

The usage of Information and Communication Technologies in teachers' formation courses.

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, a teacher cannot think of giving his classes without taking into consideration that his/her students will probably have, in one of their pockets, a mobile full of games, apps and internet. Some with more sophisticated varieties and others, the poorer ones, with more simplified versions or even pirate ones. However, the Brazilian educational universe is far from facing the complete usage of resources in technology and communication in the context of Elementary Education. In the global scenery of the country, few schools have the necessary tools for the didactic application of information and communication technologies. It is important to point out that many teachers and even students are digital and mediatically illiterates for the accomplishment of projects which involve such technologies, no more considered as novelties. Nevertheless, this fact does not exclude the possibility of working, mainly in the universe of teacher formation. It is from this perspective that the idea of proposing Languages graduation students the creation of mediatic games that could be used as tools for teaching and learning in Portuguese classes for Elementary Education came out. This research means to describe such experience and propose didactic and methodological practices that are close to the virtual everyday life that, today and in a significant manner, invades the lives of many students. Besides, a proposal is presented for teacher formation, taking into account the contemporary educational context that considers the students as protagonists in building their knowledge.

Keywords: games, teaching-learning, technologies of information and communication.

INTRODUCTION

Computers were introduced in the Brazilian school context, gradually, from the 1980's and, since the beginning of their usage, there are constant discussions on their efficiency in the teaching-learning process, mainly in Brazil, of accounts of experiences and studies that can assist more concrete positions on such question.

Besides, there are the professionals that refuse the idea of using computers in the classroom, alleging that it is inadmissible that the machine may substitute the role of the teacher. However, according to the ideas of Lévy [1], the insertion of computer language in the lives of students is inevitable, once

They will learn to read and write with machines that edit texts. They will know how to use computers as tools to produce sounds and images. They will manage their audiovisual resources by means of the computer, they will pilot robots, consult data bases. All the evolutions that are showing in the educational area are in congruence with the modifications of cognitive activities observed in other areas. The usage of computers in teaching prepares for a new, computerized culture.

Other teachers even say that they don't understand how a computer can be more interesting and attract more attention from the students than their own performance as teachers. Setzer [2] explains that if the computer

Attracts more attention from the students than the teacher, this may mean that this teacher might not have an adequate idea of what a child or a young person is, or this teacher is tied to a

curriculum, method and atmosphere that contradict the qualities of his/her students. His/Her classes are probably too abstract, related to the students' intellect and not to their whole beings. Then, the students cannot identify with the content which is being given, so they feel oppressed and think that the classes are tedious.

In reality, neither teachers will be substituted by computers nor computers are or will be more attractive than good teachers. Demo [3] make these statements evident when he says that:

The one who learns is the human being, not the machine. The one who is interactive is the human being, not the software. [...] The computer exceeds the power of the human mind in several dimensions, such as processing and storing information, calculating, without mentioning the speed through which it works, but all these cannot, at least not yet, simulate what an hermeneutic, interpretative, semantic, complex and not-linear machine does, such as the human brain is.

Besides, there are still teachers who consider themselves as the center of the teaching-learning process and that only judge the student as a receptor of knowledge that must be gathered along the course of the year:

With a 'bank' educational conception we develop a 'bank' evaluation of apprenticeship, in a kind of way out capitalism once we make a deposit of 'knowledge' and expect them back, without interest rates or monetary correction, once the student cannot add to it nothing from his own gnoseologic elaboration, but only repeat what was transmitted to him/her. [4]

Nowadays, what a wise teacher does is alter his/her strategies so that the class will not fall into monotony. Innumerable teachers complain that the students use mobiles during classes. But, this usually happens when people are being exposed to tiresome and repetitive activities. Classes which are only descriptive, for example, can be a complete lack of stimulus for any student. Many students become demotivated because they have classes with teachers who are equally demotivated.

Few people like doing the same things all the time, having a routine that is never changed and doing tasks due to obligation, knowing that, sometimes, they will make very little difference in anyone's practical life.

The same happens in the school atmosphere. Maybe, because of convenience or habit, certain teachers give classes in an only manner, without proposing activities that make students' curiosity flow or even challenge them.

There is nothing worse than such a situation. The scarcity of the school universe may damage all the school year of

a student, having him/her lose interest for his/her studies, getting far from reading and from perceiving the importance of a solid academic formation.

It is also interesting to comment that, in a first moment, it is quite common to consider the formation courses guilty for this deplorable reality. There are many teachers who say that they do not propose different activities to their students because they haven't learned anything innovative when they were students in teacher formation courses.

But, habitually, what is seen in practice is that the changes that happen in the class dynamics of many teachers are not due to a direct appropriation of information transmitted by means of courses, books or magazines. Weisser, mentioned by Albuquerque [5], who explains this reality saying that

the knowledge is not the result of a transmission, but of an appropriation and a production; it is connected to the professional author and his own person. The formation of the teacher will not take the aspect of a decontextualized knowledge transference, but of a re-interpretation of a pedagogic discourse of each of the involved ones.

This means that each one re-interprets, or at least should re-interpret, the pedagogic discourse that one receives in the formation courses to find his/her own and most appropriate way of teaching, taking into consideration the school reality in which he/she is inserted. Then, the teacher's posture shows a role in evidence.

For a better formative result, it is recommended that the teacher shows flexibility to change the course of action, once that strategies, alone, already carry the idea of uncertainty and unpredictability, which concern the human processes that are present in everyday life, inside and outside school.

The teacher who is conscious of his/her task should not expect for miraculous strategies. He/She should, instead, discuss with colleagues, create proposals, develop projects and evaluate the results. Furthermore, the usage of varied teaching strategies takes to an integrated learning, capable of establishing new meanings about the world at the same time it develops abilities, values and competences.

The focus of this question, then, is not on using or not using the computer in the school atmosphere. The focus is centered, in fact, in the dynamics of the class prepared by the teacher and in his/her posture during the activities proposed to the students.

USING COMPUTERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Starting from a wrong formula, some teachers take their students to computer labs and let them free, surfing the

internet. During this kind of class, for instance, it is not difficult to hear students asking what they have to do, which site they have to investigate. According to Setzer [6] in these cases, the computer is seen

as an artificial sweetener, transforming what is now considered as the bitter medicine of school learning into something palatable for children that grew up in the empty calories of television. [...] Using the computer as an educational sweetener is a pedagogic dishonesty, bringing something harmful to the educational diet, which many times, ends up becoming a vice.

Badly formed teachers, not well informed, with lack of enthusiasm and lack of love for their students use technological tools without any evident purpose. Moran [7] exposes that

Undoubtedly, technologies help us enlarge the class concept of space and time, of audiovisual communication, and establish new bridges between what is present and what is virtual, between being together and being connected at a distance.

In this context, it is also indispensable that technologies truly be at teachers' disposition at both public and private schools:

There is always another challenge that is also worrying, which is the access to electronic media, in particular at distant and less developed places. The state and local education rulers should be responsible for that, in the sense of minimally guaranteeing such access, as a rule under the collective perspective (place or collective access places). A "teacher's house" where he/she can work with the internet, among other rebuilding activities, could be an appropriate idea. [...] It would be fundamental to remove the counter-argument of the teacher who does not have a chance, who does not have a book, who does not have internet [8]

However, the computer is not a miraculous resource. It is not the solution for all the present problems of Brazilian education that still shows itself as profoundly traditional and, at a certain point, tiring and boring. Without clear objectives for its usage, it acts as other tools that seem to color the educational context so that schools can see themselves as modern.

If the computer – or any other tool – is well used, the school environment will then be more motivating. This way, for the machine to be used in the best way possible in the classroom, it becomes essential that, before any other thing, the teacher gets prepared, organized and that using the computer during any kind of activity be justified.

Teaching is not made only by means of technological instruments, but, today, it is impossible to deny that they

are tools of extreme relevance in the teaching-learning process of young people who inhabit a world that becomes, daily, more computerized, interactive, mediatized and virtual.

Freire [9], years ago, concerning the characteristics of Brazilian education, already said: "I don't have any doubt on the enormous potential of stimuli and challenges to curiosity that technology disposes to children and teenagers."

It is not, then, an individual learning that is centered, only and exclusively, in the free surfing of sites and collecting information from the internet. In reality, it is a task in which there are exchanges between teacher and student and amongst students.

It was from such references that the proposal of inserting computer and games in classes of teacher formation courses came up.

WORKING WITH GAMES IN TEACHERS' FORMATION COURSES

The work proposal that will be described came from the idea of asking students from the Languages course, future teachers, to create, using information and communication technologies, games that could help in the teaching-learning process of Portuguese in Elementary Education, taking into consideration the present model of language teaching.

Being the game a tool that mobilizes mental schemes and that is usually characterized as bringing pleasure and spontaneous effort, the idea was to create proposals that would absorb the students from Elementary Education in a more intense way, in an environment of enthusiasm, vibration and knowledge construction. According to Ronca [10], "the game movement, simultaneously, becomes a pleasant source of knowledge", once, by its means, the students "builds classifications, elaborates logical sequences, develops the psychomotor and affectiveness and enlarges concepts from various scientific areas."

The objective was to produce games on some grammar content that would involve Portuguese classes in Elementary Education and High School, so that the future teachers would experiment moments of creation of activities involving games.

Initially, the fifth semester students from the Languages course, enrolled in the subject entitled Educational Projects for the teaching of Portuguese, received all the information required for the project "Building Games for Elementary Education.": justification, objectives and perspectives, being the initial direction given to students, to create a game, making use of any kind of mediatic resource.

Once the initial phase of project presentation was over, the teacher who gave such subject showed her students game she had created when she used to give classes at Elementary Education. The aim, with this practice, was to have students visualize some models that could inspire new creations.

In the very beginning, the first surprise: some groups of students asked in the first class if they could make the virtual version of the game and another one in paper. The necessity came, according to the students, from the knowledge that they acquired in their observation classes both in public and private schools (nationally compulsory for those who want a licence to become teachers) that, in a general sense, in the private ones, there are computers and projectors in the classrooms, what would facilitate the use of virtual games, but in public schools this reality was distant from being present.

After two weeks preparing the games, during the classes and also in the computer lab, on the presentation day, the groups demonstrated game proposals to the whole class, showing creativity and commitment.

All the created games achieved the first objective which was dealing with some grammar content developed in Elementary Education and High School (phases that compose Basic Education in Brazil), but they went ahead, because even though the teacher had not asked for an interdisciplinary task, it was this what really showed in practice. According to Fazenda [11], interdisciplinarity “is the substitution of a fragmentary conception to a unitary one of the human being. It is an open attitude, without any prejudice, in which all knowledge is equally important”.

This way, besides working with subjects like writing difficulties, punctuation, nouns, verb tenses and linguistic varieties, questions concerning language teaching also appeared and they also got close to other areas.

In one of the games on linguistic varieties – content applied at the sixth year of Elementary Education and also in the first year High School -, for example, the students also dealt with geographic, folkloric, cultural, gastronomic, musical and touristic questions. This way, the project helped in the process of

favours the creation of strategies for the organization of school knowledge in relation to: 1) the treatment of information, and 2) the relation concerning the different contents around the problems or hypothesis that facilitate for the students the construction of their knowledge, the transformation of the information coming from different knowledges into their own knowledge. [12]

Finally, the students were also asked to evaluate all the games so that they could exercise the capacity of reflexive judgement. Even though many praises were heard, some

suggestions were also given for the improvement of the games.

Once the activity was over, it was possible to observe the exchanging of experiences and knowledge amongst teacher and students and also amongst the students. The proposal, then, was in accordance to the idea of a dialogic education. It is truly pleasant when the opposition teacher students is overcome in such a way that they are able to understand each other as “both teachers and students” [13]

CONCLUSIONS

Any kind of teaching activity requires real, not naive commitment from the teacher's part with the pedagogic practice, the content, the institution, the society and, mainly the students.

The teacher must be conscious of the cultural and social transformations and also make use of them in his/her teaching practices. If this teacher, for instance, found problems in his/her academic formation, it is up to him/her to rebuild and improve his/her knowledge.

The technological tools, the way of spreading information and the appearance of media that are rapidly updated and improved must, as soon as possible, be part of the school environment, even for the simplistic view of students being closer to such ideas, including in their future job market.

During the tasks that involve information and communication technologies, as the proposal abovementioned, there are exchanges between teacher and student and amongst students.

The main objective of the proposal developed in the classes of Educational Projects for the teaching of Portuguese was to show the future teachers the daily need of rethinking methodologies in language teaching in search of more significant, motivating and efficient practices in a world in which games, important instrument in the teaching-learning process, are constantly present.

The project “Building Games for Elementary Education” emphasized the creative process, the usage of the digital universe, interdisciplinarity, besides showing a dialogue and a reflection on the most efficient methodological practices.

In face of such findings, then, it is up to the teacher in the formation courses to create an environment with motivational elements and propose activities that establish a relation between theory and practice and that, really, are significant for teachers' formation courses, as it was the case with the activity described in this research.

To sum up, it is possible to see that even though the machines bring a freer learning environment, in which the individual rhythm is more respected, the role of the teacher as a mediator, as a guide, still figures as fundamental.

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