

55 - COOPERATIVE GAMES IN THE ACTIONS OF THE A UNIÃO FAZ A VIDA PROGRAM IN THE NORTH OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL

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Introduction

Human beings are undeniably interconnected with each other, at all distances. "Everything is in everything and vice-versa" (MORIN, 1996, p. 275). This phrase, suggested by Pascal three centuries ago, shows that each individual is part of a society that constitutes the whole that intervenes in global and personal growth and formation. In other words, the part is in the whole, and the whole is in the part. It is the principle of interdependence.

Considering the interdependence that exists within a group is very important in order to realize how much cooperation and collaboration between individuals make sense in local and global contexts. Reclaiming some of the objectives of education, the need for educators today to allocate some time also to socialization during the four hours a day they spend with children and adolescents should be highlighted, since human relationships are a practice of ethical and moral values. Unquestionably, one of the main social roles of school processes nowadays is to foster activities that lead children and adolescents to reflect, to review their behavior within the group, to deal with their emotions and to experiment ethical and responsible relations. According to Cury (2005):

[...] how will students develop a healthy personality if they can only see the world with their own eyes, if they cannot put themselves in someone else's shoes, and do not have any emotional defense against the illnesses that confine intelligence to a prison? (p. 1).

Cooperative games are pedagogical tools that may contribute to experiences of socialization, so important in the school environment; cooperative games are means of integration between people and, as a playful means of expression, reproduce the socio-cultural relationships that exist in a community.

The A União Faz a Vida Program (Union Makes Life) conceived by SICREDI Central-RS aims at developing cooperation and citizenship and has as target population students enrolled in Preschool Education and Primary Education in the communities where SICREDI is present. The main objective of the Program is "to build and experience attitudes and values of cooperation and citizenship by means of practices of cooperative education [...] nationally" (Program Guide, 2003). The program is implemented in organized environments in order to "care for and protect" childhood and adolescence, that is, in environments such as schools. In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, in a partnership with a pool of Universities, 1,244 schools participate in the program; these schools are located in 118 different municipalities. Our study takes place in four municipalities in the north of the state, which in a partnership with Universidade Regional Integrada Frederico Westphalen, develops the program in the cities of Rodeio Bonito, Vista Alegre, Pinheirinho do Vale, and Ametista do Sul. The knowledge problem of the study may be thus expressed: What impact are cooperative games by means of the A União Faz a Vida Program making on the knowledge and the pedagogical practices of teachers who work in public schools in the region, from the perspective of this teaching collective? In order to build this qualitative question, we based ourselves particularly on the following presuppositions: a) We live in times and with social agendas that have potentiated individual isolation and that have made schools vulnerable, schools seen herein as spaces of essential life and learning experiences where in a complex way processes of being a child, being young, and being a teacher are articulated; b) teachers signify their practices based on their own experience; c) motivations and challenges from spaces located outside the walls of the official education system may change teaching knowledge and practices whenever the latter include the former in the planning of the process of production of knowledge and effects aimed at (SARASON, 2003).

In this study, the Law on Education Guidelines and Basis (LDB in the Brazilian abbreviation), no. 9394/96, and its resulting guidelines are the legal framework for the analysis of the educational practices and processes present in schools in this region from the perspective of the teaching staff.

The system of cooperative of credit SICREDI and the a União faz a Vida program

In the 1970s and 1980s, the over 60 cooperatives of credit belonging to SICREDI were development and in search of partnerships with organizations related to cooperativism, although at the time SICREDI was facing difficulties related to the ups and downs in economy.

Embedded with the cooperativist spirit, SICREDI contacted the Habitation Cooperative of Montevideo, Uruguay, which counted with a School Cooperative, and visited it in order to learn from that experience and multiply it in Brazil.

After seeing that the president of the Uruguayan Cooperative was an eleven-year old boy, very enthusiastic and counting with broad knowledge on the topic, SICREDI was convinced that Brazil needed to plan actions that would transform participation and entrepreneurship cultures, which were ongoing at the time in the country.

The first initiative undertaken by SICREDI (1990) was to contact the Center for the Development and Study of Cooperativism at the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos UNISINOS located in São Leopoldo, Brazil, whose coordinator was Father Roque Lauschner; the objective of SICREDI was to develop a cooperative education program to be worked in a transdisciplinary way on the school curricula. The pilot project was conducted in the city of Santo Cristo in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil in 1995.

The A União Faz a Vida Program consolidated the educative cooperativist proposition launched by SICREDI; the proposition was seen as propositional and meaningful for both human development and the qualification of individuals in order to form a cooperative culture. The concept of cooperation and citizenship was the focus of the educational processes and the basis that led to the creation of the methodological proposition of the program.

SICREDI bases its ideas for the program in principles and guidelines that reaffirm cooperativist values, such as mutual help and responsibility, democracy, equality and equity, volunteer and free enrollment, economical participation of its members, autonomy and independence, education, formation and information, intercooperation and interest in the community.

Already implemented in the Brazilian states of Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, and Mato Grosso, the A União Faz a Vida Program aims to raise awareness to the fact that the construction of a more fair society is not based on the increase in goods consumed but on the increase in positive interpersonal relationships for the strengthening of a collective culture of freedom,

justice, solidarity, and cooperation.

Aiming to develop an efficient planning and to transform the A União Faz a Vida Program in a cooperative practice of excellence, SICREDI Central-RS defines roles to the different levels of responsibility, called sectors, which are: partners, supporters, pedagogical assessorial, its publics, and managers. These sectors operationalize competences that in accordance to the objectives and goals of the program have affirmed the collective commitment of its strengthening.

Cooperative Games

Seeking to better understand the meaning of games using a philosophical and cultural approach, we resorted to Huizinga (1980), who understands games as an element of human culture. Narrowing down his point of view, the author proposes that games are earlier than culture, since the latter presupposes the existence of human society, and animals already played before society appeared. Huizinga states that "the existence of games is not linked to any determined degree of civilization nor to any conception of the universe" (1980, p. 6).

Based on Huizinga's cultural and philosophical view (1980), we can better understand the appearance of cooperative games as well their social role. Cooperative games were created thousands of years ago by the tribal communities that got together to celebrate life (ORLICK, 1989). Other ancestral peoples, such as the Inuit in Alaska, the Aborigines in Australia, the Tasaday in Africa, maintain their cooperative way of life practicing games that value the action of human beings and their contribution to the growth of the group. These are dances, games, and other cooperative rituals (BROTTO, 1995).

In Brazil, Brotto (1995) is pointed out as the pioneer in cooperative games. Until the 1980s, cooperative games were experimented only in the field of physical education. This conception of games has spread to other areas, such as pedagogy, health, as well as to the development of human potential; it is practiced by very diverse population groups.

According to Brotto (2001) and based on the principles of pedagogy of cooperation, the main objective of cooperative games is to maintain the dialogicity in the search of an interpersonal balance between "vision and action, theory and practice, dream and reality, the whole and its parts, the individual and the collective, and each person with him or herself", emphasizing collectivity and mutual respect. In other words, it is not possible to conceive experiences of cooperation limited to games and children's play. The pedagogical proposition expects more than just changing competitive play practices to cooperative practices. Through reflection, it intends to transform individualist culture by means of the experience of cooperative games with children and adolescents in both school and non school spheres. When children and adolescents get involved in cooperative activities, they seek results that are beneficial to themselves and to all group members. It is possible to create many cooperative games from the adaptation of rules, children's plays, and traditional games, and even from sports, always optimizing everyone's participation. In cooperative games, individuals work together to reach shared objectives. In this sense, in the context of the proposition of cooperative games, sports represent the great pedagogical potential capable of making available collaborative and solidary experiences, instead of competitive and meritocratic ones.

Teaching Formation

Thinking about education implies the inclusion of a number of aspects that constitute it. Since educators are one the main subjects of this process, we can understand educators as those who conduct students so that they become a subject of knowledge. Contrary to what some people think, simply teaching is not enough, one needs to insert children and adolescents in the learning process, involving them in the study and the improvement of their knowledge, stimulated by their own determinations. Paulo Freire (1996) states that:

A good pedagogical-democratic atmosphere is one where students learn at the expense of their practice even if their curiosity, as their freedom, is subject to limits but is in permanent exercise (p. 85).

In this sense, educators that are able to insert children and adolescents in processes of production of knowledge, leading them to engage themselves in studies, have in their hands the meaning of restlessness, which is an essential characteristic to individual growth. It is with this rationale that the term "educator" is used in the proposition called "cooperative games".

The development of intelligence comes from an individual's curiosity, since the basis for knowledge diversity and the true exercise of citizenship, along with its amplitude, is exactly curiosity and questioning. "As a teacher I must know that without the curiosity that moves me, makes me restless, sends me out in searches, I do not learn, I do not teach" (FREIRE, 1996, p. 85). This curiosity comes from a motivation and a problematization resulting from dialogue, which by means of its different ideas, leads individuals to reconsider their concepts and awakens in them criticism and a citizen spirit, which in turn challenge them to seek new knowledge.

Knowledge is neither finished nor definitive. Just as teaching is prone to changes and improvements, there is no external world to the individual to be communicated. Every perception, every concept, every observation takes into consideration the point of view of the observer, in a way that reality itself becomes relative. In this sense, all learning is a unique experience for each individual. This considered, instead of focusing on concepts, the new paradigm suggests that schools should privilege relationships, giving greater importance not to results, but to the process; not to the functionality of learning, but to self-realization.

This proposition of pedagogical practice calls for environments that surpass the space of the classroom, spaces that more often occupy not only the labs and the social spaces at school, but also the environments available in the community. As a result, collaborative activities in which experiences are experienced individually and in groups are undertaken. This proposition calls for activities that privilege the dynamic of projects investing on children and adolescents, responsibilities as to their learning, and the world that surrounds them. It calls for activities that are assessed not only by its contents but also by the self-realization they provide. In this context, the mere habitual, expositive classes, with the same practices, betting on the same theories, become something of the past, and give way to an interactive, collective pedagogy. "[...] as this practice consolidates and becomes a habit, we will build a new professional culture" (ARROYO, 2001, p. 160). The classroom stops being the temple of knowledge transmission and repetition and becomes an educational environment, where important moments of socialization of individual learning and group experiences, dialogue, and the confrontation between these experiences and theory, the formulation of problems and the search of solutions take place.

Methodology and Results

The study, which follows a qualitative design, is limited to the school sphere of four municipalities that implemented the program until 2004; these schools are located in the north of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Since 1995, the region has developed formation courses for teachers using cooperative games in the frame of the A União Faz a Vida Program, in a partnership with Universidade Regional Integrada Frederico Westphalen.

The choice of four municipalities of the nine that participate in the program was a result of a criterion of time. The four

municipalities of the region that implemented the program were investigated between 1999 and 2004.

Two public schools in each of the municipalities were identified, that is, one peripheral and one central school. To obtain the objective data, a questionnaire was applied to all the teachers of the eight schools. Later, based on the data, two teachers of different courses per school were identified according to the criteria of representativeness; teachers were invited to interviews which focused on the following study problem: What impact are cooperative games by means of the A União Faz a Vida Program making on the knowledge and the pedagogical practices of teachers who work in public schools in the region, from the perspective of this teaching collective?

Interviews were taped, validated, categorized, and analyzed in a dialogue with participating teachers. The process allowed us to elaborate the following statements, which summarize teachers' statements: a) formation seminars focusing the principles of cooperative games produced effects on the planning and the assessment of teaching activities in all courses and favored the organization of interdisciplinary actions; b) little by little, meritocratic principles are giving way to participative and process strategies in the ways of evaluating the learning process of children and adolescents; c) continuing formation programs undertaken within the sphere of schools contribute more to the teaching practice because they include teachers as protagonists of the experience; d) the school community has participated more intensely in the school life with relationships built in a friendlier way; e) students have manifested more satisfaction with teaching and learning processes organized with cooperative dynamics; f) children and adolescents have strengthened self-expression, self-esteem, and collective values.

For the teaching collective studied, cooperative games are a practice that can contribute to the teaching tasks as they constitute a positive pedagogical didactical strategy when compared to the challenges teachers are faced everyday. Emphasizing solidary and collective practices in the everyday of group relationships, cooperative games promote communicative, creative environments, which are full of collaboration and valorization of the individuals who participate in them.

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COOPERATIVE GAMES IN THE ACTIONS OF THE A UNIÃO FAZ A VIDA PROGRAM IN THE NORTH OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL

ABSTRACT

The present paper is the result of a Master's research on Education; it aims to investigate the impact that Cooperative Games, through the actions of the A União Faz a Vida (Union Makes Life) Program, have had on the knowledge and teaching practices of public school teachers in the north of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, from the perspective of the teaching collective. The study was conducted in four municipalities that implemented the program until 2004. The following presuppositions gave rise to the research: a) We live in times and with social agendas that have potentiated individual isolation and that made the schools vulnerable, schools seen herein as spaces of significant learning experiences; b) "cooperative games" express an experience in the "pedagogy of cooperation"; c) teachers signify their practices based on their own experience; d) motivation and challenges coming from spaces located outside the walls of the official teaching system may modify teaching knowledge. The guidelines established by the Law on Education Guidelines and Basis (LDB), No. 9.394/96, and the principles of "Cooperative Games" served as reference to the analysis of the educative practices and processes in this study. The knowledge problem of the study was: What impact are cooperative games by means of the A União Faz a Vida Program making on the knowledge and the pedagogical practices of teachers who work in public schools in the region, from the perspective of this teaching collective? The study design used a qualitative and descriptive approach. Participating individuals were two teachers per school participating in the Program; teachers were chosen according to a criterion of representativeness. Study tools were document analysis, a questionnaire, and an interview. The analytical process showed that the guidelines of the A União Faz a Vida Program conceived by Sicredi produced new forms of relationship in the sphere of the school communities studied. These new forms of relationship have particularly improved cooperative dynamics in the pedagogical practice in all courses.

Key words: Cooperative games, teaching knowledge, pedagogical practices.

LES JEUX COOPÉRATIFS DANS LES ACTIONS DU PROGRAMME L'UNION FAIT LAVIE, DANS LE REGION DU MEDIO ALTO URUGUAI - RS - BRESIL

RESUME

C'est une recherche de Master II en Education ayant pour objectif d'étudier l'impact produit sur les savoirs et dans les pratiques des professeurs de l'enseignement publique de La Région du Médio Alto Uruguai/RS, des Jeux Coopératifs dans les actions du Programme « L'Union fait la vie », dans la représentation de ce collectif de professeurs. La recherche a été réalisée dans quatre municipalités qui ont adopté ce programme jusqu'à l'année 2004. Les hypothèses à l'origine de l'étude: a) nous vivons des temps de pactes sociaux qui potentialisent des positions individuelles et fragilisent l'école comme espace d'expériences significatives d'apprentissage; b) les "jeux coopératifs" sont l'expression d'une expérience en "pédagogie de la coopération"; c) les professeurs donnent du sens à leurs pratiques à partir de leur propre expérience; d) les motivations et défis qui proviennent des espaces extérieurs aux murs du système d'enseignement officiel peuvent modifier les savoirs professoraux.

Les directives découlant de la LDB (Loi des Directives et Bases) n° 9.394/96 et les principes des “Jeux Coopératifs” sont les références aux analyses des pratiques et des processus éducatifs de cette étude. La problématique que soutient l'étude est la suivante: quel est l'impact que les Jeux Coopératifs, dans les actions du Programme “L'Union fait la vie” produisent sur les savoirs et les pratiques pédagogiques des professeurs qui travaillent dans les écoles publiques de la Région du Médio Alto Uruguai-RS, dans la représentation de ce collectif de professeurs? C'est une recherche d'approche qualitative descriptive. Les acteurs collaborateurs ont été deux professeurs par école participant au programme, choisis selon le critère de représentativité, dans le contexte de l'étude. Les outils utilisés sont l'analyse de documents, le questionnaire et l'entretien. Le processus analytique a montré que les directives du Programme “L'Union fait la vie”, mis en place par le Sicredi (Système de Crédit Coopératif), ont produit de nouvelles formes de relation dans ces communautés scolaires. On constate, surtout, un approfondissement des dynamiques coopératives dans la pratique pédagogique, ceci dans toutes les disciplines.

Mots-clés: jeux coopératifs, savoirs professoraux, pratiques pédagogiques.

JUEGOS COOPERATIVOS EM LAS ACCIONES DEL PROGRAMA “A UNIÃO FAZ A VIDA” EM LA REGIÃO MEDIO ALTO URUGUAY RS

RESÚMEN

Tratase de una pesquisa de Master en Educación cuyo objetivo es investigar el impacto que los juegos cooperativos, en las acciones del Programa “A União Faz a Vida,” produce en los saberes y en las prácticas docentes de los profesores de enseñanza pública de la Región Médio Alto Uruguay-RS, en la perspectiva del mismo colectivo. Pesquisa efectuada en cuatro municipios que implantaron el Programa hasta el año 2004. Presupuestos que dieron origen a investigación: a) vivimos tiempos de pautas sociales que tienen potenciado posiciones individuales y fragilizado la escuela como espacio de experiencias significativas de aprendizaje; b) los “juegos cooperativos” expresan una experiencia en “pedagogía de cooperación”; c) el profesorado significa sus prácticas a partir de su experiencia; d) motivaciones y desafíos oriundos de espacios localizados fuera de los muros del sistema oficial de enseñanza pueden modificar saberes docentes. Las directrices advenidas de la LDB 9.394/96 y los principios de los juegos cooperativos fueron referencias para el análisis de las prácticas y de los procesos educativos del estudio. El problema de conocimiento que sujetó el estudio: cual es el impacto que los juegos cooperativos, en las acciones del “Programa A União Faz a Vida” están produciendo en los saberes y en las prácticas pedagógicas de los profesores que trabajan en las escuelas públicas de la Región Medio Alto Uruguay-RS, en la perspectiva del mismo colectivo? Pesquisa de diseño cualitativo descriptivo. Atores colaboradores: dos profesores por escuela participante del programa, elegidos por detener representatividad, en lo que el contexto de la investigación se refiere. Instrumentos: análisis de documentos, cuestionarios y entrevistas. El proceso analítico evidenció que las directrices del “Programa A União Faz a Vida”, idealizado por SICREDI, propusieron nuevas formas de relación en el ámbito de las comunidades escolares. Tienen, sobretodo, mejorado las dinámicas cooperativas en las labores docentes, en todas las asignaturas.

Palabras-clave: juegos cooperativos, saberes docentes, prácticas pedagógicas

JOGOS COOPERATIVOS NAS AÇÕES DO PROGRAMA A UNIÃO FAZ A VIDA, NA REGIÃO DO MÉDIO ALTO URUGUAI - RS

RESUMO

O estudo em questão é uma pesquisa de Mestrado em Educação que objetiva investigar o impacto que os Jogos Cooperativos, nas ações do Programa A União a Vida, vem produzindo nos saberes e nas práticas docentes dos professores do ensino público da Região do Médio Alto Uruguai/RS, na perspectiva desse coletivo docente. Pesquisa realizada em quatro municípios que implantaram o programa até o ano de 2004. Pressupostos que deram origem à pesquisa: a) vivemos tempos de pautas sociais que têm potencializado posições individuais e fragilizado a escola como espaço de experiências significativas de aprendizagem; b) os “jogos cooperativos” expressam uma experiência em “pedagogia da cooperação”; c) os docentes significam suas práticas a partir da própria experiência; d) motivações e desafios advindos de espaços localizados fora dos muros do sistema oficial de ensino podem modificar saberes docentes. As diretrizes decorrentes da LDB 9.394/96 e os princípios dos “Jogos Cooperativos” foram referência para a análise das práticas e dos processos educativos nesse estudo. O problema de conhecimento que sustentou o estudo: qual é o impacto que os Jogos Cooperativos, nas ações do Programa A União Faz a Vida, vem produzido nos saberes e nas práticas pedagógicas dos professores que trabalham nas escolas públicas da Região do Médio Alto Uruguai-RS, na perspectiva desse coletivo docente? Pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa descritiva. Atores colaboradores: dois professores por escola participante do Programa, escolhidos por critério de representatividade, no que tange ao contexto da pesquisa. Instrumentos: análise de documentos, questionário e entrevista. O processo analítico evidenciou que as diretrizes do Programa A União Faz a Vida, idealizado pelo Sicredi, produziram novas formas de relacionamento no âmbito dessas comunidades escolares. Têm, sobretudo aprimorado as dinâmicas cooperativas no fazer pedagógico, em todas as disciplinas.

Palavras-chave: Jogos cooperativos, saberes docentes, práticas pedagógicas.