66 - STUDENT CULTURE: APPROXIMATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ETHNICAL DIVERSITY

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Introduction

The focus of this work is the understanding of the student culture in the schools of the City of Porto Alegre Education Network (RME/Poa). The different relations present in the everyday of the educational institutions take us to the perception of the school as a complex crossing of cultures, or still , according to Pérez Gómez (1998), as an instance of cultural mediation among meanings, feelings and behaviors of the social community. In this crossroad of cultures there are teachers and students that usually are from different generations social classes and family structures, and the teachers, as the initiators of pedagogical action, sometimes impose or try to impose their values, expectations and behaviors, forgetting that their culture is not the only one present or of value .

Culture

Culture may be understood, according to Geertz (1996) as a public entity that allows men historically to build and represent themselves. Not only their ideas, but also their own bodies and emotions are cultural productions. McLaren (1997) uses the term culture to signify the particular ways in which a social group lives and gives meaning to their circumstances and life conditions. In this case it makes us think, according to Bank (2000), not only of what people do or say, but also what other people mean to each other. It would be unsatisfactory, in this analysis, to try to understand the reality of the determined group without the contextualization of its meanings, since, as Santos (1994) states, each cultural reality has its own internal logic.

Pérez Gómez (1998) considers a culture as the set of meanings, expectations and behaviors shared by a determined social group, that facilitates and organizes, limits and gives power to the social interchanges, individual and collective productions and realizations inside a determined spatial and temporal boundary. The school is taken as an important element of possible analysis, since it is formed by subjects with multiple interchanges that circle, not always as a priority, around an institution that is historically marked by control and power relations. In this way, identifying and understanding the culture of the student can by an alternative to reduce the distance between the teachers and the students, seeking to establish a more consistent bond and improve the pedagogical practice developed in the school.

Student Culture

We understand that the experimental culture proposed by Pérez Gómez (1998) is more linked to particular meanings and behaviors if we consider the scholastic context, since every student is imbued with a social culture prior to the scholastic culture although they are coincident after a certain age from the moment of their ingression to the school. On a group aspect, we consider that the experimental culture becomes one of the participant elements in the configuration of the student culture. In this way, Bank (2000) considers that the cultures of equals are built in the interactions that are produced among the participants of the group, however, the descriptive and evaluative senses that compose those cultures do not necessarily originate from groups of equals. It's more likely that the group builds its senses from what was learned at home, from the means of communication, from the teachers and from many other people and groups with which their ideas had been exposed. Those senses are never static, and the interactions among the participants of the group consist of language, the behaviors that build, maintain and consolidate, challenge end/or modify those same senses. The interpretations that the groups of equals build to themselves and their behaviors usually are part of a wider process in which also is given a sense to other groups and individuals.

Therefore, we can think that the students constitute, through their interactions in school, a determined peculiar culture that allow them to justify some attitudes and behaviors that are completely accepted among their equals at the same time that they can be seen as absurd and unacceptable by some of the teachers, for example. According to Bank (2000) what distinguishes a culture of equals from another is not their beliefs, preferences, rules or values as much as the meaning and importance that they give to those cultural elements on the behaviors of the groups of equals.On those relations the students build their representations and meanings, constituting a strong and meaningful link to be analyzed in the scholastic context, since even if the student culture may present some elements that originated outside the physical space of the school, those elements will possibly reflect on the scholastic environment and influence the educational relation proposed and/or established.

The student culture embodies a series of elements particular to these subjects, having as its main characteristics the identification of the students as a social group. In this way, it presents their expectations, values and behaviors that are seen and interpreted differently by subjects belonging or not to that specific culture, such as a way of talking, dressing, posture relating to the school and classroom, mocking or funny comments that compose the student culture and, as it, present meanings significant to the group. In compensation they can be seen as attempts of facing or disrespecting the authority of the teacher or the institution.

1- Pérez Gómez (1998) proposes that the crossing of the cultures produced in school, among the propositions of the critical culture, located in the scientific, artistic and philosophic disciplines; the determinations of the academic culture, reflected in the definitions that constitute the curriculum; the influxes of the social culture, constituted by the hegemonic values on the social set; the pressures of the everyday of the institutional culture, present on the roles, the rules, the routines and the rituals pertaining to the school as a specific institution; and the characteristics of the experimental culture, acquired individually by the student through experiments in the spontaneous interchanges with the environment.

2- According to Bank (2000) the term *equal* is used to refer to people that occupy an equivalent position in an organization or social net. Therefore, the students of a school are *equal*, in the same way that the teachers are, however students and teachers occupy different positions and are not *equal*. I use in this text the expression "culture of equals" to refer to a student culture, since my analysis is based in the group of students that are constituted as equal in this perspective.

3- Bank (2000) seeks to differentiate group of equals from culture of equals, developing the idea that the term group, in this case, would be more restrained to attitudes and behaviors, while culture contained the ideas and the meanings that the subjects build relating to those attitudes and behaviors.

4- Agency in charge of caring for the accomplishment of the rights of the children and the adolescent.

5- On the adolescent language, "to hook up" indicates an exchange of kisses and momentary caresses that do not characterize any commitment. It's possible (and valued) to "hook up" with more than one person, including at the same place.

6- McLaren (1991) proposes four interactive states in a study made about the rituals of instruction in school. By proposing the state of street corner; the state of student; the state of sanctity; and the state of home, he suggests styles of interaction with the environment and others. According to the author, the four states of interaction would be mutually tangled in the system and the changes from one state to the other would occur constantly, in a conscious way or not, according to the situations. The student state refers to an adoption of gestures, dispositions, attitudes and habits of work expected from the "being a student"; there is a realignment and readjustment of ones behavior.

7- This is proposed by McLaren (1991) and evocates the behavior that the students present on the street. However, this behavior is not limited to the streets, being manifested in other environments. The state of street corner is composed by a conglomerate of attributes that, when put together, constitute a determined way of relating to environments, events and people.

Pérez Gómez (1998) exemplifies that the understanding that the students have of the scholastic situation may be substantially different from the teachers'. In some cases, the students are obliged by the family or the tutelary council to go to school; others believe that they are doing a favor to the parents or the teachers by going to school and doing the activities proposed. One of the motivations for the students to go to school is based on the relations that can be established with classmates, such as “hooking up”, dating, playing ball, making friends, talking, showing off outfits, haircuts or accessories or simply feeling as part of a group.

A general view of the municipal schools of Porto Alegre shows us students that belonging to the popular classes, where the African American population is very present. That fact creates an everyday filled with ethnic relations, capable of producing diverse feelings regarding the body and body representations. Since the African American has been historically discriminated and the miscegenation of the Brazilian society raises difficulties to definitions regarding races and ethnic groups, what is seen in our schools is a great diversity of “colors', characteristics physical and cultural ones and behaviors that usually depreciate those who deviate from the “ideal model” light skin and straight hair constantly proliferated in the means of communication, speeches and attitudes. The school fulfils, and very well, its job perpetuating determined social roles where students do not have a voice, women have less opportunities and African Americans are seen as inferior. Despite that, in RME/Poa, some elements of the black culture seem important, as in the perception of students and are present in the everyday life of the school. Music, dance, clothing, slang and accessories identified with African Americans are valued in the student culture and acquire significant meanings among those subjects. Although it does not seem to be a specific reflection on the meanings of these element in black culture, the students may be manifesting, through it, ways of resistance and expression of their particular values.

McLaren (1991) states that the rituals of teaching should not be attempts to manipulate the “state of student” by the complete closing of the “state of street corner”. Many of the conflicts that take place in the scholastic environment may originate in the different interpretations that the official school culture, the teacher' culture and the student culture have, in the attempt of sharing the times and spaces in a rigid way. Sometimes the students, perhaps as resistance or as a result of incomprehension or rebelliousness don't accept any situation that repels the state of street corner, while the school institution wants the students to “abandon” this state outside the gates of the school, and “incorporate” their state of student, disciplined and obedient.

The attempt to establish inflexible routines so that the students accept the school's propositions without questioning, with the objective of transmission of values and knowledge shocks with a social-cultural reality that presents students with values and meanings of their own, as states Bank (2000) when she says that the cultures of equals of children and adolescents are often opposed to the objectives of teachers and the official culture of the school in which those objectives are framed.

The aforementioned studies indicate the possibility of identifying the existence of the student culture, seeking to understand the thoughts of the students and the reasons for determined behaviors, not with the idea of manipulating, but with the objective of establishing a relation of respect and harmony. We don't claim the inexistence of conflicts, but propose a relationship in which conflicts can be debated, and proportionate growth and individual and collective emancipation to those.

Problem Approach

The quest for identification and understanding of the student culture can list some aspects of tension between students and teachers that sometimes become obstacles to education and therefore are fundamental in the will to reduce the distance between students and teachers. in her study of culture of equals, Bank (2000) identified and r some of the tensions and contradictions lived by the students and the official culture. Some research cited by the author (Everhhart, (1983; Cusick, 1973; Wooden, 1995; and others) mentions the emphasis, relatively deficient, that the students see in the importance of the studies. We highlight this aspect as an important point of analysis; after all, an understanding of the meaning of the studies can be an element that, properly contextualized, brings a series of distinct interpretations, or even an opposition situation.

According to Willis (1983) and Bank (2000), another significant aspect in the student culture is the importance given by it to “sport” and to physical activities in general. According to Willis (1983), physical activity offers space and opportunity to those students who are averse to the school culture, to confirm their ways of acting in the social scope. In this way, Physical Education in school that deals, among other subjects, with sports and physical activities can become an important element in the conception of the students, about to become characteristic to that group.(?)physical education in schools, according to Collective Authors (1992), seems to be facing more and more the meanings that the students build when critically appropriating the elements of the body culture of the human moving, with the intention of recognizing the possibilities to develop concepts and values meaningful to their social action. It is possible to state that the classes of physical education are configured as an important moment to most of the students. Some find on that moment the opportunity to express themselves through games, play, movement and sport knowledge; others find a difficult exposition on those relations where the body finds itself usually exposed to the regard and judgment of the others. In this way, the body, as an expression mean, suggests moments of pleasure and joy, as well as situations of embarrassment and suffering; those feelings may be manifested in any moment or place, but they usually accentuate on the physical education classes.

Therefore, physical education may be seen as a possibility to establish relations that differ from those that are established on other disciplines. Maybe it is because of the environment change; or the possibility of more contact and body exposition; or even the possibility of movement. Perhaps, as reminded by McLaren (1991), it is because PE allows students to come closer to their state of *street corner*. In this way, in this study, we propose areflection on the following research question: How is ethnic diversity manifested on school physical education and how is this manifestation articulated in the student culture? (manifested on?)

Methodological Decisions

This study is being made in a school of the City of Porto Alegre Education Network, which develops its activities among the popular classes, where we believe that the cultural shock between teachers and students is more evident and the identification of the student culture can be important in the qualification of the pedagogical practice. Besides that, this city has implemented more than 15 years ago the education by cycles of formation, a fact that makes the study even more interesting in this educational scope. The proposition of a re-organization of school time creates a series of doubts among the students and a non-definition of their role in this context.

Our research is characterized as a case study and supported by a qualitative perspective. Therefore, observations of physical education classes, register in a field diary and from that semi-structured interviews and discussion groups with the students are being made, with the objective of identifying and understanding the important components to those subjects and their interactions with the elements of the student culture.

First Findings

The study is a stage of field research, where we are making the observations at the school. Our experience as teachers of physical education, along with these primary observations, allow us to anticipate some findings that we consider important to the study.

The physical education seems to be the most popular discipline among the students, even among those that "prefer" to stay out of the activities proposed, because they don't like or don't want to do them ; nevertheless, they look forward to the physical education period, in order to "play ball", talk to their friends, and meet friends from other groups.

Some trouble among the students during the class originated through mockery and nicknames that "value" physical characteristics considered negative in the group's view. Therefore, "the fat becomes an elephant or a whale", "the short becomes a midget" and "the thin becomes a stick". The African American is the "monkey", "their hair is steel wool" and their history is exclusively poorness and slavery. This kind of treatment is many times considered "normal" among the students, and even for some teachers. This fact may be responsible for the resistance of some subjects to take part in the activities that demand increased body contact and exposition.

In certain moments we perceive that some African American students are protagonists in the groups in which they act, exercising influence among the classmates, valuing their "blackness" and serving as examples of expression and reference. Even so, those ethnic relations are usually full of very particular meanings that end up labeling the subjects in an excessive way.

It's also important to highlight the difficulties they find in expressing their perceptions regarding ethnical relations. For example, referring to an African American subject without "offending" or how to not differentiate the classmates that have different tones of skin, darker or lighter. "Moreno", "sarará", "mulatto" and other terms are used among the students and create classifications that may be exalting some aspects, as well as extenuating some "defects".

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STUDENT CULTURE: APPROXIMATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ETHNICAL DIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This work as a study focus on the student culture in the schools of the City of Porto Alegre Education Network (RME/Poa). The objective of this investigation is to understand the way that ethnic diversity is manifested on school's physical education and the way this manifestation is articulated in the student culture. This research is characterized as a case study of qualitative approach, having as its main instruments of investigation observation, semi-structured interviews and discussion groups with the students. Presently, observations of the physical education classes in a municipal school are being made, followed by notes in a field diary. Up to the moment it is possible to state that one of the factors that lead to a resistance by some of the students in taking part of the activities that demand a higher body exposition originates from the mockery and nicknames given to some physical characteristics that are considered depreciative in this group. On the other hand, we observe preliminarily that some African American students are protagonists in the groups where they act, exercising influence among the classmates, valuing their "blackness" and serving as examples of expression and body imposition.

Key-words: Student culture; Ethnic group; Physical Education

CULTURE SCOLAIRE : RAPPROCHEMENTS ENTRE ÉDUCATION PHYSIQUE SCOLAIRE ET DIVERSITÉ ETHNIQUE

RÉSUMÉ

Ce travail porte sur l'étude de la culture scolaire dans les écoles du réseau municipal d'enseignement de Porto Alegre (RME/Poa). Il a pour objectif de comprendre comment se manifeste la diversité ethnique dans l'éducation physique à l'école, et comment cette manifestation s'articule dans la culture scolaire. Cette recherche est une étude de cas qualitative, avec comme principaux instruments de recherche l'observation, l'entretien semi-structuré et les groupes de discussion avec les élèves. Actuellement sont réalisées des observations de cours d'éducation physique dans une école municipale, avec prises de notes. Jusqu'à présent, il est possible d'affirmer qu'un des facteurs entraînant la résistance de certains élèves à participer aux activités qui exigent une plus grande exposition corporelle est issu des moqueries et surnoms qui valorisent certaines caractéristiques physiques considérées comme dépréciatives dans ce collectif. D'autre part, nous observons de manière préliminaire que quelques étudiants noirs tiennent une place prépondérante dans les groupes auxquels ils appartiennent, exerçant une influence sur les autres, valorisant leur « négritude » et servant de modèles d'expression et d'imposition corporelle.

Mots-Clés : Culture scolaire, Ethnie, Éducation Physique

CULTURA ESTUDIANTIL: ACERCAMIENTOS ENTRE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA EN LA ESCUELA Y DIVERSIDAD ÉTNICA

RESÚMEN

Este trabajo tiene como foco de estudio la cultura estudiantil en las escuelas de la red municipal de enseñanza de Porto Alegre (RME/POA). El objetivo de esta investigación es comprender como la diversidad étnica manifestase en la educación física en la escuela y como esa manifestación se articula en la cultura de los estudiantes. Esta investigación está caracterizada como un estudio de caso de enfoque cualitativo, teniendo como principales instrumentos de recogida de informaciones, la observación, la entrevista mitad estructurada e los grupos de discusión con los estudiantes. En la actualidad, están siendo realizadas observaciones de las clases de educación física en una escuela municipal, seguido del diario de campo. Hasta el momento es posible afirmar que uno de los elementos que provocan la resistencia de algunos estudiantes en participar de las actividades que exigen mayor exposición corporal, tiene origen en las bromas y apodos que

valoran algunas características físicas que son consideradas despectivas en este colectivo. Por otra parte, percibimos preliminarmente, que algunos estudiantes negros son protagonistas en los grupos donde actúan, ejerciendo influencia entre los compañeros, valorando su “negritude” y presentándose como modelos de la expresión y de la imposición corporal.
Palabras Claves: Cultura Estudiantil, Etnia, Educación Física.

TÍTULO: CULTURA ESTUDANTIL: APROXIMAÇÕES ENTRE EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA ESCOLAR E DIVERSIDADE ÉTNICA

RESUMO

Este trabalho tem como foco de estudo a cultura estudantil nas escolas da rede municipal de ensino de Porto Alegre (RME/Poa). O objetivo desta investigação é compreender como a diversidade étnica se manifesta na educação física escolar e como essa manifestação se articula na cultura estudantil. Esta pesquisa está sendo caracterizada como um estudo de caso de enfoque qualitativo, tendo como principais instrumentos de investigação a observação, a entrevista semi-estruturada e os grupos de discussão com os estudantes. Atualmente, estão sendo realizadas observações das aulas de educação física em uma escola municipal, seguidas de anotações em diário de campo. Até o momento é possível afirmar que um dos fatores que levam a resistência de alguns estudantes em participar das atividades que exigem maior exposição corporal, tem origem nos deboches e apelidos que valorizam algumas características físicas que são consideradas depreciativas nesse coletivo. Por outro lado, observamos preliminarmente, que alguns estudantes negros são protagonistas nos grupos onde atuam, exercendo influência entre os colegas, valorizando sua “negritude” e servindo como modelos de expressão e imposição corporal.
Palavras-chaves: Cultura estudantil, Etnia, Educação Física.