action, considering it as a very pertaining modality when it comes to pedagogical actions.

The research-action was the main method used in the investigation, involving the teachers' theories and actions, as well as the occasional transformations in the daily practice. This method derived from ethnography within the educational context is the most suitable in cases when the teacher is the researcher himself. In this work, the authors themselves researched into their everyday practices, meeting systematically to reflect about and plan their intervention all together. (NETO *et al*, 2006, p. 1)

Betti, when researching the school relations with the electronic media, also resorted to the Research-Action procedures, emphasizing its pedagogical character:

But it was not about a “training program”, in which it would be told to teachers what to do and how. On the contrary, it was assumed that the teachers have something to say about what to do and how to do it, involving the need of a constructive dialog, through a partnership work in which, arising from the experiments and debates, all the interlocutors jointly sought the “solutions”, and thus, they improved their knowledge about the adequacy of strategies/contents in the use of television reports in Physical Education classes. (BETTI, 2006, p. 102).

We closed this topic with the widely known words of Thiollent (2004, p. 14):

Research-action is a type of empiric-based social research that is conceived and performed in close association with an action or with the resolution of a collective problem, in which the researchers and the participants representing the situation or the problem are involved in a cooperative or participative manner.

3.2 The research place

The research was carried out at a Basic Education School belonging to the State Education System in the City of Florianópolis, SC. The physical configuration of dwellings, to a certain extent, identifies the social segments existing in the region: from the district's main street to half of the hill, where there is still asphalt, higher-middle class dwellings; from there on, going hill up, a residential center mostly composed of migrants from the State inland. Our students derived from this second segment.

3.3 The research students

The students that participated in this study belong to this second segment, and all of them came from low-income families. We selected two groups, one from the morning period, composed of ten boys and twelve girls, and another from the afternoon period, with ten boys and fourteen girls. Therefore, we carried out this work with forty-six students all together, aged between seven and eight years, in the second grade of the Elementary School.

3.4 The Workshops of Game

In the Workshops, the symmetry intended by the space planned in the classroom does not exist. The Workshops of Game, therefore, start by breaking with such plan in order to break with the curricular tradition afterwards. The Workshops of Game intend to cover other equally important human knowledge fields, such as the social relations, the moral field, motor function, affectivity, sensitivity and aesthetics. The Workshops of Game require free-movement spaces, ludic environment, colorful and diversified sceneries. Nevertheless, the Workshops of Game do not aim at being pedagogy apart from school; on the contrary, the intention is that it can work where the traditional school does. The Workshops of Game do not have the purpose to combat the traditional school, but operate where it does.

At the beginning of works, we visited the school's direction to present the Workshops of Game' pedagogical plan and request the authorization to apply it to two student groups. After being granted authorization, it was the time to talk to the other teachers, even those that would not be involved with the groups under consideration.¹ Next, the student group's teacher, who was one of the researchers, talked to the children about what was intended to be done in the following classes, which were supposed to be Physical Education classes.

During one month, in the beginning of the second semester 2004, the children and their parents collected

¹ Research authorized by the Ethics Committee of UDESC: University of the State of Santa Catarina.

recyclable materials for the didactic material confection. Subsequently, we arranged a collective work, which counted on the participation of students, students' parents and teachers. In this collective work, we built the material necessary to the classes; the pieces were painted with bright dye, in four colors. The material diversity, beside the colors, could also be noted in relation to weights, shapes, sizes and textures.

In regard to the first grade of the Elementary School, we considered the make-believe or symbolic games, the construction and social games as the most suitable for those children. The materials built during the collective work could be used in any games; however, more specifically in the symbolic and construction games.

We had experience, in previous works (FEIJÓ, 2005), in giving classes with themes suggested by the teachers. In such case, we wanted to see the work's effects after developing themes suggested by the children themselves.

At the beginning of each class, the group's teacher gathered the students in a circle, they sat down on the floor and talked about the previous class and what they should do in the class that day. During the first classes, the students expressed the interest to play with the materials, but changing the themes at every moment. They were free to decide what to play. They produced constructions that represented their houses, things existing in their district, histories, but without sticking to any of the themes. However, some classes after the school semester had started, using the didactic material, the students started building what a supermarket represented to them.

From the definition of the theme “Supermarket”, the students did not want to change it anymore. They remained until the school year end playing about this theme.

According to Freire and Scaglia (2003, p. 62), the materials are particularly, but not exclusively, intended “ [...] to the theme Construction Games and to the activities related to it, a category of games that help in the transition between the child’s egocentric activity and the decentralized, socialized activity”.

At the beginning of each class, the children talked to the teacher/researcher about the supermarket. At each class, they added new elements. We ended the year with a complete establishment: shelves, goods, boxes, administration system, economic control.

4 The Interpretation of the Data Found and Reality Transformation

4.1 Let’s see some scenes related to morality.

A girl told the teacher: “- I’m not going to play with **A**. She doesn’t know how to play. All the toys are hers, she doesn’t lend them to us. She always wants to rule everything. And she is also rebel.”

That’s about a typical morality situation. The child feels a victim of injustice. He/she seeks the teacher so that he can intermediate the situation and do justice. **A** couldn’t share the

toy. The make-believe games fulfill this function to help the child in the transition between a very self-centered state to a multicentered state.

Several classes ahead, the progress in relations was noted: “**B**: - Can’t you see that you took my toy car’s tire? **C**: - I’m just seeing it, take it easy! I’m your friend! **B**: - **C**, see it with the eyes, not with your hands. And adds: - Ok.”

In another class, the relations are even more peaceful, and one of the children warns: “- The supermarket is open, organize yourselves and come in. Have a nice shopping!”

At this point, the school’s director, observing the children’s play, commented: “They behave as adults, they take the play to heart, I do not see anyone attacking, pushing or even arguing with the friends.”

From the morality standpoint, there was a significant advancement in the children’s knowledge. It’s no wonder: on the one hand, their age favored such transformation. On the other hand, the engagement in collective games, which cannot be performed, except through social agreements.

4.2 Advancements related to motor function (dimension on which the Physical Education subject is based).

The situations experienced by children when they played the supermarket favored especially the motor dimension mobilization, mainly regarding the fine handling movements:

D: - Can't you see, **DA**, that this box is small and does not fit in the bigger box's place? Take care. **D:** - **B**, you can't simply throw the boxes one over the other, you have to place them rightly, the biggest below and the smallest above. **G:** - I, **B** and **J** constructed a very tall building, with several boxes. Now, let's try to transport it.

Observing the classes development, we noted the advancements in relation to the care with the materials used to install and operate the supermarket. Cares related to countless dimensions, but that required exact and well-coordinated gestures from children in order to be accomplished.

4.3 Advancements related to affectivity:

It is a dimension covered at school with a rigorous armor, so that the educational system can ignore it while caring about the logic-mathematic thinking, even because we generally know little about affectivity.

In a certain class, we asked **MA** why she was walking hand in hand with **MI**: “**MA**: It's because we are playing mother and daughter, who are close friends.”

The situation translates a friendly relation, a friendship, a love relation between the two children. However, in the educational scene, the teacher's question is very important. When making the question, the teacher leads children to set

them apart from the situation, giving opportunity to criticize, comprehend and deal with such feelings.

In another class, we recorded: “ **LA:** Teacher! Are we going to have Physical Education class today? Teacher: - Yes, we will. **LA:** Whoopee! I love Physical Education classes, you know? It’s nice! And you are good and quite beloved, did you know that? Can you invite over some day? Some day...”

Freinet (2001) could note that in his classes:

We are not severe about the way of politeness. This child comes towards us, eager to tell us a discovery made in his/her way or to tell a piece of news. In his/her eagerness, he/she forgets to say good morning; but by the way, isn’t his/her reliance the most courteous way to say good morning? (FREINET, 2001, p. 77)

There was a boy who, in the classroom, created countless troubles. He even refused to stay in the classroom, causing serious troubles at school. At the supermarket, he was designed by the other children to coordinate the money issues, control the soft drink display and work as a cashier. His behavior, in this play, didn’t diverge from the others’. In relation to that, the student **E** affirmed: “Today we designed **L** to count the money, so that he stops challenging the others. In the classroom, he is terrible. And we placed **MA** to help pack the goods, because he is always lonesome.”

This is a very convenient moment for those children's affective growth, so that they can learn how to deal with emotions and feelings. According to the group's teacher testimony, at that time, the students were helping a lot in the classroom and **MA** was clearly making advancements, producing and drawing some pictures.

There is the possibility that today it's both important to educate affectivity and the logic-mathematic thinking. We know how difficult it is to persuade the teachers that it's possible to teach how to deal with emotions and educate feelings, so that the students are kind, altruist and sympathetic. However, in this experience of the Workshops of Game, all the time children inserted in their games the feelings experienced in their everyday lives.

4.4 Advancements related to social relations.

Children learned how to make exchanges, to come to an agreement and act co-operatively. As the time went by, no discords or accusations were observed in the supermarket play. The children respected the lines to buy and pay at the supermarket and nobody complained to have been cheated in the change. One of the children's mothers noted that the Physical Education class seemed to unite the children even more, they didn't remained in front of the classroom's door and always played all together. In fact, the game fascinated those children very much. As Huizinga (1996, p.13) affirmed: "Games cast a spell over us: it's 'fascinating, 'captivating'".

We recorded this talk among the children: “**L**: We are not using these boxes, let’s give them to **P. B**’s group, will we? - Yes, we are not going to use it at all.”

Those two children, in a subsequent interview, confirmed that one of the most important lessons they learned during the Workshops of Game was to share materials with their friends, not to discuss (quarrel) with their classmates and help their friends who were in trouble.

4.5 Advancements related to aesthetics.

PI, observing a tower construction with bottle caps, made by his friend **G**, said loudly: “ Gee! How beautiful! It’s very cool! It looks like the TV Cultura’s tower on Morro da Cruz [Cruz Hill]. You know, bro’, yours is even more terrific, all colorful, it looks as if it was very sunny, you know, end of afternoon, reflection, that orange light looks like a streak, totally amazing.”

The sensitivity to beauty that Paulo Freire (2003, p. 77) has always highlighted: “[...] stop and enjoy the sunset. That’s what seizes our attention, lost in the contemplation of the quickness and elegance with which clouds move through the blue-sky background. That’s what thrills before the work of art that fixes my attention on beauty”.

I asked **J**: “Why did the tree leaf fall?” And he answered to me: “The leaf fell down with happiness. It wants to show to

us that it feels happy, jumped, danced and then, it fell down. She wants to be happy, she wanted to be like us.”

Brougère (1998, p. 90) said that: “The poet does like the child that plays; he creates an imaginary world which he takes deeply to heart, that means, he is endowed with great affection qualities, distinguishing it clearly from reality”.

G is engaged in a construction with some bottle caps: “Teacher, look at what I did!”, and **P**, next to **G**, said loudly: “Wow, bro’! That’s a work of art!”

Then, I asked **P** what a work of art means: “**P**: A Work of art is just like that, look!” Curling his lips and pointing with the index finger to the classmate’s work.

During one of our class, the school’s director showed up and saw the supermarket construction. She could not contain herself and said to the children: “Gee, what a beautiful supermarket! I’ve never seen such a lively and fancy supermarket like yours, and how many different walls!”

The children answered: “You will see tomorrow, we are going to make another even bigger and more beautiful one. If you don’t come back to visit us, you won’t see how beautiful it will be. Not only the wall is beautiful but also the shelves are modern and quite colorful, pretty nice.”

We may say that beauty can be taught. The examples presented in our work are indiscussable. We do not mean learning according to the traditional molds, when, at the traditional school, things are only transmitted, but within another concept of school.

4.6 Advancements related to the logic-mathematic thinking

A: “Let’s set the bottle caps in a row. **P:** Let’s use about one hundred of them. **A:** All in the same color? **P:** No, we can mix them up. Hey, **A,** don’t forget to count, to make it right, OK!”

A affirmed during the interview that, with the supermarket play, he learned to sum up fast, give the change and keep a good relationship with the other classmates.

At the Workshops of Game, the students, taking the example of **P** and **A**, organize their thinking within a context. The calculations they perform are inserted into the context of the supermarket play and, therefore, they make sense, have a meaning to them. See what a student girl said during the play:

J: - Teacher, look at what I’ve just found out: there are small heavy bottles; other big soft drink bottles that are light, some are more filled up than others, some are bigger and some are smaller, one is very big, some are more filled up than others. It’s for us to learn how to calculate the weight, isn’t it? You’re very clever, you know! May I put them on the shelves?

There are in this expression signs of awareness raising. Undoubtedly, before producing the sentence we transcribed, the student thought it over and concluded accurately. How much she

must have explored the material and reflected upon its actions to get to such conclusion! The teacher didn't have to give the information, she inferred it. In her subsequent interview, **J** mentioned that, through the games, she learned how to calculate and organize. At another moment, this dialog was heard:

Teacher: - What are you doing? **J**: I am measuring the sticks, and then, I'm going to build a ladder. Teacher: How are going to build the ladder? **J**: In this way, teacher: I'll put the stick on the floor and I'll keep placing from the smallest to the biggest one. Teacher: Oh! I got it. So, do it! I want to see it. **J**: - I'm going to show you, the way I saw the clothes there at the shop, all in a row. Quite beautiful and organized.

Not so in haste, she observed, trying, changing the sticks until reaching her objective.

There were so many classes and so many examples observed that it would take too long to describe them here. In addition to those expressions observed during the several classes, at the school year end, we asked the children to write about the classes. All of them showed the ability to write their testimonies, although they did it, in many cases, still with a certain embarrassment. Fragments of the testimonies written:

[...] I have learned how to calculate and help my friends. I share my things, I like the teacher

[...] I learned to respect my friends and share my toys with them [...]. I am the creator of the Havon supermarket. My specialty is to play and create materials. [...] I learned how to make friends. [...] I love playing with the secretary. [...] I work as a cashier. [...] I love teacher Ciro from my school as if he were my dad.

It's worth mentioning that, at the beginning of school year, many of them were unable to read and write. We can't assert that it was thank to the Game Workshop that they learned how to read and write; this is only another data that confirms the advancement achieved by the children, from the intellectual standpoint. But we can presume, in this learning, the influence of the Workshops of Game, because we verified in a previous survey (FEIJÓ, 2005), that scholars of economically impoverished districts do not usually learn how to read and write in the first grades of the Elementary School.

In the traditional education, the problems are given by the school, just like the solutions for them. At the Workshops of Game, by the examples provided, the themes developed by the children caused the problems. The children sought solutions because they were necessary to continue the play. As we have seen, they compared, established correspondences, reverted, sorted, put in series, preserved, challenged by the huge diversity of situations roused by the games. By the way, which subject is the logic-mathematic thinking constituted of, but of such basic notions of thinking?

5 Final Considerations

Considering the school reprobation rates in the public education system published by the secretariats of education as still alarming, we noted that at the schools situated in economically destitute districts, such rates are higher than in the economically privileged districts. And the school searched into lives such reality, because it very often receives a significant number of students came from impoverished communities, who reside in the vicinities of the school.

One of the school's requirements is that children learn the school contents, that means, the formal, scientific knowledge. We also know that the child comes from a ludic and informal environment (when he/she has the opportunity to create his/her children's environment). However, in most of times, the school does not provide the possibility of intermediation between the informal knowledge acquired in the child's cultural universe and the formal knowledge provide by the school.

Provided that there is not the bridge between the cultural reality lived by the child and the daily obligations at school, he/she will face difficulties to overcome the obstacles, what may lead the child to reprobation or to being approved by condescendence, without being literate. And that's not only about a school-centered problem. The lack of instruments to absorb the school contents, as well as the lack of education in other plans other than the traditional school's, shall reverberate in the attempts of social emancipation of those children in the future.

Thinking about reducing the distance between the street and the school (that means, between the child's everyday life and the school's formal activities, and, breaking with the traditional Physical Education class, we implemented the Workshops of Game, a set of pedagogical materials, methodologies and games that constitute environments suitable to educate in a different manner, allowing the children to attend the school without renouncing their right to be children. Breaking with the ancient school's tradition means, among other things, the possibility to produce a ludic environment, which is typical of childhood; it means teaching how to think, teaching how to express oneself; how to deal with feelings, to live in community, to articulate the individualities to compose groups.

The school searched into, in the Game Workshop environment, assigned to students themselves the responsibility to generate the game themes. In another research previously carried out by us, a teacher herself suggested the themes for children in the Workshops of Game. We wanted to know if, in case they didn't receive any theme suggestions, they would be able to generate and develop them on their own. And if such themes, generated by them, would produce results similar to those of the other research.

Several themes were created by the students. In contact with the recycled material, they engaged actively in the game, always collective, from which diverse reasons to play arose. The most frequent of all was, undoubtedly, the Supermarket one. For months, the children practiced this play, which seemed to be endless. At each class, new ingredients were added. And everything we observed in the research that previously

suggested the themes for the students (the previous one, already concluded), also occurred in this case, as we could see in the data interpretation performed. The Supermarket arose, grew and expanded among the children from the groups that lived such experiences in the Workshops of Game. It deserved different baptisms from them and became the greatest attraction of the Workshops of Game during the research works.

The children went field working. They could not organize a good supermarket without knowing what happened in a real one. Fantasy features as something real, but integrates the invisible. The make-believe commercial establishment had, according to them, to be very similar to the real one, but each one's life experiences were deposited and played during the games there inside (another way to live each thing). They researched about goods, prices, quality and organization. They had to organize the departments, deal with money, make calculations and write. The aspects that are usually typical only of the Physical Education subject were integrated to the knowledge of several areas. It ended up creating a theme that forced them to think and, therefore, it reverberated in other activities that required the logic-mathematic thinking, like the classroom's subjects. Dealing with a supermarket demands speaking well and write, what contributes to the Portuguese contents. The recycled material and the commercial establishment arrangements, among other plays, produced an environment of plentiful beauty. Although our intention is not dealing with artistic education, the symptoms of enhancement of the children's aesthetic sense were evident.

The teacher for that subject, who was also the researcher, was present all the time, intermediating the relations among the children and between them and the games. His presence was part of the games. His research researched about him. The conflicts arose and the teacher was there, ready to intermediate them. As seen from the analyses, the students always came to agreements, because the game motivation was strong and they wanted to go ahead with the play. The teacher never imposed rules; they had to be built by mutual agreement among the students.

Those children's teachers agreed upon recognizing the advancements achieved by them during the period in which we observed their activities in the Workshops of Game. Among other things, they learned how to read and write. It does not mean that it could not be achieved without the Workshops. Of course the teachers could reach this result, but the fact is that in schools situated in economically impoverished districts, it has been more and more frequent to see a child promoted to the next grades without mastering writing, reading and the elementary calculations. When our work started, very few of them could read and write something. At the end, all of them showed advancements in such aspects. For children that live in these districts, everyday attacked by the urban violence swept to the outskirts, incorporating instruments like reading and writing is of fundamental importance. It is difficult to think in emancipation when at least this is not learned. This was one of the major results of the work carried out with the Workshops of Game: contributing to increase the power to absorb the school contents. And what about the rest, that means, the education in other plans? Learning how to think, for example, does not reflect

only in the Mathematics or the Portuguese; it's for life. That's like learning how to live in society, build rules, appreciate the beauty, deal with feelings, know the own body, among other essential elements for an autonomous life. For many children, that's not only about passing to the next grade, but also running away from poverty, acquiring the right to life.

Playing and Producing: the workshops of game as an educational proposal in the initial years of Elementary School.

Resume: Taking into account the historical difficulties of the Brazilian children who attend the public schools to learn the basic contents, we suggest a pedagogical practice with greater means to improve the quality of this learning. Starting from the idea that the ludic constitute a favorable environment to the learning process, the central goal of this study was to verify the potential of the Workshops of Game as a pedagogical practice that is able to produce repercussions in other school learning processes, as well as to produce learning processes in other levels not anticipated by the traditional school. The Workshops of Game are a pedagogical practice situated within the Physical Education discipline (gym class), in which in playing, the children learn the basis of knowledge (thinking, body motor function, sociability, morality, affectivity, etc.), and do it in a way as to have repercussions in other school disciplines. The investigation method adopted was the Research-

Action.

Keywords: Physical Education. Play and playthings. Education, primary and secondary. Pedagogy

Fabricando: Los Talleres de Juegos como propuesta educacional en los años iniciales de la Enseñanza Fundamental.

Resumen: Considerando las dificultades de los niños brasileños que frecuentan las escuelas públicas para aprender los contenidos básicos, sugerimos una práctica pedagógica que busca mejorar la calidad de ese aprendizaje. Partiendo de la idea que la actividad deportiva constituye un ambiente favorable al aprendizaje, el objetivo central de este estudio fue verificar el potencial de los “Talleres de Juego” como práctica pedagógica. Se espera que esta práctica sea capaz de repercutir en otros aprendizajes escolares, así como inducir aprendizajes en otros planos no previstos por la escuela tradicional. Los “Talleres de Juegos” son una práctica pedagógica localizada en la disciplina de Educación Física, en la cual los niños jugando, aprenden las bases del conocimiento (pensamiento, motricidad, sociabilidad, moralidad, afectividad, etc.) haciéndolo de modo que repercuta en otras disciplinas escolares. El método de investigación adoptado fue el de pesquisa-acción.

Palabras clave: Educación Física, Juego e implementos de juego. Educación primaria y secundaria. Pedagogía.

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