



The cooperative management of the curriculum: a case of study

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Abstract

In order to form active, intervening and critical citizens, capable of intervening in society, it is imperative to promote a school environment based on democratic participation by students. In the context of this education paradigm, nowadays, the student must take an active and participative role in managing their life in the classroom. It is with a democratic formation and sociomoral development, based on cooperation and communication that the constructive and interactive model of learning favors the full participation of students in the management of the school curriculum. This participatory management of the curriculum presupposes the involvement of students in the planning, development and assessment of learning processes, considered as formative operations of the entire development process. It is in this context that the interest in the study of Cooperative Management of the Curriculum processes emerges, in a 2nd grade classroom, with 7/8 year- old students. This study was limited to the pedagogical practice of a teacher in the 2nd year of schooling at a public school in the city of Lisbon, characterized by the use of an innovative pedagogical model, based on cooperative management of the curriculum processes in the classroom with students. In accordance with the object of the study, a methodology of a interpretative qualitative nature was used, using as data collection techniques, direct and participant observation, the semi-structured interview, informal conversations and documentary analysis. The results were treated with the analysis of content following the assumptions of Bardin (2013). The study results allow us to identify as nuclear moments of cooperative management of the curriculum: the Education Cooperation Council, the Autonomous study time and Project Work. The experiences lived by the students in these work routines had an impact on the students' development, either at a cognitive level, or at an emotional, social and moral level. The synthesis of the data analysis allowed us to highlight as competences developed by the students, competences to learn and innovate, emancipatory, social and emotional competences, key competences for the 21st century presented by UNESCO (1998), Comissão Europeia (2007) and the OECD (2016).

Keywords: Cooperative Management; Cooperation; Curriculum; Skills

1. Introduction

A society in change and innovation requires education that accompanies these changes, in order to train young people prepared for active and participatory citizenship. The teacher today faces different challenges to respond to the demands of the 21st century. The present investigation is based on a socio-constructivist and interactive model of learning, which, according to Serralha (2007), includes: the social dimension, referring to the students and the teacher; the constructive dimension, referring to the subject who learns, the student; and the interactive dimension, referring to the situations and learning objects of the community. The document on the Profile of students leaving compulsory schooling enshrines skills as “complex combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes” that are essential in the profile of students. It is about organizing the school as a model of democratic practice that leads students to understand, “based on concrete problems, what their rights and duties are, and how the exercise of their freedom is limited by the exercise of rights and freedom of others” (Delors et al., 1996, p. 61). According to Mestre (2017), when we refer to “cooperative management within a learning community, when there is a proper commitment between students and the teacher” we are highlighting a true “Common Learning Project” (p. 79).



2. Methodology

In accordance with the problematic and the questions, we identified as general objective of this research: *To study the processes of Cooperative Management of the Curriculum in a classroom of the 2nd year of schooling.* The following specific objectives were defined: (i) To identify the moments of Cooperative Management of the Curriculum in the practice of the cooperating teacher; (ii) To characterize each one of the moments of Cooperative Management of the Curriculum and (iii) To describe the impact of the Cooperative Management of the Curriculum in the development of competences in the students. This study was developed according to an interpretative qualitative methodology. Design is the case study that is one of the most used modalities in qualitative research. According to Ventura (2007), this type of research “aims at investigating a specific, well-defined case, contextualized in time and place so that a detailed search for information can be carried out” (p. 2). The practice of the cooperating teacher in her classroom with her students was studied. Direct and participant observation techniques were used, studying the group for a period and participating in its collective life. The behaviors were assessed in their production moments, which made it possible to collect the desired information without questioning the actors, that is, the students in the class (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 2018). The data collected were subjected to content analysis which, according to Bardin (2013) and Coutinho (2019), should privilege phases organized around three chronological poles: (i) pre-analysis; (ii) exploration of the material and (iii) treatment of results (inference and interpretation). 22 students participated, 14 males and 8 females, belonging to a 2nd year class, aged between 7 and 8 years. The cooperating teacher with seven years of professional experience and an academic background in master's in teaching from the 1st cycle and in Portuguese, History and Geography of Portugal, Mathematics and Natural Sciences from the 2nd cycle also participated.

3. Results

Data analysis allowed the identification, in an explicit, clear and precise way, of the cooperating teacher's perspective on the concept of Cooperative Curriculum Management (CCM). CCM is understood as the active participation of children in the planning, regulation and evaluation of the school curriculum itself, in the management of space, materials and working times in the classroom, as well as in managing conflicts and regulating their attitudes. This investigation allowed us to perceive the discriminated use, by the teacher, of the concepts of collaboration and cooperation. For the active participation of students, it is strictly necessary to establish a horizontal relationship between teacher/student and student/student, that is, a cooperative relationship. All that takes place in the classroom and appear in the weekly agenda stand out as moments of CCM. Even so, it happens more explicitly: in the Educational Cooperation Council, in the Autonomous Study Time (AST) and in Project Work. In these times, the CCM takes place in a more formal and evident way in the planning, regulation and evaluation of the curriculum itself, being necessary regulation instruments, the so-called pilot instruments, such as: the weekly agenda, built and shared with the students; the daily plans; the Individual Work Plan, described as essential and which allows the regulation of the work developed by the student throughout the week. AST Files are made available, organized by curricular areas and, essential to the processes of pedagogical differentiation, the Text Production Records and Checklists, which are the curriculum adapted with a language accessible to students and which allow to regulate learning and understand what are the difficulties. Emphasis should also be given to assessment processes, highlighting the importance of formative assessment, supported by constant feedback from the teacher to the students. The collected data suggest: (i) the use of self-assessment procedures in the Educational Cooperation Council at the beginning and end of the week; (ii) self-assessment at the end of each day - verbal or written - and (iv) hetero-assessment and co-assessment. Another aspect highlighted is the practice of pedagogical differentiation of contents, times, spaces, resources and materials. Oral communication is also important and is related to the rules of coexistence, agreed between the students and the teacher. Finally, it is essential to experience practices of autonomy and accountability of students. Data analysis shows that the active involvement of students, responsible and intervening, involves putting in their hands the course of events that concern them, with a view to appropriating a curriculum in which they have some freedom to choose what they most need. As advantages of CCM, the following stand out: the increase in motivation for learning, the attribution of the social meaning of learning and, also, the assessment of their own learning, which allows its regulation. The teacher is an indispensable human resource, as a great deal of preparation is required, and as they must play an active, attentive, provocative, mediating



role and responsibly and autonomously involve students in the management of classroom life. Must develop the children's metacognitive capacity and the competence to learn to learn. It is essential to ask questions, provoke dialogues and discussions, get children to think. Teachers should also privilege working in practical communities with their colleagues. With regard to the constraints of an intrinsic nature to the teacher, his path as a student stands out: long personal experience of teacher-centered teaching practices; insecurity in knowing how to do the CCM; sensitivity to noise, since this practice calls for work in pairs, and also the difficulty in sharing power with students for fear of losing control of their learning. With regard to constraints of an extrinsic nature, control and prescription rules issued by the direction of the school grouping stand out; the guidelines of the pedagogical direction and sometimes certain guidelines of the Ministry of Education. Regarding the facilitating aspects, the trajectory of the intern student as a student and the experiences lived in the context of the CCM stand out; guidance of initial training practices from a CCM perspective and participation in cooperative work groups with colleagues and teacher associations.

4. Conclusions

Data analysis allowed us to consider that the teacher's practice favors a pedagogical model supported by a socio-constructivist and interactive perspective of learning. Three moments stand out in which it is possible to observe the active participation of students in the planning, regulation and evaluation of the curriculum itself, in the management of times, spaces and learning contents, in the classroom, as well as in the management of conflicts and in the regulation of your attitudes. These are: (i) the Educational Cooperation Council; (ii) Autonomous Study Time and (iii) Project Work. These moments result in an impact on the students' development, both at a cognitive level and at an emotional, social and moral level. Data analysis allowed highlighting the skills developed in students with this pedagogical work model. Taking as a reference the Key Competencies for the 21st century, presented by UNESCO (1998), the European Commission (2006) and the OECD (2016), it was possible to frame them in emancipatory competences; social and emotional skills and skills to learn and innovate. Data analysis highlighted the importance of the teacher's role in the implementation of the CCM process. The teacher has the fundamental role of regulating, monitoring and guiding their work, through a form of formative assessment that includes constant feedback.

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