

RECREATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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To my father who always
dedicated his life to children

A B S T R A C T

The future of a civilization depends on what persons do when they work, as well as what they perform when they don't work. If they take up their time on creative and constructive pursuits during their free time, civilization will go on; if such activities are destructive, social order will deteriorate and progress will be retarded.

Should one prevail upon inducements and people behaviour by indirect means of definitive recreation forms, so that it would be possible to cooperate for evolution and transformation of the society?

Educating isn't only guaranteeing a large range of knowledge, but mainly promoting the entire development of the student's personality in order to form a conscious, disciplined and happy citizen.

School must encourage students to think about life as being studied and planned.

School has to develop a program that prepares the individual for all situations - during free time - as much for his work as for himself. So, school will also be teaching spiritual values to the whole formation and cooperating for social progress and human fullness.

Recreation in the Elementary School shouldn't be an idle period. It should be planned, accomplished and estimated in respect to the whole growth, the personal maturity, the formation of good habits and the assimilation of new knowledge.

This program of artistic, literary pursuits, rhythmic and gymnastic activities can be accomplished in three phases: directed recreation, guided recreation and free recreation, taking as a basis the experience developed at the municipal schools of the Porto Alegre City Hall - Rio Grande do Sul - Brasil.

S U M M A R Y

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I. INTRODUCTION

School must stimulate the student to think about life. The subject of study must coincide exactly to life. The first concern of the teacher, on his engagement with education, should be placed on the value systems of what his students know, think and feel.

School must teach a child how to live the present, so as to correspond to that curiosity which the student meets looking for a solution to his problems. School must encourage the pupil to get to normal habits of school work, with the total integration of his personality enjoying what he does for the results that he obtains and for the activity that he performs.

According to KILPATRICK (1960) the task of education is to transmit culture to the young people and improve the existing culture. This means that school must help to form an adjusted personality that can and wants to live among the social changes and go further the best way it can, having an influence in its environment as an agent of cultural development.

Science with its inventions or Technology as it is frequently called, has stimulated rapid and unbalanced social changes. The dangers which the quantity of social problems without solution represent to man, should cause concern to the school and family on the child's upbringing. The critical study of culture, making understand its strength and weakness and a constructive program experimentally determined to solve those problems, should be used as a basis for the definition of educational aims.

We live in a society, which is more concerned with cognitive development than with the integrated development of the personality, a situation which possibly derives from the growing demands of the technological world. For FICHTNER (1975) it is no longer a question of educating but attending school to keep a society in constant development, mainly, in the countries of the so called third World.

In this way, Education becomes a link between production and consumption and the school, the operational mold of this ideology. This concept of educa-

tion has influenced negatively in the educative planning of childhood, for the growing technicalization demands specialized human resources in time and the principles of results no longer respect the operational level, the psychoneurological maturing of a child.

One cannot deny that modern society stimulates competition and that sooner or later one should learn this. But, the concept of competition should include the consciousness that life can be richer and more profound if there is co-operation kindness and solidarity in the process of social survival. In this process, the person must be conscious of his own values and resources. The stimulus, which induces the student to overcome his faults, creates opportunities for self estimation which will serve him as a starting point to accomplish his effort. In relation to this he will be able to measure his progress.

Through play activities school may stimulate principles of morality, justice, sense of humor and the satisfaction of getting to something by working for it.

For KILPATRICK (1966) the main task of education may not be so much to produce learned men but above all men that may feel, think and act.

According to FIGHTNER (1975) the adult in modern society is the product of a social structure which disqualifies him of his human condition.

A school which does not correspond to the necessities of the modern world, which inhibits man's creative capacity, which subjects him to old forms of interpreting the environment can, thus, negatively influence him in his historical evolution. Education should no longer be standardized and static placing the student in the mere position of a depository of informations often useless, even favouring the loss of motivation for learning.

As for the countries still under development, that do not yet profit from the consequent benefits of high industrialization with a pronounced reduction of working hours and the availability of free time, because the necessities of subsistence impose new searches for economic acquisition essential to survivance, education should contain specific aims also in relation to leisure, concentrated on the necessity of a human preparation in the sense of forming an individual conscience for the ways of acting. One understands by ways of acting, the establishment

of a hierarchy of values in the daily decisions of each individual; an attitude which helps him to govern his initiatives and guides his conduct; a disposition for the answers to individual motivations and necessities. In his ways of acting, the individual should be prepared to recognize the necessity to ballance his professional tasks and all the requests of a neurotic world with the renovating familiarity of human relations and with the contact with nature.

By not sharing informally and solidarily with his fellow ones and not contemplating and learning how to appreciate nature's beauty, the man of the urban areas reduces his joy of living, loses his natural simplicity, places himself at a distance from his origins and risks losing the fundamental values of a civilization.

With these thoughts in mind, it would be worth recognizing the necessity of the school to engage in the modification of child education making it forget that, it not only prepares the individual as an instrument for work but develops him as an active being having in mind his total formation: "for no knowledge has value, if it is not directly related to life and to the way of living" (Fichtner, 1975, p.8).

According to FICHTNER (1975) the majority of the world's child population does not attend schools. Unesco's statistic show that only in a few nations does half of the child population complete the first six years of school. In Brasil, more than half of the students from the rural zone stop studying before the third grade of elementary school, thus not acquiring a functional literacy.

Among the proved examples, the author presents as less frequent school activities in the curriculum of those schools: dramatization, recreation, physical education and other activities outside the classroom.

The analyses of curricular activities shows a gap between the proposed academic tasks and the environment in which the child lives as well as poor specialized didatic resources. What FICHTNER (1975) observed is an inadequacy of the school's curriculum in which purely intelectual activities still predominate in detriment to other practical and creative activities, which would allow the student to learn his world by using his corporal potentialities.

Studies like FICHTNER's (1975) and experiments in elementary schools next to poor areas in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, led the author of

this work to plan a study about recreation in schools.

An annual recreational program in schools is the opportunity for a school to stimulate the total development of a personality by means of educational practices integrated to the other teaching plans.

Educational practices, also called specialized activities, such as Physical Education, Music and Arts can better reach formative and educational objectives when spontaneity and motivation are observed. Educational practices are so necessary to the reaching of the schools's social aim, that they can not be relegated to the sporadic and temporary enthusiasm and to the good will of some teachers. They should be part of the general plan of school activities and be integrated with the curricular plans of each level of the school, making school life richer, more dynamic and suggestive while programs will gain more function ability.

It is no ingenuity to wish and recognize that the annual programming of the recreation in school, like other initiatives can also be obtained with some effort and dedication. Organized recreation has been introduced in the municipal schools of Porto Alegre with reasonable acceptance and success in the period between 1961 and 1966.

Education for leisure is a function of the family and the school. The more sociably lacking the school's population and the environment in which school must operate is, the greater its preoccupation must be in keeping children and youngsters busy in their free time.

One of the basic purposes of the school to help students to get adjusted to their curriculum and have them produce more in their school work, should be to convince them that school is a social place where friends meet and share affectionately in their common activities and not only a place of formal learning, where instruction dominates the total formation.

II. THE PSYCHO-PEDAGOGIC VALUE OF ORGANIZED RECREATION IN SCHOOL

During all moments of her life, the child is observing, selecting, accepting, acting in some sense and transforming what she accepts into her own character. She learns what she lives, she does not learn without living the experience of the action. This should bring serious consequences and preoccupations to the parents and teachers who are responsible for the child, for if she learns what she lives then the quality of life is the most important thing that can happen to her. If the child lives a high quality of life, she will be trained with a high quality of character. The young people will choose their way of living according to what lives in their hearts. If these things are correct, the most important preoccupation of all in the family, at school and in society should be the quality of living.

Play activity and the right to play freely and extensively have aroused the general attention of the studios. The truth, however, is that school life continues in this irreducible duality of "class" - "recreation". In the first (class), there is the presence of work, authority, obedience, effort, silence, immobility. In the second (recreation), there is the play, joy, spontaneity, expression, pleasure, plenitude of the child's life. In the classroom, there is the formality of the teacher and of teaching. In recreation, there is the simplicity of the student acting spontaneously. In both situations, teacher and student are separate, placed in opposite positions and difficult to bring together. Thus, studying assumes the fatiguing concept of the demands of the intellectual effort and of requests imposed by the accomplishment of an almost always theoretical program, while recreation develops led by the students themselves, who on their own choose activities and do not always know how to use this freedom.

The student needs many experiences lived during recreation with companions who are more or less his age and have identical mental development. He needs to learn about others' rights and feelings, how to share about relationships and interactions as member of a group; thus, can solidarity be lived. The teacher's task is also to help the student to satisfy his necessity of independence and transmit the first notions about social participation, individual liberty and the implications in which he will be involved during this process.

The student needs a big opportunity to grow physically and know how to use big and small muscles, just as he will learn about work he should learn

to relax, to rest, to free himself from the tensions of every day life and should develop his capacity of perception in the relations between time, space and movement.

A recreation program in school must be planned, organized, carried out and evaluated every year like any other teaching plan. Once board and teachers recognize that recreation will help psycho-motor development, the integration of curriculum, the general discipline of the school, the relationship between teacher and student, the opportunity of developing leaderships, personal hygiene and outdoor life and education for leisure, teachers shall introduce organized recreation in school with an annual program divided into three phases: directed, oriented and supervised recreation.

Speaking of integration of curriculum, one must stress the importance of the use of all educational and cultural resources of the school: from the use of library with "story telling time" helping with the study of the native language, the organization of chorus, jesters, thus developing an artistic sensibility and diction; folkloric groups arousing the interest of the origin of the people, of the study of History, Geography, Social Sciences, besides dancing and rhythm; intramural sports stimulating an interchange of teams, sociability and individual values of healthy competition; outdoor programs favouring the practical study of Natural Sciences, love of nature and spiritual development; besides other forms of educational practices which enrich school work.

III. THE METHODOLOGY OF ORGANIZED RECREATION IN SCHOOL

1. Directed recreation

Taking for granted that a child learns to live socially and develops herself harmoniously in her plenitude through movement, participation, healthy competition and outdoor activities, each school should have a free area, necessary equipment and teachers with good will and interest in educating.

Directed recreation, the first phase of an annual program of recreation, is a daily period of 20 minutes when students go to the school yard with their teachers and play preselected games with the aim of giving an opportunity

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to develop new abilities increasing the student's recreational means inside and outside the school. Thus, it will be advisable to include new games, with a certain weekly regularity and frequency, so that the student increases his program of games and election and spontaneity may be favoured.

This free area for recreation should be divided into reserved spaces so that about 25 to 30 students of one class can move in an area of at least 25 to 36 square meters. Thus, the school yard can be fully painted and divided into small areas which will be used by the same groups daily while this phase lasts.

Teachers should dispose of a classified file of well selected recreational activities with varied specific aims, the intensity of the game, age and sex. This file composed of games, songs, simple folk-dances, singing games and other suggestions should frequently be revised and renewed preferably by teachers of Physical Education, who should coordinate recreation, and the teachers of Music and Arts who thus will be a better contribution for the amplitude of the individual abilities of the students. The richer the individual is in abilities, the better his attitude towards leisure will be, the more spontaneous and pleasurable his recreation will be, the more satisfactorily his free time will be filled.

Such principle is far more stressed if the aim is the child, who by nature is always looking for new ways of action during the availability of herself.

One should stress the fact that the period of annual duration of directed recreation in Brasil, usually starting in March or April will be determined by the development of the program itself and by the attainment of the proposed aims. The complete growth of the students is, little by little, demonstrated by a greater desembarassment and security in initiatives, by the manifestations of independence when choosing activities and by a creative imagination which makes them invent new ways of activities based on those which they learned during the time of this first phase. More than delimitating the time it will be necessary to observe the moment when students start to:

- a) demonstrate abilities and interests in choosing;
 - b) decide and meet new satisfactions in their free time;
 - c) recognize and distinguish their individual resources to elect activities and enjoy greater liberty of choice. When children demonstrate a greater
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capacity of order and discipline and start needing less the teachers, to get a general participation of the groups, to choose activities and get organized in teams, then the second phase of the program can be started.

Generally in schools where there is no Physical Education teacher available, this period never lasts longer than 2 or 3 months.

For most of the schools tradition and routine have made an idle interval out of recreation period, when free time turns out to be an interruption of a learning process which should be constant so that the school could better complete its social, cultural and teaching functions.

2. Oriented recreation in school

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In the previous phase the school yard was divided in such a way as to determine an area for each group of students with their own teacher. During oriented recreation the school yard should be divided so that varied activities have reserved spaces specifically for each one. Thus, there will be a definite place for singing games, for rope skipping, for small groups play, folk dances, ball games etc. Likewise the library will be available to those who prefer "story telling time"; rooms should be established for choruses, jesters, dramatizations and handicrafts. The participation of the student in this second phase starts being more spontaneous than directed because he will have the opportunity to choose whom he is going to play with and what he is going to practice without staying with his class teacher. Each activity will have one teacher, as guide, who will try to keep a balance in the students' relationship, always protecting the majority's wish to liberty and assuring the participation with spontaneity and satisfaction.

During oriented recreation activities are preferentially selected by specialized teachers who will observe in this choice the previous experience of the students, that is: abilities developed in the first phase, interests which they demonstrate, level of relationship they have reached in groups, physical resistance which is revealed, attendance to necessities which have not been satisfied and the difficulties they show. As an example, the organization of theater clubs and others, tradition and folkloric groups, literary and sports clubs, school choruses and bands could arise, if such activities as: dramatizations and mini-games, folk dances, "story telling time", reading and poetry, sports and music

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initiation had been developed during the directed recreation. The annual ^{period} of oriented recreation must be of at least one more ⁹ quarter of a year before the final phase of the supervised recreation.

? → Like in the first phase (directed recreation), oriented recreation should last 20 minutes. In general, in this period, it is possible to develop not only outdoor game activities but also artistic activities: rhythm, singing, painting, drawing so as to awaken and develop the student's capacity of creative expression.

The recreation in school should be always stamped for the variety and quality of recreational offerings. Variety in the sense that the student can experiment new options and develop new abilities and interests; quality for the purpose of preserving recreation's educational values.

According to CORBIN (1970, p.8) "the mere fact that an activity is volitional and based on a choice does not assure that it has recreational value. All too often, the activities are repetitive rather than creative, superficial rather than meaningful, and enervating rather than restorative. Obviously, all that goes under the guise of recreation does not genuinely qualify".

Recreation can be compared to a ladder with its rungs consisting of worth while and lifelong activities and hobby pursuits that embody adventure, satisfaction, choice making, self-expression, creativity, voluntary participation, and socializing among other factors. (Corbin, 1970).

3. Supervised recreation in school

The third phase of the annual program of recreation in school is called supervised recreation. During this period new patterns of activities are created and the students organize themselves in clubs, fraternities, ~~and~~ tradition and folklore centers. Led by the colleagues themselves in group activities, the choice becomes entirely spontaneous, and free time is left available to what the student's creativity and imagination may suggest in terms of performance with the same daily duration of 20 minutes. It will always be necessary to have a teacher responsible for the general coordination of the recreation in any of the three phases, during the program's development. This coordinator could preferably be the Physical Education teacher, who due to his professional formation should have practical, theoretical and technical knowledge

about recreational activities in the school.] 13

Supervised recreation requires the participation of some teachers as assistants, who stay during recreation time, to follow the activities without interfering in the student's decisions.

At this stage of the program, the children should be capable to chose activities freely, the teachers will only supervise, observe and solve problems which may eventually occur.

Experiments with group activities in programs of elementary schools induced the author of this work to investigate by means of observation methods, about the ideal number of group members in childhood. The results have proved, with a relative margin of accuracy, that a child's gregarious capacity between the ages of nine and twelve reaches influence and interaction until the number of eight members for each group. POWELL (apud FEB, 1944) would have supported this statement when he organized the Boys Scouts movement, establishing as the unity of each troupe a patrol of eight members. It would be worth proving with a greater scientific base the hypothesis that the gregarious capacity of adolescent groups is related to the age of the members that integrate them.

MEDEIROS's recommendations are suitable when she writes that elementary school, among other aims, must "offer children great diversity of games which they may learn well and continue to use in their leisure time, dedicating themselves to recreation in an active manner rather than merely acting as spectators" (Medeiros, 1961, p.42). Preventing fatigue, favouring self expression, allowing relaxation, enabling the development of physical capacity in an atmosphere of happiness and disciplined liberty, is to contribute to the student's total health.

The concept of competition, when dealing with education through games, is a subject that should deserve special attention from the educators. It is known that, somehow, we all compete and that even certain ways of competition are not only instinctive but also beneficial; contemporary life can become a competition. It will be prudent to prepare the young people to face the reality of life. Some people live superficially, others live for their inspirations and integrity, both types are real and exist. The reality of the struggle for life is a discovery that the student feels very early, and the

childhood is the ideal phase for him to arouse a different conscience: that life can be more plentiful, richer and deeper. Cooperation is perhaps the first step to make him feel this consciousness.

Competition, according to GOUVÊA (1969), may be useful as a stimulation to the person's wish to acquire abilities and try to act with perfection, exercising courage, decision, initiative, perseverance and control. On the other hand, Gouvêa recommends that the wish to struggle and the instinct of destruction should be overcome; it is possible that through games, aggressiveness and ambition may be so exalted, that qualities like benevolence, friendship, sincerity, sense of justice, honesty, generosity, tolerance, be extinguished, thus, forming a false concept of these highly important moral values in human life.

The school must care for an atmosphere of joy and easiness among those who are recreating. Therefore, it is not advisable to demand an accurate technique and perfect performance in games, dances and other activities. To keep everyone's pleasure, and arouse the wish to repeat activities for the satisfaction of practicing, is the right attitude for recreation time. Each one's great pleasure consists of distinguishing and discovering the way to overcome his difficulties.

IV. EVALUATION FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Educating is not only assuring knowledge, but mainly favouring the total development of the student's personality, having in mind the formation of a conscious, disciplined, responsible and happy citizen. This development cannot be reached only through intellect, but through all the aspects of life (DEWEY , 1960). If cognitive development does not follow the affective, the student will be deprived of social and spiritual progress.

Educational practices, on the other hand, ⁱⁿ view of physical, artistic, civic, moral and religious necessities should have their programs evaluated in relation to the total growth, the individual maturity, the formation of habits, although it is also necessary to consider the assimilation of a certain knowledge. To instruct is to inform enabling new knowledge. To form is to condition for an individual, moral, physical and spiritual life.

For the analysis of the results, special attention should be given, in the sense of determining the study population and group control, the definition of variables, the gathering of data and the validity of measurements.

A gathering of data, by the planners involved in the annual recreational program will be essential for the analysis of the results. The instruments for the gathering should preferably be elaborated by all people involved in the process.

In this research of the annual evaluation of recreation in school, the following data should be observed:

- 1) general organization of activities;
- 2) liberty of individual expression;
- 3) individual growth;
- 4) leisure aims;
- 5) development of leaderships;
- 6) integration of teaching plans;
- 7) teacher's staff and its participation.

While this experience was being developed in twelve municipal schools of Porto Alegre, new necessities aroused and some programs related to recreation were officially implanted by the executive and administrative Board of Education of the Municipal Government. Thus, clubs' day (weekly), swimming campaigns (twice a year), outdoor education experiences (weekly), folk dancing festivals, civic time on national dates and recreation seminars for teachers, have been carried out.

To evaluate an annual program of recreation is to accompany the individual progress of the student his capacity to participate socially, his leadership development and his abilities in general, his disposition for new interests, his creativity, his disciplined attitude, his personal hygiene habits and his cultural development.

A school that "forms" and "informs" gets a new human and social significance and truly performs its cultural function in the process of nationalization and of universal fraternity.

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