

Nutrition Games and inventiveness of *practitioners/children*

Jogos de Nutrição e a inventividade das *criançaspraticantes*

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Abstract

In this article we aim to make visible the *practitioners/children* “performing arts” in a *practical/experience* of the daily life of the “Body, Color and Flavor” workshop at the Leblon Art Center of Rio de Janeiro Municipal Department of Education. The purpose of this workshop is to discourage *thought/performed curricula*, as well as the networks of knowledge, actions, values and beliefs in food, nutrition and health of *practitioners/children* in the third grade of elementary education. In this methodological path, we are guided by the thoughts of Paulo Freire, Certeau, Nilda Alves, Carlo Ginzburg, Inês Barbosa de Oliveira and Boaventura de Sousa Santos. To cheat the rules and to invent other ways of playing educational games are the schemes of children who do not recognize themselves in prescriptive and normative educational strategies. By subverting and re-signifying official artifacts, *practitioners/children* produced *thought/performed curricula* in everyday school settings. By making these *doings/knowledge visible*, we hope that we can instigate the exercise of the ecology of knowledge in the elaboration of these instruments and in the educational practices *inside/outside* schools.

Keywords: Feeding. Children. Curricula.

Resumo

Neste artigo temos como objetivo desinvisibilizar as “artes de fazer” das *criançaspraticantes* em uma *experiênciaprática* do cotidiano da oficina “Corpo, Cor e Sabor”, no Núcleo de

Arte Leblon da Secretaria Municipal de Educação do Rio de Janeiro. Essa oficina tem como proposta desinvisibilizar os currículos *pensadospraticados*, bem como as redes de saberes, fazeres, valores e crenças em alimentação, nutrição e saúde das *criançaspraticantes* do terceiro ano do ensino fundamental. Neste percurso metodológico, somos agenciados pelo pensamento de Paulo Freire, Certeau, Nilda Alves, Carlo Ginzburg, Inês Barbosa de Oliveira e Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Burlar as regras e inventar maneiras outras de jogar os jogos educativos são astúcias das crianças que não se reconhecem nas estratégias educacionais prescritivas e normativas. As *criançaspraticantes*, ao subverterem e ressignificarem os artefatos oficiais, produziram os currículos *pensadospraticados* nos cotidianos das escolas. Esperamos que, ao desinvisibilizarmos esses *fazeressaberes*, possamos instigar o exercício da ecologia de saberes na elaboração desses instrumentos e nas práticas educativas *dentrofora* das escolas.

Palavras-chave: Alimentação. Crianças. Currículos.

Initial Thoughts

In this article, we aim^a to make visible the Certeau's "performing arts" - the wiles, the subversions, the uses and the inventivities - of the *practitioners/children* in a *practical/experience* of the daily life of the "Body, Color and Flavor" workshop in the Núcleo de Arte Leblon - Unidade de Extensão Educacional da Secretaria Municipal de Educação (Leblon Art Center - Educational Extension Unit of the Municipal Department of Education) of the educational network of the city of Rio de Janeiro, which plays the role of Centro de Pesquisa em Formação em Ensino Escolar de Arte eEsporte (Research Center for Training in School and Art Education).

It is important to make clear that we do not intend to present a review of the literature on the subject, nor exhaust the thoughts of the authors who based the *theoretical/political/epistemological/methodological* paths of the research. In this more essayistic approach, therefore, we intend to give visibility to the *doings/knowledge* of *practitioners/children*, in a *practical/experience*, among many of our daily school life.

a In the narrative, we will make use of the first person in the plural with the intention of revealing, above all, the existence of a network of subjects who think and practice *in/of/with* everyday life, workshop and research, even if they are not authors of the article.

Still with the intention of clarifying to the reader, we indicate that the clusters of words, sometimes considered antagonistic, presented throughout the narrative, intend to show the inseparability of them or to give them another meaning.¹ The research *in/of/with* our daily lives, as Nilda Alves teaches us, requires that we narrate life and literaturize science.² It is necessary, then, another writing, other “arts of saying”,³ the art of storytelling and of inventing other senses.

Motivated by our affinities and our hybrid and complementary formations (dance, theater, video, physical education, nutrition), we dream together a possible dream, for, as Paulo Freire tells us, it is “impossible to exist without dreams”,⁴ especially at the moment of struggle (strikes and demonstrations) that we lived, municipal and state teachers, in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Our daily response to disregard for education would happen *inside/outside* the classroom, with the conviction that change is possible, albeit difficult. Imbued with a hopeful criticality,⁵ we thought of a workshop that had as its proposal to stimulate “epistemological curiosity”⁵ and to discourage⁶ *thought/performed*⁷ curricula in food, nutrition and health, allowing us to know the ways of *thinking/learning/teaching* valued by practitioners/children,³ as well as their networks of values and beliefs on the subject.

We need to say that our inflection into daily life did not happen at random. We were captured by Certeau³ and his networks in the concreteness of our daily life, when we, teachers, in our moments of escape, we gather, subvert the order, to have a coffee, to talk and to do science (*why not?*). The meeting, with a *friend/teacher*, placed two readings in our hands: *The invention of the daily*, by Michel de Certeau,³ and *Research in/of school life - on knowledge network*, organized by Oliveira & Alves.⁸ And, as one pulls others, it came entwined to Certeau, Nilda Alves, Carlo Ginzburg, Inês Barbosa de Oliveira, Boaventura de Sousa Santos... As many of us were worried about our truths, they turned us upside down and gave us the enchantment of researching our own practice and the daily life we inhabit.

We are delighted by the research *in/of/with* everyday life that, as Alves tells us,² turns us upside down, makes us create a new organization of thought, reversing the whole learned process, requiring multiple paths. And, in these ways, there is no longer the linear, disciplined and hierarchical thinking that imprisons our *doings/knowledge* in official curricula. It is no longer possible to follow strictly the a priori ways and paths of teaching and learning still so valued in the field of education. Above all, we need to follow paths, often impossible to be anticipated and that only reveal themselves during the journey. The everyday people, inspired by Certeau,³ teach us, incite us, to live with the unforeseeable, with the unexpected, with the concrete actions, with the performing arts - tactics and wiles - of the daily practitioners.

In this sense, to *feel/think/do* differently, established by Certeau and his networks, we are subverting the logic that sustains the *spaces/times* of the school. We are walking around and creating *spaces/times* other than those provided for in school logic. We are thinking of *spaces/*

times that guarantee diversity, freedom, creativity, experimentation, criticism, ethics, aesthetics, solidarity, hope, *learning/teaching* collectively, and everything else that is necessary for to awaken in our children, and also in us, the decency and beauty of educational practice.⁵ The neoliberal ideology and the fragmentation of knowledge that we inherit from modernity oblige us to invent the everyday, to change the curricular proposals, to create our own ways, to “circumvent” the “official rules”. They are the daily tactics allowing us to establish points of contact, meetings, connections and compositions.

The researches *in/of/with* everyday life, as pointed out by Oliveira,⁷ have the epistemological and political conviction that curricula, as daily creations of *practitioners/thinkers* of schools, can contribute to the fabric of social emancipation defended by Boaventura de Sousa Santos.⁶ By discouraging the curricula that are *thought/performed* in our daily life by those who practice it (students and teachers), we are therefore bringing to the scene what is (re)created and (re)invented, despite the insistence of the rulers and bureaucratic “authorities” in maintaining the protagonism in the hegemonic monoculture and in making invisible what of *plural/singular* is done in the scholarly daily.

Inês Barbosa de Oliveira⁷ is convinced that, in addition to passive consumption, *practitioners/thinkers* of school every day produce credible and legitimate alternatives to the curriculum instituted, thus becoming curriculum developers, even if invisibly and marginally.

We are instigated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos^{6,9-11} to recognize the inexhaustible wealth of the world, even though hegemonic monocultures insist on producing absences. The author proposes to us the sociology of absences as a transgressive procedure that operates by replacing monocultures with ecologies, among them the ecology of knowledge. This is because it is founded on the premise that “there is no knowledge in general, nor is there ignorance in general. We are ignorant of certain knowledge, but not of all”, what makes us reflect on the different fields of knowledge, raising some questions throughout the *research/practice*: How much the fields of education, nutrition and health (and others) are colonized and of colonizer? What was/is left out by the hegemonic and monolithic curricula that formed us? How to broaden the *in/of/with* everyday schoolexperiences, making visible the *doings/knowledge* of their practitioners? How to *think/make* a “science that is wise for a decent life”?

So we immersed ourselves with all our senses in what we wanted to research: everyday life. For Nilda Alves, this dive is the first movement to think about our displacement in the complexity of the research *in/of/with* daily lives. According to the author, we must feel the world and not only look at it from above or from far away.² And feeling the world is nothing more than following the clues of the “everyday arts” of everyday common practitioners.

To follow indications, therefore, makes of the indicial paradigm of Carlo Ginzburg,¹² a valuable method for researching *in/of/with* daily lives. The indicial method allows us to *walk/dive*, as it enlarges the scale, deciphering the subtle, ephemeral events, singular and too small to be seen

from afar. Therefore, the small gestures, the glances, the rumblings and the “performing arts” of the *practitioners/children acquire relief*.

We designed this workshop and research hopeful that our knowledge would be built collectively if we immerse ourselves with all the senses in the daily life of our children. We wanted a daily life with more color, taste and smell, a more loose daily life, full of joy, where practitioners, through their “performing arts”,³ when coming into contact with the official curricula and their artifacts, would recreate, re-signify and subvert their uses, denaturalizing hegemonic knowledge, actions and powers.

In this way, by making visible the “performing arts” of the *practitioners/children*, we intend to bring to the center of the scene the polyphony and the dialogue between the knowledge, in the composition of knowledge, instruments and educational practices in food, nutrition and health.

Methodology

The *practical/experience*, the center of this narrative, took place in 2014 with the *practitioners/children* of three classes of the third year of elementary school at Escola Municipal Sérgio Vieira de Melo (Sérgio Vieira de Melo Municipal School), next to the Art Center, located in the neighborhood of Leblon, South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. They attended the “Corpo, Cor e Sabor” (“Body, Color and Flavor”) workshop in the school counter-shift, twice a week, lasting one hour, throughout the school year.

The workshop, conducted by three teachers with hybrid and complementary training^b of the Art Center, had the proposal of stimulating “epistemological curiosity” and making *thought/performed* curricula visible, as well as the networks of knowledge, actions, values and beliefs in food, nutrition and health, to know ways of *thinking/learning/teaching* valued by the *practitioners/children*.

In the course of the workshops, we made daily notes in the field notebook, recording in writing what we considered interesting, not only for research but also for developing the workshop. This experience report is, therefore, a cut in the diversity of *practical/experiences* lived by the practitioners of this daily life.

We clarify that all the children participating in the workshop had the Free and Informed Consent Form signed by their legal representatives, after approval of the research project by the Research Ethics Committee of the Pedro Ernesto University Hospital of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, under the number 642,493. At the workshop’s first meeting, the *practitioners/children* also became aware that activities would be recorded, in writing and by image, for use in scientific work.

^b Teachers admitted to the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, with training in Dance, Theater, Physical Education and Nutrition. One of the authors of this article was part of this faculty.

Step by step: the astute uses of *practitioners/children*

Accepting the ideas of Certeau,³ we believe it is fundamental to observe what the children do with the products (films, books, games, activities, curricula...) imposed in their day to day lives. Realizing their tactics, subversions and escape routes, especially in the face of the rules imposed by games for educational purposes, makes us think of the inconsistencies between what their idealizers articulate and what is accepted.³

These inconsistencies were observed in the experimentation of three games acquired with a publisher specialized in products directed to nutritionists. “Keeping an eye on food”, “Beto and Bia: the race of good food and healthy habits” and “Eat Well”, each with its peculiarities, left gaps so that the children could put into practice their “performing arts”.³

We need to make it clear that we do not aim to describe the games and their rules in all details, because what we were interested in is actually to perceive the subversions, the tactics used by the *practitioners/children* to play in their own way. So we immersed ourselves with all our senses² in the pursuit of the “performing arts” of the *practitioners/children*,³ trying to capture, to make it visible,⁶ what they inserted, reinvented, created again on the product that had been imposed on them.

Throughout two encounters, children were divided into groups to try out the three games we had bought, especially for the workshop. Each game presented a different dynamic, generating different interests and times. Some groups ended it and played it again, while others had not even read all the rules. Others, having already played more than three times, moved to the next group to “snoop” the game of others. And so we went together, walking, experimenting, *learning/teaching* and surprising us.

It was interesting to observe how they negotiated the groupings and the functions of each one in the game: who would read the rules; who would be the boy “X” or the girl “Y”; who would be responsible for the money; who would start the game; who would play with whom for having exceeded the number of participants. Finally, there were innumerable possibilities for negotiations that did not always reach consensus. Children who refused to take on certain roles were also part of a “game” scenario that happened on and off the game.

“Keeping an eye on food”, a game for children over six years of age, intends to introduce children to different foods. It consists of a board and dozens of mini-circles, with images of foods of the groups of cereals and derivatives; fruits; vegetables, and tubers; legumes; milk and milk products; sweets; eggs, fish, meat and derivatives, other foods and preparations. Each player receives equal amounts of mini-circles, which must be allocated on the same board image. The game winner will find the food scattered before his/her opponents.

At first glance, it seems very simple. It's just finding the same figure and it's ok. And that's right. It was interesting to hear them asking each other (after they had played twice, three times, given the agility of the game), what food was that. Many did not know how to respond. And to be honest, neither did us. Mango that looked like peaches (or peaches that looked like mango); lettuces that were cabbages; oranges resembling mandarins... Until we reached a consensus, it was a lot of fun. It was still possible to hear sounds or to see them making faces when a food was not to their liking, having been tried or not.

If the game itself was very simple, the doubts, generated by some images that were distant from reality, generated gaps so that *practitioners/children could create another way of using it. A "way to use it"*³ that allowed them to talk about food, recognizing their preferences and aversions, as well as that of their colleagues, which differed according to their networks of knowledge, practices, values, beliefs, affections and subjectivities.

"Beto and Bia", a game developed by nutritionists, aims to encourage healthy eating and healthy habits in children over six years of age. It consists of a board, a die and four pins of "Bia" and "Beto", with which the participants must move from the exit to the arrival, that is, from house 1 to 90. In the middle of the race, participants can drop into 26 'houses' (yellow houses) that contain tips on good eating and healthy lifestyle. The blue contoured hints congratulate the player and ask him to advance to the houses ahead. The tips outlined in red criticize the player's attitude and make him/her walk backwards. Anyone who stops at one of these houses will read the tips. Otherwise, the player comes to an end without having read any tips. On arrival, however, he/she reads: "Congratulations! You're the winner! Practice everything you've learned! Practice a healthy life!"

At the beginning of the game, many children started reading the tips when they stopped at the yellow houses, but as the game progressed, they began to circumvent the rules, using deviant tactics.³ The game, as its name suggests, is a race. Between the departure and the arrival, although not described in the game, the rule leaves no doubt: when stopping at the houses, read the tips and do what you are asked to do. Some tips: "You avoid eating sweets because in excess they are bad for your health and can also make you fat. Very well! Walk 4 houses". Or "You love eating hot dog snacks with soda. Beware, you can get obese and sick. Unfortunately, you will have to go back to house 35".

Everyone knew at first what they should do, but the *practitioners/children* astutely read only the final sentence of the nutritional tip, which indicated the number of the house they were supposed to go to (walking or returning a certain number of houses), ignoring all the information formulated with the intention of teaching about food and health. They circumvented the rule of the game so that they could reach the finish line more quickly. They have shifted from a supposedly passive consumption to a singular creation, born of the practice, of the diversion in the use of the imposed products¹³ that call into question the intended first function of the product.

It was possible to perceive that there are “ways to do it” (walking, reading, producing, speaking, cooking, eating, playing...), “ways to use it” that are created into concrete action networks, which are not mere repetition of a previously established order from above and from afar. By inserting creativity, the *practitioners/children* modify the rules and power of domination to which they are supposedly subjected.

“Eat well”, also designed by nutritionists, aimed to teach children the nutritional value of food and the importance of good nutrition for health. A re-reading, let’s say, of the well-known “Real Estate Bank”. “Eat well”, for the color of its box, was the one that aroused more euphoria in the groups when we presented the games in the first meeting. As soon as it was placed on the table of the group, the children opened the box and took all the components of the game: a board; four pyramids of food and red balls to represent food; colored pins for drive; a die; paper money to buy food; nutritionist tip sheets and question and answer sheets. On the back of the box, the rules.

Faced with so much bustle, the rules were forgotten and the participants were already organized to begin, when a girl showed everyone the verse of the box where the rules were written. At this point, a boy said: “It’s a lot to read. We can play without reading the rules!” Some agreed, some did not, but tried to move on. However, the doubts arose and they decided to look at the rules. They chose a child who, according to them, was able of reading better and then started reading. We stood nearby, wondering if the children needed help. They read, talked, fought, reread, and so they tried to understand the rules, much more complex than those of the two other games mentioned.

Negotiating the functions was the stage of greatest conflict: who would stick with the pyramid; who would take care of the money; who would read the tips of the nutritionist; who would ask the questions; who would play the dice. The conflict allowed other functions to be invented: keeping the box in hand to read the rules (for any questions that appeared); being the “bank” (the most popular function) and forming some doubles became part of the game.

After all, apparently combined, and with pieces and money distributed, the children began to play the “Eat well”. Throughout the game, participants could stop at “food houses” where nutritional information and the selling price of said food were described: “Eggplant: Vegetable. Good source of mineral salts. R\$ 3.00”; “Cake and bread: Food rich in carbohydrate. Provides energy. R\$ 2.00”; “Lettuce: rich of fiber, vitamin A, C and complex B. R\$ 2.00” or “French fries: It has high caloric value and can lead to obesity. R\$ 3.50.”

When they stopped at these houses, the majority of the children began to identify only what the food and the price were, and showed no more interest in reading the nutritional information. When they read, however, it was a quick reading, with no questioning and no pauses to ponder over the content.

At the moment of the game, we wondered if everyone knew what minerals, calories, carbohydrates, fibers, complex B, and all the other words that were present in the texts were. And if they did not know, why did not they ask? Did not they read it? Did they read without paying attention? They read it, but did not understand? And if they did not understand, did it make any difference to the game they were playing with their “performing arts”? In the course of the pins, when playing dice, the children could also stop at the “home of the nutritionist.” When falling into this house, the player should take the letter from the nutritionist, read it aloud and do what was asked. The nutritionist could give “congratulations” or “call the attention”: “Congratulations! You have managed to control your blood cholesterol and will not spend more on drugs. Receive from the bank the amount of R\$ 7.00 “. Or “Attention! All the players are fat. And you, as a nutrition expert, will remove the potatoes from your pyramids and return them to the bank.”

It is possible to see that in reading the nutritionist’s letters, as well as in reading about the nutritional information of the food, the children were much more interested in knowing where they should go and how much they would spend to buy food, than in *learning/teaching* about food and health. From the beginning, the money was the greatest attraction of the game. In fact, as we mentioned earlier, assuming the “bank” function was the insertion of creativity, cunning, and “performing arts” of the *practitioners/children* so that everyone could experience the game regardless of the maximum limit of participants.

To circumvent the rules, to use silent tactics, to invent other ways of playing the game are wiles of *practitioners/children* who did not recognize themselves in the prescriptive and normative educational strategies of the “Ear Well” and “Beto-Bia” games. It was possible to hear them talking, alone or commenting with the child beside them, that those attitudes mentioned in the nutritional tips or in the letters of the nutritionist were not carried out by them. In this sense, the non-recognition of self and the refusal to be governed¹⁴ may have enhanced the inventive practices and resistance tactics of the *practitioners/children*. *Cunningly, children exercised the “art of the weak”³ in the face of the gaps and fissures of knowing/being able.*

Final Thoughts

There are many indications¹² left by the *practitioners/children* as they try out nutrition education games. Clues that could have remained invisible if we immersed ourselves in our daily lives without the thoughts of the authors who put us to walk. Perhaps we would not be mindful of the processes, usages, subversions, cunning tactics, and deviant tactics of the *practitioners/children* when playing games. Perhaps we were only interested in what they supposedly learned (or not), as we have learned from modernity. Armed with our “epistemological blindness,”¹⁵ we would be observing regularities and not deviations, homogeneous operations and not heterogeneous ones.

The *practitioners/children*, therefore, by subverting and re-signifying educational games, produced the *designed/practiced* curricula practiced in school every day.⁷ Curricula that embrace plurality and the uniqueness of *doings/knowledge* of the subjects who live in schools and who, for the most part, are historically made invisible.

We are critically hopeful that by making the *practical/experience* visible, we can instigate the exercise of polyphony and the ecology of knowledge in the construction of curricular artifacts and educational practices in food, nutrition and health, *inside/outside* of the schools, since they must be created **with** and not **for** or **on** the children.

Contributors

Rezende MGP participated in all stages, from conception to revision of the final version, acting also as teacher in the *locus* of the research. Soares EA and Oliveira IB participated in the writing of the article and its final version.

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