

## 10 - THE GAME AND ITS SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION FOR EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

In the present study we seek to understand how the game makes part of human society, through the knowledge of its main characteristics, its relationship with culture, with education and with the Physical Education pedagogical practice at school.

Initially, we discussed our learning from the analysis of three references: Huizinga(1990); Caillois(1990); Amaral (2002), then, investigated the theoretician-methodological contributions presented by these authors, getting them closer to the school reality, considering Tavares' study (2004) that describes a Physical Education discipline methodological treatment that materializes in a theory-practice relationship.

### THE GAME AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Huizinga (1990) debates the nature and meanings of the game while something inherent to human essence. To understanding this phenomenon, he highlights the intensity and fascination power that game exercises through the pleasure and happiness provided to the practitioners, turning it out to be a cultural phenomenon that transcends the chronological barriers.

The author explains the game four fundamental characteristics, which are: 1. The freedom that absorbs the player intensively and totally, one may begin and finish the game when desires, because it isn't a compulsory activity, it plays because likes and feels pleasure in doing this; 2. The reality escape or evasion. The game is not the everyday or real life, on the contrary, it is an activity with sequence and proper organization; 3. Necessity of occupying space and a certain time to occur; the isolation, where the space delimitation is even notorious than time, because it configures as closed places that obeys determined rules, or be, out of the habitual every day, which resembles enough between a space defined for the game or for a consecrated ritual; 4. The game creates order and is the order itself when introduces a supreme and absolute order regardless the everyday life in that given time space and location where game takes place. According with these characteristics, it is possible to realize they relate to give the game an autonomous, free and aware character, separated from the everyday life, because every game has a meaning and a defined function.

Among these characteristics we can apprehend that the game is separated from the day by day interests, it is free and able to involve the player completely, the provided pleasure isn't represented materially, one plays for liking, for happiness and not for material interests. On the whole, game can be defined by two aspects: the search for something or the representation of something through the imagination or imitation.

### THE GAME AND CULTURE

According to Huizinga (1990), there is a narrow relation between the game, the culture and its questioning about what arose first, so, which one gives rise. For the author, game is even more primitive than culture, and to justify such statement he analyzes the games played by animals and how their characteristics approach with the games experienced by human beings, stating that society added no new characteristic to the general idea of game present among animals. The attitude assumed by Huizinga (1990) is based on the game among animals' characteristics, when he says that culture results from game, and not the opposite.

Caillois (1990) investigates the relationship between the game and culture quoting two opposed thesis as follows: the first theory says that in game everything degrades, or be, when it finishes nothing is put up to society, on the contrary, the very games result from men activities; the second one mentions Huizinga, who affirms that all important and fundamental culture characteristics, like freedom and respect for the rules, arise from game.

In this confront of arguments we observe that games are essential to culture, however, along the history they received its influences and not the opposite, or be, we agree with the first thesis because, in course of the human evolution, games and toys were influenced by culture, even so we don't agree with the statement that when game is over everything finishes, but that occurs an influences interchange between game and culture.

Caillois (1990) categorizes game in four fundamental characteristics: the competition ones, the lucky or bad luck, the ones of mime, disguise or interpretation and the ones of vertigo, spasm or trance. Like examples of each characteristic, we can cite: for competition (agôn), we have the sports; the lucky or bad luck (algae), we have the lotteries and the bets in horse races; for the interpretation (mimicry), we have the interpretations theater, movies, soap operas, and also in festivities including quadrilles and carnival. Like a vertigo example (ilinx) we can mention the high speed sports, as car races.

The author appoints possible and impossible combinations, the possible ones occur among: competition and luck or bad luck, and interpretation and vertigo, these composites grant the game its main essence; the impossible combinations occur among: interpretation and luck or bad luck, competition and vertigo. The disrespect to the rules of these kinds of games leads also to disorders or disturbances, which he considered as being games corruption. Such problems would reveal in the society through forms of violence, superstition, alienation, alcoholism, drugs, among others. Such conception points, therefore, for a society that doesn't represent an extenuate burden, which impels the being to escape for the ludicrous world cited by Huizinga; formerly, this society manifested strong traces of sportiveness in its reality.

Caillois (1990) still observes the literatures historical context on the games and jokes when in some historical moments, like the industrial revolution, they were seen like uselessnesses, reserved only for children, without any importance, just like hobbies. However, we can understand that, even without being valorized, the ludicrous has always been present in society, not only in the infantile universe, but also in the adult, under distinct features when adults practice it in a more complex and even dangerous manner. The social function and not the essence is what differentiate them from each other.

He concludes that the more the game moves itself away from the reality, its educational value increases due to the fact of not following prescriptions but stimulating abilities, relating the escape and evasion characteristic emphasized by Huizinga, because game is a free and uncertain activity, it must occur separately and independently of the everyday life, so that one realizes

that the game contributions for education or work don't occur in specific areas, game demands abilities that lead to the development of these characteristics and consequently provokes an improvement in the performances, be for school or work. So, the authors are consensual on the inaptitude or child's disdain demonstrations to these requisites result in game exclusion, as of learning and working, what can be reverted from the discovery of the pleasure for the respect, obeying and even creating the game rules.

### THE GAME AND EDUCATION

Amaral (2002) show us the educational perspective based on the democratic thought, as the only human life worthy way and not as a possibility to be accepted, defined as: "The base infantile development social life constituent, fitting to school the important task of offering conditions for the child express life in community through one activities" (P. 100). In this context, game presents as an important factor in the child natural development process, because in different times and societies games took always part in the children development process.

The author still deals with the natural and spontaneous character of the game experienced by children in development and its educational importance, because they learn playing, therefore, games must be used as an educational instrument inside school because, if games and jokes practiced out of school come into the scholar institution, it is possible to correct some wrong behaviors acquired by children when they are playing.

The joke for children is a moment of learning as much important as to learn how to read, for example. Differently of adults, when children play, they try to obey the rules dictated by the game in the same way they strive to learn a new content at school, for example. Nevertheless, game brings them moments of happiness and pleasure, for this reason, it is present so frequently in their day-by-day life. Playing with dolls, top, ball, amarelinha (Brazilian game), makes part of children every day, even the ones that don't own socioeconomic conditions to buy toys, they create their own toys and jokes, but no child stops playing.

When children play, they start to develop potentialities, absorb and set habits and information regarding the world in their memories, more than if they had simply lived indifferently to this entire magic universe present in games and jokes. However, they also become vulnerable as much to the positive happenings as to the negative ones, which are present in this context as well, and can take part of child's every day, becoming more difficult to correct them, because they were acquired through jokes. Game is known as a powerful educational tool, when reviving this ludic atmosphere at school it is possible to relate child's instinctive activities like playing, its interests and its social life in a teaching and learning process, as Caillois (1990) discuss about Mathematics discipline

It's up to educators to know how to use such tools favorably for a harmonious development, and the interest will arise naturally on the part of children, without forgetting to valorize culture and student's social context, for thus establish through the school a bridge between formal education and life in society.

The action of playing justifies a democratic practice, becoming the fundamental base of the human nature conception, education and, consequently, highlights the important role awarded by them to the infantile game. Amaral (2002) sought to develop the political arguments, making it dynamically, debating some key-concepts, such as: Democracy and faith in education, which are of fundamental importance to understand the democratic thought and its educational philosophy.

When we refer to the word faith, we soon associate it to religion, but the term: "faith in the democratic practice" sends us to a conceptual reflection, because this refers to a not-fanatic and not-religious faith aware of the reality, hope in the capacity, in the equality and in human progress.

### APPROACHES AND DISTANCES AMONG HUIZINGA (1938), CAILLOIS (1958) AND AMARAL (2002).

From the reading and discussion about the three analyzed references we can punctuate in what they approach and move away in their argumentations about the game thematic. The first distance we observe is between Caillois and Huizinga according to the game and culture relationship. The first defends that culture influenced game directly; the second believes the appearance of game is previous to culture and, therefore, game just influences culture and not the inverse. Other clear difference among the texts is that while Huizinga (1990) and Amaral (2002) study the game entirely, Caillois (1990) fragments it in four main characteristics: agôn (competition), algæ (luck), mimicry (simulation) and ilinx (vertigo) analyzing their possible combinations separately, dividing them in fundamental and prohibited combinations. However, they all defend the fascination and subjectivity character of game, not doing any reference to their argumentations related with the quantitative and biological aspects, which according to Huizinga (1990), the intensity and fun of the game can't be explained by biological analyses, because it is in this intensity that resides the essence of game itself, where fun resists to every analysis and logic interpretation.

The authors in common, in spite of trying apparently to demonstrate through different means, believe in game as being a sportiveness source, above all for children. They also believe that the methods for the teaching-learning process, adopted by the contemporary societies, can enrich so much its results if depart from the utilization of the game like a tool for the abilities and capacities knowledge and development construction, as Caillois (1958) expanded it with Mathematics. The three authors understand that there is an influences constant interchange between game and society, and that the game offers important contributions for the infantile progress, as well as, it is present not only in early life of human beings, but in adult life too.

### THE GAME LUDICROUSLY PRACTICED IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

Tavares (2004) describes and explains his experience with the game content in the Physical Education classes close to the 6th year of the Basic Education, at a Pernambuco State teaching federal net school. From the analysis of these classes we shall inquire the presence of the ludicrous in Physical Education classes, examining if the here investigated theory materializes in practice. The data collection was accomplished with base in the classes' description and observation, which he ministered in that federal school. All the methodological work was made up from the student critical sense emancipation and construction referential, thus overcoming the well-known mechanic teaching forms in Physical Education.

We note that during classes the teacher encouraged the knowledge construction in a collective way, as much in the relation among the students as between students and teacher; the students were stimulated to carry through their researches, get back previous experiences during classes, as well as the knowing experienced by their families, hence, they established relationships between content game and culture, such as: trace the main differences among games played by the ancestors and those practiced nowadays.

The relation between game and culture questioned here is also present in Tavares' discussion (2004), who agrees with Caillois (1990) when understanding that game influences culture directly, however, according to Huizinga (1990) who describes the game among animals to defend that culture was subsequent to game.

Therein, the teaching process was driven so much that it contextualizes the learning with the everyday. Tavares

(2004) moves forward in this sense, contextualizing the practice of game with culture elements, entirely, keeping both of them always associated, exploring all its ludic potential, articulating theory and practice, consolidated on the triad: reflection-research-action.

During this cognizance construction process, the students' participation is the teacher-student pedagogical relation base and must be stimulated not only in the planning elaboration, but in the practical experiences, the information change is of fundamental importance for the new knowledge construction too. The evaluation, as well as the planning, results from joint experiences and advances between teacher and students; it does not focus the contents quantity and in attributing values to its practice, it is much more linked to quality and if the students are actually infatuated, and the information set in the class room can attend to student's life. The cultures, experiences and knowledge encounter provides the human being critical sense formation, one begins to understand and observe its reality and the others critically.

The classes structure have always been directed to: planning, school research, previous class and jobs in group ransom (encouraging a kind of castor among students, so that all of them work closely), where the next methodological structure was present: problem delimitation, discussion, argumentation and assumption, thus the content was administered to stimulate the critical subjects formation too, as Amaral (2002) describes while defending the democratic society as the only worthy life way. All decisions were taken collectively with the purpose of systematizing the knowing access, taking under consideration the individual experiences of each student, or be, its life knowledge and comprehension, if not before in a critical manner, now doing it involved by a happiness and pleasure atmosphere, elements that constitute the ludicous.

Happiness and pleasure are inherent to man, experienced only through differentiated manners according with the age. In early life this concept becomes more evidenced, when child use games to reach sportiveness and like entertainment but, why don't do from sportiveness a methodological instrument present in classes, permeating the educational process, learning with happiness, pleasure, stimulating curiosity and the student more active in turns during the teaching process? Adults try disentailing the ludicous practice of the everyday, seeking pleasure separately from their everyday obligations in a more complex and dangerous means. According to Tavares (2004), game is observed as a sportiveness source, and the propitious location for working is the school scope. Amaral (2002) ratifies this thought putting the game with importance for child's development, and this procedure is present in all societies and cultures.

Game is a social construction, and so, a right for all. It has then to be inserted in the school context, a location where learning must be offered to students objectifying to socialize the knowledge. Physical Education in this sense, while a curricular component, and, therefore part of the scholar dynamics, requires appropriating this learning with more consistency, systematizing them. Is this the way Tavares (2004) uses all this game educational potential to make our pedagogical practice more significant, qualifying Physical Education?

According with Tavares (2004), it is possible to qualify Physical Education, establishing new relations in the school every day, on objective bases in favor of a learning collective construction, using the game like a content and methodological resource for the pedagogical practice at school, realizing it as the location that must be directed to life in society, in the intention of demystifying some prejudices with Physical Education discipline, which erroneously is still understood just as a moment of leisure and not of knowledge construction. However, we discern according to the practice of this teacher that educators can build the disciplines acquaintance happily and joyfully, relying on the students' participation and involvement in all class moments critically and spontaneously.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on these references, we apprehended the importance of the game for the society along its evolution, thus, we consummated this study to contribute with the development of this thematic, from the authors mentioned here. In course of these texts, with no doubts, enough peculiar and significant contributions were brought aiming to enrich our speech regarding the ludicous and its importance when inserted in school and in particular in the curricular Physical Education discipline. It explores the game as a opportunities multiplicity to be experienced as content, present in the society cultural and historical relations.

Through the game, the child can transcend the real world barriers and transports to the endless imagination universe leading and projecting dreams, fantasies, happiness, but game and sportiveness when present in the teaching process, penetrates classes aiming to qualify this procedure, as we could identify in the practice described by Tavares (2004). Game becomes then a sportiveness source in which child has the opportunity to put in practice the experiences resulting from a "lived culture", establishing relations among disciplines contents and its everyday life, realizing that the school knowledge can be practiced with happiness, and school being not seen as an obligation but as a moment that makes possible to be happy and learn playing and joking.

Then, we conclude that every methodological approach has its limits and possibilities; however, through the ludicous it is possible to transform the knowledge acquisition and construction, establishing a happiness moment during the school knowledge construction, in which students learn with quality and relate this learning to life, because this is the school role: to form and educate for life, where it is possible to comprehend, reflect, construct, play, joke and smile during classes.

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### THE GAME AND ITS SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION FOR EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION SUMMARY

This text results from studies performed in the Sportiveness and Physical Education research group, linked to ETHNÓS (ESEF-UPE-BRASIL). We researched the presence of the game as a social-cultural phenomenon through the identification and understanding of its main characteristics, conception and its relationship with culture, society and education,

identifying how these comprehensions are present in practice, or be, at school, especially in Physical Education classes. Regardless of time, culture, and social class, games and jokes have always been present in human beings' life. We believe game is an important means for children and youths' formation. For this reason, it is imperative to search the sportiveness understanding according to philosophical and pedagogical aspects, reflecting about the practice so that we can perceive game as an essential knowledge for education and Physical Education.

**KEY WORDS:** Game; Culture; Physical Education.

#### **LE JEU ET AS CONTRIBUTION SOCIO-CULTURELLE POUR L'ÉDUCATION ET L'ÉDUCATION PHYSIQUE RÉSUMÉ**

Ce texte est le résultat des études réalisées dans le groupe de recherche Lucidité et Éducation Physique, lié au ETHNÓS (ESEF-UFPE-BRÉSIL). Nous avons analysé la présence du jeu en tant que phénomène socio-culturel à travers l'identification, la compréhension et son rapport avec la culture, la société et l'éducation, en cherchant comment ces compréhensions sont présentes dans la pratique, c'est-à-dire à l'école, notamment dans les cours d'éducation physique. Car, indépendamment de l'époque, de la culture, du niveau social les jeux ont toujours fait partie et sont présents dans la vie des êtres humains. Nous croyons être le jeu un moyen important pour la formation des enfants et des jeunes. Pour cette raison, nous jugeons nécessaire la recherche de la compréhension de la lucidité devant les aspects philosophiques et pédagogiques, en réfléchissant sur la pratique pour que nous puissions comprendre le jeu comme une connaissance importante pour l'éducation et pour l'éducation physique.

**MOTS-CLÉ :** Jeu ; Culture ; Éducation Physique.

#### **EL JUEGO Y SUS CONTRIBUCIONES SOCIOCULTURALES PARA LA EDUCACIÓN Y EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA RESUMEN**

Este texto es resultado de estudios realizados en el grupo de pesquisa Ludicidade y Educación Física, de acuerdo con ETHOS (ESEF-UPE-BRASIL). Investigamos la presencia del juego como fenómeno sociocultural a través de la identificación y del entendimiento de sus principales características, de la comprensión y de la relación con la cultura, con la sociedad y con la educación, identificando como estas comprensiones están presentes en la práctica, o sea, en la escuela, y específicamente en las clases de educación física. Independiente de la época, cultura, situación social, los juegos y los juguetes siempre hicieron y siguen haciendo parte de la vida de los seres humanos. Creemos que el juego es una herramienta importante para formar jóvenes y niños. Por ello juzgamos necesaria la búsqueda del entendimiento del lúdico delante de aspectos filosóficos y pedagógicos, reflejando acerca de la práctica para que podamos entender el juego como un conocimiento importante para la educación y educación física.

**PALABRAS LLAVES:** Juego; Cultura; Educación Física.

#### **O JOGO E SUA CONTRIBUIÇÃO SÓCIO-CULTURAL PARA A EDUCAÇÃO E EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA RESUMO**

Este texto é resultado dos estudos realizados no grupo de pesquisa Ludicidade e Educação Física, vinculado ao ETHNÓS (ESEF-UPE-BRASIL). Investigamos a presença do jogo como fenômeno sócio-cultural através da identificação e do entendimento de suas principais características, da compreensão e de sua relação com a cultura, com a sociedade e com a educação, identificando como estas compreensões estão presentes na prática, ou seja, na escola, em específico nas aulas de Educação física. Pois independente da época, da cultura, da classe social os jogos e as brincadeiras sempre fizeram e se fazem presente na vida dos seres humanos. Acreditamos ser o jogo um importante meio para a formação de crianças e jovens. Por isto julgamos necessária a busca do entendimento da ludicidade diante dos aspectos filosóficos e pedagógicos, refletindo sobre a prática para que possamos compreender o jogo como um conhecimento importante para a educação e para a educação física.

**PALAVRAS CHAVES:** Jogo; Cultura; Educação Física.

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