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PLAYFUL TRAINING IN PEDAGOGY: A TRANSFORMATIVE PILLAR FOR THIRD MILLENNIUM EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses playful training in pedagogy programs as a fundamental element for establishing a new educational paradigm aligned with the demands of the third millennium. Based on a qualitative study conducted with graduating students from the Frassinetti College of Recife (FAFIRE), the aim is to understand how playfulness, experienced during initial training, influences the development of a more sensitive, critical, and creative teaching practice. The text delves deeper into the theoretical framework of playfulness, engaging with neuroscientific, philosophical, and pedagogical concepts. It also presents a thorough analysis of empirical data, revealing the potential and limitations of playful training in the context of private higher education. It concludes that playfulness, when treated as a formative and epistemological axis, transforms not only pedagogical practices but also the educator's way of being, promoting a more humanizing and emancipatory education.

Keywords: Teacher training. Playfulness. Pedagogy. Pedagogical practice. Education in the third millennium.

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first-century education demands new understandings of teaching and learning. In a world marked by technological advances, cultural shifts, and socio-environmental challenges, teacher training needs to be rethought from a perspective that transcends the limits of instrumental rationality and technocratic pedagogy. In this context, playfulness emerges as a fundamental formative principle, capable of articulating reason and emotion, body and mind, content and sensitivity.

Playfulness cannot be confused with mere recreation. It is an existential and methodological approach that allows students to experience learning with pleasure, creativity, and engagement. It is in this sense that it becomes urgent to reflect on the place of playful training in pedagogy programs, especially in private higher education, where a commercialized logic of education often prevails.

This article is the result of research carried out with students completing the pedagogy course at FAFIRE, in Pernambuco, with the aim of analyzing the need and importance of play in teacher training in the expectation of changes in pedagogical practice. The study, of a qualitative nature and hermeneutic-dialectical approach, aimed to analyze how playfulness was understood, experienced and projected by the participants in their future teaching activities.

Throughout the history of education, playfulness was long relegated to the recreational realm, associated with childhood or informal learning. However, in recent decades, the concept has been redefined, assuming a central position in debates on integral human development.

Brazilian legislation enacted the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education, Law 9.394/96, which expanded the scope of action for education professionals and the social dynamics themselves, mobilized by the socio-cultural transformations that have characterized education globally, and place as a requirement a

solid and contextual training that meets the educational needs of contemporary times.

Within this framework, the proposal for pedagogy courses seeks to consolidate the playful educational proposal of the third pillar of 21st-century education, in order to guarantee the insertion of professionals in the job market in order to provide them with training that provides cognitive, affective and emotional skills that ensure the mastery of knowledge coherent with the demands of professional profiles that meet the challenges, in the face of social transformations, which requires constant professional qualification.

In the context of teacher training, playfulness represents a break with rigid pedagogical models centered on the mechanical transmission of content. It proposes a pedagogy of the sensitive, the symbolic, listening, and interaction, in which knowledge is constructed through meaningful, pleasurable, and collaborative experiences.

Playfulness is any activity that provides pleasure when performed. Through it, children learn to coexist, to win and lose, to wait their turn, to deal with frustration, and to understand and explore the world. It is a practical tool for stimulation, and can be used at any stage of development. It is a global form of expression that encompasses all domains of nature. It offers significant physical, intellectual, social, and educational benefits for children. However, playfulness is integral to the overall educational process, and the objective of education lies not only in the meaning of the word "educate," but also in how it is done, in the expressions, in how thoughts are developed, in the types of distinctions that emerge, and in the moral and ethical criteria that underlie the path to be followed.

The basis of playfulness is supported by various fields of knowledge. In the field of neuroscience, studies indicate that the right hemisphere of the brain, associated with emotion, imagination, intuition, and sensitivity, plays an essential role in the processes of learning and development. The activation of

this hemisphere, often neglected by traditional pedagogical models, is directly linked to playful experiences. For Santos (2010, p. 13), "Being playful, therefore, means using the right hemisphere more and, thereby, giving a new dimension to human existence." This hemisphere is responsible for creativity and pleasure, in addition to exploring fundamental factors that make playfulness possible. flows naturally. Therefore, it needs to be encouraged by everyone involved in the training process.

Thus, playful training is not limited to acquiring techniques for using games or play in the classroom, but involves a paradigm shift. It involves training educators capable of developing a playful approach to life, knowledge, and relationships with others—an approach that combines ethical commitment, creativity, and critical thinking.

In pedagogy, scholars such as Kishimoto, Negrine, Luckesi, and Brougère advocate playfulness as an emancipatory pedagogical practice. Kishimoto understands play as a cultural language, while Brougère proposes a sociological approach to play. Luckesi, in turn, emphasizes the aesthetic dimension of playfulness, conceiving it as a way of living with intensity and authenticity. These contributions reinforce the need for teacher training that goes beyond the instrumental, recognizing the educator as a creator of playful experiences. He proposes that playfulness is not synonymous with fun or play, but rather an experience of wholeness and mindfulness, experienced by the individual in their entirety—body, mind, and emotion. Inspired by authors such as Ken Wilber and David Boadella, the author advocates a comprehensive view of the human being, which articulates four dimensions of existence: individual interior (I), collective interior (We), individual exterior (He), and collective exterior (They). In this framework, playfulness is situated in the sphere of the "I" — the aesthetic and spiritual dimension of consciousness.

In short, we highlight one of the main merits of playfulness as a fully subjective experience, which can only be authentically experienced

when the subject surrenders to the action with involvement and presence. The same activity can be playful for one person and not playful for another, depending on each person's life history, emotional state, and existential openness. Thus, playfulness is more of a "state of being" than a "type of action."

METHODOLOGY

The research underlying this study was developed using a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach. Its goal was to understand the importance of playful learning in pedagogy programs, based on the perceptions of graduating students at a private higher education institution in Pernambuco. This approach was chosen because it allows for the appreciation of the participants' subjective experience, interpretations, feelings, and representations of the educational process.

The epistemological framework supporting the research is hermeneutic-dialectical in nature, allowing the interpretation of participants' discourse from a sensitive, critical perspective, open to a plurality of meanings. The analysis aims to go beyond description, seeking to understand the meanings attributed to play and their implications for teacher training and future practice.

The data collection tool used was a focus group, conducted with students graduating from the pedagogy program at Frassinetti College in Recife (FAFIRE). The focus group was chosen because it facilitated collective listening, interaction among participants, and the emergence of spontaneous and contextualized discourse. The session was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed based on content analysis and thematic interpretation.

Data analysis was organized into thematic blocks, constructed from the recurring ideas, feelings, and reflections expressed by the students. Each block highlighted central aspects of playful training, such as the conceptual understanding of play, experiences during the course, perceived training gaps, and projections for professional practice. This methodology

fostered the emergence of a critical and proactive perspective on the importance of playfulness in teacher training for the third millennium.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Data collected through a focus group with students graduating from the FAFIRE Pedagogy program were analyzed using content analysis, based on a hermeneutic-dialectical perspective. The analysis allowed the discourse to be organized into thematic blocks that reveal perceptions, experiences, and projections related to playful training during undergraduate studies and its implications for future teaching practice. The main findings are presented below.

Students' perceptions of playfulness

The participants demonstrated an understanding of playfulness as an experience that goes beyond mere play. For them, playfulness is related to the pleasure of learning, creativity, and a lighthearted approach to the educational process. Some reported that, during the course, playfulness was addressed sporadically, in specific disciplines, without systematic articulation with teaching practices. Even so, they affirmed their recognition of its importance as a driving force for meaningful learning.

Training experiences and playful practices

The students reported that their most memorable experiences involving play occurred during supervised internships, extension projects, or extracurricular activities. They highlighted the lack of playful experiences in the regular curriculum, which created uncertainty about the practical application of playful activities in the school environment. At the same time, they expressed enthusiasm when recalling situations in which they were able to role-play, create games, or tell stories, noticing the positive impact of these strategies on children's learning.

Educational play activities include a variety of pedagogical experiences that integrate games, play, art, and body expression into the teaching process. They must be intentional, planned, and integrated into an educational project that respects the educational objectives and the student's comprehensive development.

Professional projections: playfulness as an emancipatory practice

Despite the gaps in their training, the students expressed a desire to incorporate play into their future teaching practices, recognizing its formative and humanizing value. For them, being a playful educator means being sensitive, creative, welcoming, and open to dialogue. They emphasized that play is not just a teaching tool, but an ethical and existential stance toward the act of educating. They also advocated for the need to expand the presence of play in pedagogy courses, with specific disciplines, active methodologies, and integrative projects.

When incorporated as a cross-cutting axis of the pedagogy curriculum, playfulness enables more meaningful training that respects the rhythms and uniqueness of the students. It allows future teachers to experience the joy of learning and recognize the value of listening, play, art, and dialogue as legitimate forms of knowledge construction.

Analysis of the results reveals that, although the students recognize the value of play and have experienced some meaningful practices, there is still a gap between institutional discourse and actual educational practice. There is consensus among the participants regarding the urgent need for training more aligned with the challenges of the third millennium, preparing educators capable of integrating reason and emotion, knowledge and sensitivity. Playfulness, in this sense, emerges as a possible and necessary path toward building a more humanized, critical, and transformative pedagogical practice.

CONCLUSION

The data reveal that, although playful learning was not treated as a central focus of the curriculum, the students perceived it as essential to their teaching practice. This perception aligns with the contributions of Negrine (1994), who highlights playfulness as a constituent element of the learning process, necessary for the development of sensitivity and pedagogical creativity.

The participants' statements also confirm Marli Pires dos Santos's (2000) analysis, which states that playfulness cannot be treated merely as a technique, but as a philosophy of education and a life stance toward teaching. For them, being a playful educator implies developing empathy, listening, and presence—elements that were often not effectively addressed during training.

Luckesi (1994) reinforces this view by considering playfulness as an aesthetic experience that mobilizes the individual as a whole. This idea is evident in the students' statements, when they state that the playful moments of the course were the most memorable and meaningful, as they allowed them to feel welcomed and motivated. Thus, the empirical results align with the theoretical foundations discussed in the theoretical framework, consolidating the case for playfulness as a structuring axis of teacher education.

The analysis developed in this article highlights the importance of playful training in pedagogy courses as a structuring element of a more sensitive, creative, and humanizing teaching practice. Throughout the theoretical and empirical journey, it was possible to understand that playfulness, when treated as a formative pillar, enhances the educator's integral development and expands the students' learning possibilities. More than a methodology, playfulness represents an ethical and existential stance toward the act of education, connecting emotion, reason, body, and culture in a meaningful educational experience.

The results obtained from students graduating from the FAFIRE Pedagogy program reveal a desire for a more experiential education, consistent with the principles of playfulness. Although they experienced specific moments of playful practices, the participants highlighted curricular and methodological gaps that limit the consolidation of a playful approach in professional practice. These data reinforce the need to reconfigure teacher training curricula, with greater emphasis on art, play, corporeality, and sensitivity as essential dimensions of education.

In the third millennium, characterized by complexity, instability, and uncertainty, educators must be prepared to deal with multiple languages, realities, and subjectivities. Teacher training must, therefore, promote the development of emotional, social, and creative skills—skills that are at the heart of playfulness.

When incorporated as a cross-cutting axis of the pedagogy curriculum, playfulness enables more meaningful training that respects the rhythms and uniqueness of students. It allows future teachers to experience the joy of learning and recognize the value of listening, play, art, and dialogue as legitimate forms of knowledge construction.

Therefore, to respond to the educational challenges of the third millennium, it is urgent to invest in the training of educators capable of integrating academic knowledge with the aesthetic, symbolic, and affective experience of learning. Playfulness, as a science and pedagogical practice, offers fertile paths to an emancipatory, democratic, and comprehensive education. Educational institutions must be ethically committed to making play a permanent and structuring pillar of their education.

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