

## 47 - CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN SITUATION OF RISK IN THE PROJECT "CHILDREN OF CANUDOS" (I)

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### Characterization of the study

The present study was conducted in Canudos, an area in the city of Novo Hamburgo inhabited mostly by poor, destituted people. The objective of this investigation was to analyse the Project "Children of Canudos" focusing specially learning about the children and adolescents in situation of risk, and the factors that contributed to put them in this situation; the goal is to give assistance to the faculty and students involved in this institutional project, and the course of Physical Education. The survey included twenty-nine children/adolescents participating in the Project and who went to the school selected (the first chosen to cooperate in the project).

The interviews were in charge of the school's principal, with pedagogical supervisor, and three female teachers. The project was represented by the teacher/student who have been involved longer with the project 'Children of Canudos' (4 years). The principal selected 29 participants in risky situation. The questionnaire applied was divided in two parts: the first part comprehended the structured questions, and the second, the open ones, where the questions given were in order of priority, according to the respondent's interests and plans for the future. Out of the 29 questionnaires distributed, just 24 were returned for analysis. The observations of the period were entered in a field journal, just like our previous experiences were between the years 2002-2003.

### Context Studied

Canudos is located in the east zone of the city of Novo Hamburgo. It does not comprise the biggest physical area in the city, but is also the most populated zone. The greatest problem in Canudos, and the greatest challenge for the local administration, is how to overcome the social problems caused by the disorganized growth of the zone, which is aggravated even more by the invasion of public areas and illegal settlements.

Canudos has the structure of a town in size and number of dwellings. There was a movement some time ago to politically emancipate the area. Its physical area comprehends 14.1 Km<sup>2</sup>, 19.78% of the total area of the city. Canudos has grown disorganizedly. Its population is mostly composed of people who came from rural areas and other cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, who were attracted by the dynamic industrial and commercial growth of the leather/shoe sector. One portion of Canudos is rich, the other. There is a great number of people living in sub-habitation, mainly in the areas near the streams. In all, there are 19 slums and irregular areas in Canudos. Novo Hamburgo has a total of 56 slums.

The illegal occupations of areas are a result of the economic and financial crises faced by the communities and the country as well; they originate from alternative and temporary settlements of people in search of new job opportunities. The instability of these families mirrors their economic-financial instability. The peripheral populations, slums, and illegal settlements are the greatest in the city of Novo Hamburgo. Canudos is characterized by its diversity of problems as well for its diversity of qualities.

The zone has serious infrastructure problems: there is regular flooding in many parts, which for some is a cause of discomfort, and others, of despair, in special the slums near the streams. Besides that, there are problems with the water supply and sewerage, bad smell from the open-air sewer, lack of road to access some parts of the slums. The areas with the most severe problems are the 'vilas' named Kipling, Esmeralda, Iguaçú, where survival is a great struggle.

Canudos is also known as the most violent zone in the city. There are 716 shops, 322 of which are industries, 327 offer services, and there are 2415 autonomous establishments.

Vila Kipling, until 2004, helped 200 destitute boys and girls. Volunteers from several different areas are responsible for the program that offers medical, physiotherapeutic, and psychological assistance, and also activities in the field of arts. There are also two centers of the ASEMA (City Hall). These are places for protection and prevention, which offer assistance to children and adolescents from destituted families. The minors are indicated by the community, the 'Conselho Tutelar (Guidance Council)', Court for the Childhood. The children participate in the activities after they leave school for the day or when they have quit school for good.

### Interpreting the categories found in the field

For the present article, we chose to share the first part of the first category of this research, which we analyse next:

Categories	Sub-Categories
Children and adolescents in situation of risk	- Risk factors - Expectations of children and adolescents

### Risk Factors

There are factors that are harmful to children, and place them in a situation of risk. Abuse, violence, sexual abuse, drug use, family breakdown are some of the relevant aspects considered by the authors during the analysis.

Historical studies show that there is a period that marks the going of a child or adolescent to the streets. It is the moment when they can become workforce, later a commodity. Children then start to live in the streets in search of sustenance, even if in order to do that, they have to sell their bodies.

The great majority of the children and adolescents who come to the Project have a family. However, most often they remain unattended in the streets, subjected to the risks such environment offers. The families are not usually of the traditional father-mother-children type. Usually, it is a mother with children of several fathers, without the necessary values and conditions for a model education.

" (...) the mother abandoned (the child) and she (the child) has some kind of disturbance, you know, a blocking to learn"

E4

"The question is the family breakdown. The father has left them, he doesn't contribute to their education, he doesn't pay any pension. The mother has other children whom she has to look after. The result is that the older children ended up watching over the younger siblings, and we also had here cases of children who had been beaten, badly mistreated. Truly, violence is out there". E4

According to Einsenstein and Souza (1993, p.18):

Risk is the probability of occurrence of an undesirable event. Risks are not isolated or independent of a social event. They are interrelated to the complex network of factors and cultural, historical, political, sociopolitical and environmental aspects.

As the quotation above clarifies and the data from the interviews confirm, the children and adolescents in the project

live in situations of risk. What afflicts these children is a web of events that have their origin in the family and social context.

My own experience as a teacher/student in the Project corroborates this scenario; I heard the story of a girl who didn't have much to eat, but who several times told that she had a lot of things to eat: "pasta, fries, rice, beans, etc." She would alternate the order of the food item from one day to another. I knew about her reality she lived in a makeshift house made of cardboard and wood where the probabilities of risk went far beyond food. Her father, a drunkard, was unemployed doing small jobs in the meantime. Her mother has no paid occupation. She had older and younger siblings. Her talk reveals her need to belong somewhere, to receive affection, and her want for the things that she lacks." (Note 1)

In the chart below, the data from the teachers' testimony is organized.

Mistreatment	EP1, EPP2, E3, E4, E5, EP6
Pregnancy	EP1, EPP2, E3
Prostitution	EP1, EPP2, E4, EP6
Drug	EPP2, E5
Rape	EPP2, EP6
Alcohol	EPP2, E4, E5
Learning Difficulties	EP1, E3, E4, EP6
Aggressiveness	EP1, EPP2, E3, E4, E5, EP6
Family breakdown	EP1, EPP2, E3, E4, E5, EP6
Child labour	E5
Depression	EP1, EPP2, E3, E4, E5, EP6

### Chart 'Situations of risk'

The Statute for Children and Adolescents (ECA 1999) is clear about street kids: all child has the right to a home and a family. However, many are the cases of children and adolescents who are completely forsaken, thus making the street their family and their social environment. Here are, then, the parameters that separate these two concepts street and risk. The child and/or adolescent participating in the Project "Children of Canudos", despite the troubles and deficiencies, live in a household that has a group with parental links, but they live in a situation of risk.

As the interviewee EP 6 said,

"(...) family breakdown is one of the main causes of situations of risk in which the children are found... there are many problems (...)."

During a dialogue, one boy said that he was tired because he hadn't slept much. Asked about the reason why he hadn't slept much, the boy reported that he sells flowers to couples at the restaurants in the city. The child also declared that his siblings have the occupation. Questioned about whether he feared staying out late hours in the streets, the boy told the interviewer that his father waited for him in a car parked in front of the restaurants to take him and his siblings to another place (Note.4)

As one can see, these children have even the presence of a father, but are anyway at the mercy of the dangers in the streets, mainly because they work at night. The day after their night activity, the children are unable to have a satisfactory performance in class, and this just worsens the problem.

The observations and the interviews confirm that the children and adolescents in the project live in a situation of constant risk. When that is confronted to what the literature says about the issue the problem becomes apparent. Contact with criminality, economic difficulties, daily physical and moral abuse lead the children to make decisions, very often not the right ones. In this context, as interviewee EPP 2, remarked: "if a child is mistreated all his life, it is obvious that some time ahead it will blow up."

The testimony of E 3 confirms this situation when the interviewee declares that "many children allow us to see at school the situation they live at home. They bring it all to school." EP 6's testimony is that the difficulties are repeated in this social environment as if from parents to children. One case that was brought up during the interviews was the following: an adolescent has a baby at a younger age; her child will almost certainly have the same problem or suffer the consequences of that reckless act.

About this, Einsenstein and Souza (1993, p. 47) declare:

"in boys and girls who are marginalized at home or in the streets, this disregard for their own lives is a kind of trademark; it is as if they tried to enact in their daily existence the lack of concern for them that marks their upbringing. These children do not even reach the condition of individuals, for that which could evince such condition becomes secondary in the context of their day-to-day struggle for survival."

### Expectations of the children and adolescents

The content of the interviews added to the quotation above may lead one to think that these subjects have no hope at all, no dream of a better life. But against all odds, the children and adolescents have demonstrated in the questionnaires that they do concern themselves with the future. Perhaps the present leads them to question the fulfilment of their dreams, but they still dream. The table below shows some evidences:

In the analysis of the documentation, after the triangulation of data, the researchers found the following results about expectations: 1st option- to have a job and continue to study; 2nd option- to have a job and a better family; 3rd option to have a better family; 4th option to have a good economic status and be happy; 5th option to be happy; 6th option- to have family harmony; 7<sup>th</sup> option- to have a profession (Teacher, lawyer, doctor); 8<sup>th</sup> option - Don't know, and 9<sup>th</sup> option- Others.

The answers show that their priority is to have a job and to keep going to school. In second comes that these children wish to have a better family. The two results together evince that for their future their desire is for a job and a better family. This fact demonstrates the importance that a job represents for these children and adolescents for them, it results in better conditions of life. As for having a better family, we can extract something from that too. We observed many contradiction between their lives and their expectations. About the figures presented, it is important to highlight the degree of importance given to a profession as a means to get a more dignified position. A profession came last in the list of priorities, before only of "I don't know" and "others". Even with their dreams and expectations, the subjects do not hope for great accomplishments. Where they live, to have a stable job and a salary at the end of the month is a victory in itself, even if this is not sufficient to guarantee a worthy life.

The people studied here do not get the condition of citizens, but get stuck in their daily battle for survival. Freitas (1997) traces the history of child development based on this lack of personality, and lack of individualization.

The interviewee EPP 2 mentions:

"...that if a child is mistreated all her life, it will be like a snow ball, so then she may end up killing herself, or killing somebody else, or become a rebel, someone who doesn't respect anybody. And this is going to be a problem for life."

EP 6 adds that "this child doesn't respond anymore to the stimuli that life offers."

One of the teenagers reported that when he arrived home and his father was drunk, he would sleep in the barn with the horses, without a meal. In the times he tried to go inside his house he was beaten up. This happened on a daily basis. (Note:6)

If one takes the report above and contrasts it with the 'expectations' chart, one may wonder: What expectation may this adolescent have being forced to sleep with horses to avoid abuse? In spite of this situation, he still hopes for a better life and had many plans, many of which, however, were beyond his reach. (Note 6)

In the item 'others' in the questionnaire, there was the following comment about a respondent's expectation:

"To enjoy life because it is short."

Another said:

“to have a good life, to have a better family.”

The questionnaire also included question about who these children lived with and the activities they developed in the project. The majority of the children and adolescents live with mother and father, followed by those who live only with their mothers and siblings. Only two live with a father and a stepmother, and two with a mother and a stepfather. It is possible to say that the families fit the model structure of a family. The interviews reveal, however, absent parents, domestic violence, sexual abuse in the family, and family breakdown.

At the end of this study, the research questions are answered, but the results just generate more questions and important considerations about Feevale's Project “Children of Canudos”. The bibliographic revision and the analyses point that the situations of risk are part of a social context, and that there are factors that contribute to these situations. It is known that risk is an undesired factor, associated to a myriad of other factors which interact and magnify the problem. A situation of risk is a circumstance; a moment in time that offers an opportunity of risk. On top of that, one can see that the problems that assail these children and adolescents are social, political and economic in nature, and aggravated in the present society. However, there is a growing commitment from this very society to interfere with this marginalized groups. This happens because the situations of risk, or more specifically, the risk itself, is not restricted to the generating contexts of the subgroups, but it spreads and reaches the population as a whole.

Among the alternatives and attempts to cope with these situations of risk such as 'keeping healthy during the development of several stages of life, according to Einsenstein and Souza 1993 are projects like “Children of Canudos”. For their success, it is important to strengthen the protection factors, and avoid risk factors”, the authors add.

Protection factors can be personal or social resources, which work consciously or not. They comprehend situations that contribute to an adequate development in the family and the social groups with whom the children and adolescents relate. This way, risk factors and the situations that promote undesirable events would not have room to flourish say Einsenstein and Souza (1993).

Delors (1998) in a UNESCO report, writes that we live in a world of many risks due to many social problems that abound. According to that author, this is a world of uncertainties and violence, which, at the same time, causes a feeling of fraternity and conflict. Attention to children and adolescents cannot be restricted to this, once it would not solve the problem. It is not enough to mask what is going on. The same author claims that “education can be a factor of cohesion, if it contemplates the diversity of individuals and groups.”

The process of social exclusion occurs because one wants to conform something or someone who is not within a certain pattern, without any regard for an individual's specificities. Social inclusion, on the other hand, has this respect as prerequisite, and it does not break the laws that guarantee the rights and duties of a citizen. For this goal, cooperation between the local school, the community, and the university are fundamental for the incorporation of these assumptions.

#### Final Remarks

At the end of this investigation, we believe that we found answers to the question 'What is the importance of Feevale's Project “Children of Canudos” in the life of children and adolescents who are in a situation of risk?', and the other objectives of this study. Through the analysis and interpretation of the data, we have reached the results that follow below.

The children and adolescents in the survey are in situation of risk even though they have a family; they are exposed to one or more of the following factors: mistreatment, pregnancy, drugs, rape, learning difficulties, family breakdown, child labour, and depression. Despite the presence of such factors, they still have expectation and dreams of finding a job, continuing going to school, having a better family and economic status, being happy, having peace at home, and a profession, in this order of priority.

The project is not interacting effectively with the social groups where the children and adolescents are. There is a lack of dialogue between the institutions responsible for the young ones (Family, school, Feevale), once each of them seems to have their own agenda. We have observed that, many times, the real problems of these children and adolescents go unnoticed by family, school, and the teacher-students in the project. There are no effective actions to solve the problems.

The project does not include an adequate monitoring of children and adolescents in situation of risk, or the teacher-students in it. The testimonies show that the Project “Children of Canudos” is longer articulated with the other courses from the university, as it used to do at the beginning in 2000, it is now limited to Physical Education.

The people involved in the project were unanimous in saying that an affective link is fundamental in the work with these children and adolescents, which was confirmed during the revision of the literature that was done for this paper. At the moment, just one teacher/student has this 'affective link' for he has worked for four years with the children and adolescents in the community studied.

After these remarks, a question remains: In this perspective, would the Project offered be some kind of assistencialism which so many of the community members are used to? There would still other questions, but they would lie outside the scope of this research. The continuance of the Project is, for sure, paramount for the survival in this social context. However, the points which were studied here ought to be evaluated and reconsidered by the institutions involved, specially by Feevale, which has masterminded the Project. We believe it fundamental to show concern for the professionals working in the project, and to establish a permanent group. This could help the constitution of a reference mark for those who need it most the children and adolescents in situation of risk.

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**CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN SITUATION OF RISK IN THE PROJECT "CHILDREN OF CANUDOS" (I)****ABSTRACT**

This article is about the history of children and adolescents in situation of risk that arrive in Canudos, a poor zone in the city of Novo Hamburgo in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The context in which these children and adolescent are shown is that of the project "Crianças de Canudos" (Children of Canudos) from Feevale, a small local university. A school in the area was chosen as case study. It is discussed here the issue of university extension, and the collaboration between extension programs and physical education. The research problem is summarized in the question 'What is the importance of Feevale's Project Children of Canudos in the life of children and adolescents who are in a situation of risk?' The methodology used for the investigation was the descriptive interpretative qualitative one with a case study. The instruments for data collection were interview, observation, documents, the researcher's journal, and questionnaire. During the analysis and interpretation phase, 85 meaning units were obtained; these units resulted in two big categories, and four subcategories. At the school focused here, there were 29 children/adolescents, who participate in the project, in risky situation. The conclusion is that even those children/adolescents living with their families are in situations of risk. Factors such as family violence, prostitution, abuse/ill care, drugs, learning difficulties were found in the 24 participants who answered the questionnaire. For these children and adolescents, the importance of the Project is that in taking part in it, they can 'forget the bad times' for a while, contemplate the possibility of a better life with people who show affection and interest for them. A highly positive aspect to be pointed out is that in spite of the context of risk in which they live, these children and adolescents still have dreams and expectations of finding a job (not necessarily a profession), remaining at school, having a better family, among others.

**Key-words:** Children/adolescents in situation of risk - Physical Education -Community project.

**L'ENFANT ET L'ADOLESCENT EN SITUATION DE RISQUE, DANS LE PROJET "ENFANT DE CANUDOS"****RESUMÉ**

Ce travail s'agit de l'histoire de l'enfant et de l'adolescent en situation de risque au Brésil, jusqu'au quartier Canudos à Novo Hamburgo/RS. Il met en contexte cet enfant et cet adolescent en situation de risque, notamment dans le projet Enfants de Canudos, du Centre Universitaire Feevale. On étudie dans ce cas, une école de ce quartier. On parle à propos de l'extension universitaire, l'extension et l'Éducation Physique. Le problème d'investigation c'est : « Quelle est l'importance du Projet Enfants de Canudos du Centre Universitaire Feevale pour la vie des enfants et adolescents qui se trouvent en situation de risque ». Le borne théorique méthodologique employé pour cette investigation a été le qualitatif descriptif, interprétatif avec étude d'affaire. On a employé comme des outils de collecte de données pour l'interview, l'observation, les documents, le journal de l'investigateur et questionnaire. À travers l'analyse et l'interprétation, on a arrivé 85 unités de signifiés qui ont débouché en deux grandes classes et quatre sous-classes. On a trouvé à cette école, 29 enfants/adolescents participants du projet, en situation de risque. On a conclu que, en dépit des enfants/adolescents habiter avec ses familles, ils sont en situation de risque, puisque des facteurs comme violence familiale, prostitution, mauvais traitements, drogues, difficultés à apprendre, parmi d'autres, ont été détectés dans les 24 participants qui ont répondu au questionnaire. L'importance du projet de Canudos pour eux, entre d'autres choses, c'est que, en participant, ils ont l'opportunité « d'oublier les mauvais moments », montrer la possibilité d'une vie meilleure avec des gens qui démontrent tendresse et intérêt pour eux. On détache, comme un point tellement positif, la constatation que dans ce contexte de risque où vivent ces enfants et adolescents, ils ont encore des attentes et rêves comme : obtenir un travail (même que ce n'ait pas comme une profession), continuer à étudier, avoir une famille meilleure, et tant d'autres détectées.

**Mots clefs :** Enfant/adolescent en situation de risque Éducation Physique Projet Communautaire

**PROYECTO "CRIANÇAS DE CANUDOS", JÓVENES, NIÑOS Y NIÑAS EN SITUACIÓN DE RIESGO(I)****RESUMEN**

El artículo trata de la historia de los jóvenes, niños y niñas en situación de riesgo en Brasil, en específico, en el barrio de "Canudos" de Novo Hamburgo, RS/BR. Enseña la realidad del grupo a través del proyecto del Centro Universitario Feevale. Por tanto elegimos, para el caso estudiado, una escuela del barrio. Describe la extensión universitaria, la extensión y la educación física. Además, define la importancia del Proyecto "Crianças de Canudos" para la vida de ese grupo de riesgo. El objetivo de la investigación fue hacer un análisis del proyecto mientras se conocía la realidad del grupo en su situación y los factores que los llevaron a ella. Tenía el reto de ayudarles a los maestros y alumnos del curso de educación física involucrados en este proyecto. La investigación se hizo de forma cualitativa, descriptiva, interpretativa con el estudio de caso. Los instrumentos utilizados para la recogida de los datos fueron entrevistas, observaciones, documentos, el diario del investigador y encuesta. A partir del análisis se llegó a 85 unidades de significados que resultó en dos grandes categorías y cuatro subcategorías. En esta escuela participaron 29 niños, niñas y jóvenes, en situación de riesgo. Los resultados obtenidos fueron que, mientras ellos viven con sus familias, están en situación de riesgo, porque hay: violencia familiar, prostitución, malos tratos, utilización de drogas, dificultades de aprendizaje entre otros factores. Se descubrió en los 24 participantes que contestaron la encuesta, la importancia del proyecto "Crianças de Canudos" para ellos. Ellos afirmaron que, al participar del proyecto tienen la oportunidad de olvidarse de sus "malos ratos", tienen la posibilidad de una vida mejor con personas que les demuestran afecto y se interesan por ellos. Como aspecto bastante positivo comprobamos que dentro de su contexto de riesgo, el grupo todavía tiene expectativas y sueña en conseguir un trabajo (antes de terminar los estudios), para entonces, seguir con los estudios y tener una buena familia.

**PALABRAS LLAVES:** Niños y niñas en situación de riesgo - Educación Física- Proyecto Comunitario

**A CRIANÇA E O ADOLESCENTE EM SITUAÇÃO DE RISCO NO PROJETO "CRIANÇA DE CANUDOS" (I)****RESUMO**

O trabalho trata sobre a história da criança e do adolescente em situação de risco no Brasil chegando ao bairro Canudos de Novo Hamburgo, RS. Contextualiza essa criança e adolescente em situação de risco especificamente no projeto Crianças de Canudos do Centro Universitário Feevale escolhendo-se como caso estudado, uma escola do bairro. Fala sobre a extensão universitária, a extensão e a educação física. O objetivo da investigação como um todo teve como meta à de Analisar o Projeto Criança de Canudos, priorizando conhecer as crianças e adolescentes que se encontram em situação de risco e os fatores que as colocam nessa situação para subsidiar professores e acadêmicos envolvidos neste projeto institucional e curso de Educação Física. O marco teórico metodológico utilizado para essa investigação foi o qualitativo, descritivo, interpretativo com estudo de caso. Utilizou-se como instrumentos de coleta de dados a entrevista, a observação, os documentos, diário do investigador e questionário. Na análise e interpretação chegou-se a 85 unidades de significados que resultaram em duas grandes categorias e quatro subcategorias. Foram encontradas nesta escola, 29 crianças participantes do projeto, em situação de risco. Concluiu-se que mesmo as crianças morando com as famílias estão em situação de risco, pois fatores como: violência familiar, prostituição, maus tratos, drogas, dificuldades de aprendizagem entre outros, foram detectados nos 24 participantes que responderam; a importância do projeto de Canudos para eles, entre outras coisas, é que, participando eles tem a oportunidade de "esquecer os maus momentos", mostrar a possibilidade de uma vida melhor com pessoas que demonstram afeto e interesse por elas. Destaca-se como ponto altamente positivo a constatação de que dentro desse contexto de risco em que essas crianças e adolescentes vivem, eles ainda tem expectativas e sonhos como: conseguir um trabalho (mesmo que não seja através de uma profissão), continuar estudando, ter uma família melhor, entre outras detectadas.

**Palavras Chaves:** Crianças e Adolescentes em situação de Risco - Educação Física - Pojeto Comunitário.