

LA SALLE PLAY CENTRE: LIVING WITH DIVERSITY AND THE RIGHT TO INCLUSION TAUGHT BY CHILDREN

Mary Rangel¹

ABSTRACT

This article is prepared in the methodological style of an argumentative and reflexive essay about the social and human value of respect for diversity and right to inclusion. The arguments and reflections are inspired by observations of students of the Pedagogy Course of the La Salle Higher Institute of Education, as part of a broader research implemented with the support of the Amparo à Pesquisa Foundation, in the State of Rio de Janeiro, between the years 2003 and 2007. The observations were made by the students of the year 2006, in the La Salle Play Centre which was linked at the time to the Course of Pedagogy. It highlights how a group of sixty children from an age group of 5 to 6 years old, proceeding from a private school in a middle-class area and two public schools from popular neighbourhoods, with different gender characteristics, ethnic-racial features, socio-economic conditions and ways to dress, mutually accepted each other and shared activities and toys with affection and solidarity, thereby teaching fraternal and inclusive coexistence in a context of social diversity, consistent with Lasallian fundamentals. The theoretical review includes studies and theses about the Play Centre and permits to ascertain the peculiarity of the contributions in this essay.

Key-words: Play Centre, diversity, inclusion, rights.

Introduction

This study is developed as an argumentative and reflective essay about diversity and inclusion as social values. The argument is supported by observations performed at the La Salle Play Centre which presently belongs to the La Salle/CEPLAS Educational and Human Promotion Centre of Niteroi, State of Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brazil. The observations about the Play Centre were provided as part of a research performed at the La Salle Higher Education Institute (ISE La Salle), between the years 2003 and 2007 with the support of the Development and Research Agency of the State of Rio de Janeiro/FAPERJ.

¹ Coordinator of the Undergraduate Courses at the Higher Institute of Education La Salle and La Salle College Counselor Abel of Niteroi, RJ. Professor of Education in the Federal Fluminense University and Head of the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

The final report which included detailed information, analysis and results (Rangel, 2007) was delivered by the researcher to FAPERJ, receiving positive feedback thanks to its support to the reflection on acceptance of social diversity and the right to inclusion shown and exemplified by the children through their coexistence and participation to the La Salle Play Centre.

During the years of implementation of this research, whose empirical comments inspired this essay (the years between 2003 and 2007), the La Salle Play Centre belonged to the Pedagogy Course of the La Salle Higher Education Institute/ISE La Salle and welcomed students from the network of schools in Niteroi, in the age group of 5 to 6 years old, originally from different social strata.

The topic and subject of this research that served as the context for these observations were “The significance of practice for teachers’ training: processes, activities and didactic materials”. One of the objectives of this research was to verify how the students from the Pedagogy Course of the ISE La Salle and the Bachelors in Early Childhood Education and Early Years of Elementary School perceived the relations and mutual collaboration between the theoretical studies of Didactic (subject of curriculum offered during the four year program) and the practices experienced in the schools of the municipal network.

The research had a transversal scope, suggesting the insertion of female students and a collection of their data over the four-year Pedagogy Course. Thirty five (35) female students who registered for the course in 2003 and showed interest and willingness to join the research, participated to the same. The method applied was based on participative observation (Chizzotti, 1998), initially suggested in the classroom to observe class activities.

The theoretical study was carried out during 2003, and focused on studies of Teaching Fundamentals, including the relationship between theory and practice. Among the studies analyzed, we list as an example the ones performed by Candau (org.) (1990), which combine contributions that argue in favour of “a new teaching” emphasizing the indissoluble link between knowledge, culture and facts; the one by Veiga (org.) (2003), with research approaches that aim at “rethinking teaching”, and an emphasis on the teaching process through specific questions that are the basis for knowledge; or by Sacristan and Gomez (1998), that suggest “understanding and transforming teaching”, by providing greater consideration to reality; by Forquin (1993), who analyzes school and culture, focusing on “the social and epistemological bases of academic knowledge”, including the practical origin of theoretical concepts; by Arroyo (2001), that highlights contextualized teaching among the “functions of the teacher”; and by Mizukami (2004), focused on the practical-theoretical-practical interrelation in teaching. No review was performed of the Play Centre, since as previously stated; the *locus* originally scheduled for this research was the classroom.

The Play Centre was not initially considered for the theoretical section of the research, which did not include it, or as the premises for the participative observation by the female students. It was only considered as a space for observation during the last stage of the research (year 2006), in light of the interest that the students spontaneously showed.

During the year 2006, a group of 60 (sixty) children attended the library. The group was made up of children from three schools: a private school located in the neighbourhood of Santa Rosa (middle-class neighbourhood), and two public schools, located in popular strata, low-income neighbourhoods. The group was *randomly divided, without separating the schools*, into subgroups of twelve children to participate to the activities of the Play Centre, every day of the week, Monday through Friday. The

parents brought the children according to the schedule defined by the Play Centre so as to not interfere with the classroom activities of their schools.

Although they belonged to the same age group, from five to six years old, the children displayed different characteristics, not only related to their original school, but also with respect to gender; differences between girls and boys in one same group were evident as to skin colour, including black, mulatto and white children, and socio-economic conditions, especially in the clothing they wore which was far simpler in those with less purchasing power.

The results present the ISE/La Salle Play Centre as a place to experience significant learning through concrete materials such as nursery rhymes, games, playful activities. The students also specifically highlighted the relationships that developed among the children, characterized by mutual acceptance with no differences in treatment and closeness due to individual differences in gender, race and socioeconomic conditions, or to contrasts in the way they dressed. The affection, the joy of being together and participating to the same activity, permeated these relationships.

The students from ISE La Salle then experienced the practice of inclusive education in the Play Centre and established associations with other theoretical studies of the Pedagogy Course about diversity, inclusion and human rights. That was undoubtedly one of the most evident results of the research. These results support the following analyzes.

Respect for Diversity and inclusion: Rights taught by children at the La Salle Play Centre.

The different faces and nuances of diversity are interrelated. The socio-cultural diversity is associated to factors and circumstances, to the ethnic and racial diversity and it implies the recognition of the value of cultural significance as part the identity of individuals and nations; that is, of the feeling of having a nationality, of belonging to a political body, situated in a national territory.

In that same perspective of analysis, we observe the human and existential value of characteristics and ethnic-cultural expressions as significant elements of the individuals' identity, expressing their insertion into a group, a nation, showing their origin, revealing their way of feeling citizens. Thus, ethnic-cultural diversity is so expressive and relevant for the human being as biodiversity is to nature.

Culture acquires different forms, whether ethnics, racials, religious, artistics and many others that are manifested in the plurality of the identities which characterize the groups and societies those make up humanity. In that sense, diversity constitutes a common asset of humanity and must be recognized and consolidated for the benefit of present and future generations (UNESCO, 2005).

Diversity is broad and complex. In addition to social, cultural, economic, ethnic and racial factors, we must consider physical and mental differences in the individuals, including particular factors and conditions of learning, behaviour, ways to relate, to move and be integrated into social environments, starting with the family and school environment.

The different physical, mental and intellectual characteristics are broken down under circumstances, different as well, of knowledge processing, such as the articulation and use of language, reading pace, interpretation of texts; in short, in characteristics that imply bio cognitive processes. In addition to

those processes, we also observe those manifested in the involvement of organic processes such as vision, hearing and movement.

Thus, due to the complexity of the world and of the human beings that make it up, we find differences in gender, in feminine and masculine roles, and the many concepts and preconceptions maintained both socially and historically.

Differences are specific to the plural world; accepting them, respecting them and welcoming them are principles that guide behaviours for a sound and peaceful coexistence. It is especially necessary to overcome preconceptions that generate exclusion. Exclusion processes occur at the same time, as a cause or consequence of violent actions that disqualify, marginalize, and “eliminate” human beings from their spaces and times in life, from coexistence, work and the *exercise of citizenship rights*. The theory of abuse is one that offers premises and substantial contributions about the effect of violent acts of exclusion:

One of the analyses of the effect of exclusion on interpersonal relations is the theory of abuse. That theoretic framework also includes attention to subjective welfare, significantly affected by the stress caused by actions, attitudes or abusive words. The theoretical concept of abuse explains the process through which attitudes of disqualification or exclusion of individuals are manifested, through either words or actions, in their social, life, cohabitation and work contexts (Rangel, 2009, p. 43).

These theoretical and conceptual considerations support the argument in favour of an education, a school and *inclusive pedagogical activities that promote human formation in inclusiveness, offering activities and processes that teach to include while broadening opportunities to experience inclusion. One of those opportunities to experience activities that promote inclusion can be found in the Play Centre’s space and time.*

The Play Centre can therefore become a space and time to experience inclusiveness and representations of oneself and others that are positive, welcoming, pleasant, permeated by playfulness and by the approach favoured by games, songs and play.

The discussion about the self-image and the image of the other in a school environment and its activities finds significant references in the theory of social representations that help consider (possibly) the Play Centre as *an inclusive environment*.

Vala (1999, p.7) notes that “social representations are a product of the interaction and the communications phenomena within a social group” thus, “they reflect the situation of that group”. Therefore, it is understood that the school spaces and time and the experiences it offers are permeated with representations and possibilities to influence the relationships that are established in the same. At the Play Centre, games, creativity, music and the pleasure of playing generate positive representations of the other you are playing and having fun with, in the joy of being together, regardless of his or her skin-colour or “different” way of being.

Serge Moscovici, the author of the theory of social representation (formulated based on Durkheim’s theory about collective representation) adds to that analysis, pointing out that representations “circulate and are crystallized” in social environments “through speech, gestures, meeting...” We may thus verify how much and how “the established social relations, the objects consumed and produced, the

communication exchanged, are imbued with them” (Moscovici, 1978, p. 41). The Play Centre and its objects, whether produced or consumed, are imbued with representations that absorb, in turn, pleasant feelings and impressions to imagine, create and experience with others the joy of the game. 66

The game, the “running”, the “singing”, the folklore, the objects created or used by children are therefore generators of representations that stimulate their imagination and favour affectivity, approach, meeting and inclusiveness. We therefore reaffirm that the Play Centre environment is an environment of positive representations and of creation of positive attitudes.

The *attitude* is the first dimension of social representations; it comprises the judgements, the assessments of the object or the subject represented. Those judgements and assessments, according to Moscovici (1978), can be positive, negative or neutral.

Based on the attitude, we can process the *information* which constitutes another dimension of social representations: those where concepts and impressions resulting from the attitude are formed.

The third dimension *within the field of representations* is a result of the prior ones; that is where the central core is formed, where we find the images, the stronger, solid and permanent concepts of what is represented.

Those three dimensions -attitude, information and representation field- find a favourable environment and atmosphere in the Play Centre which fosters the creation of concepts and images of oneself and of the other, generated by the representations resulting from the act and feeling of playing together, singing and creating, *with a group of friends who although different, are still friends*.

Representations, as Moscovici (1978) points out, are a product of the conciliation and identification of ideas and concepts, as well as of a constant dialogue between the individual and the group we become a part of. Thus, we can understand how the individual representations of a student based on prior experiences and displayed in a new school, interact and are (re)formed in a dialogue with the representations of the group he is interacting with in this school environment.

Thus, in school environments, there is an emergence of representations potentially capable of functioning as factors that identify the students within the networks of relations and meanings established that can translate into determinants of values and behaviours:

It [the social representation] manages to instil a sense to the behaviour, integrating it into a network of relations (...), strengthening at the same time notions, theories and fundamentals of observation that transform those relations into stable and efficient ones (Moscovici, 1978, p.49).

Those analyses support and reaffirm the conditions and possibilities of the Play Centre for the formation of representations focused on positive and welcoming concepts and images of the other, regardless of his or her peculiarities, different characteristics, different as the compositions of the groups in collective environments and activities can be diverse and different (because they are plural).

Cutri and Oliveira (2002, p.1) have the same understanding of the Play Centre as a space for inclusiveness, offering activities that “help develop affectivity and expansion”, since those activities promote the “exchange with the human environment, obtaining as a consequence feelings of security, self-confidence that are necessary for a positive self-image”.

Macarini and Vieira (2006) underline the principle that collective activities such as “school children playing in the Play Centre” favour the interaction and capability to deal with different people in different situations. The authors note that the Play Centre has a specific purpose; namely, it is spontaneous, natural, with no obligation or pressure, fulfilled in the simple pleasure the child feels during the activity performed with his fellows. Kishimoto (1998) makes the same argument and emphasizes the *right of child to play*.

Mezzomo (2004) sublimates in the educational process the learning that favours the integration of the human being in an active and motivated manner into the environment, emphasizing the game and entertainment that are specific to the Play Centre, as privileged means of integration, that stimulate significant social interactions.

We therefore repeatedly point out the possibility for relationships experienced in school to generate representations that influence perceptions and concepts (elements associated in the representative process) possibly interfering with the assessment and the attitude of the student with respect to those with whom he lives. Similarly, representations also project, in a reflex, concepts and perceptions of the student on himself, influencing his self-image that is associated to his self-esteem (Goffman, 2002).

Thus, the Play Centre can be a mirror reflecting images that are different in appearance, colours, and features but similar in the way they are projected onto the feelings they convey, since those images contain the different nuances of the children, united and playing in a space for creativity and imagination. The approach of inclusiveness of diversity into the Play Centre stimulated, at the completion of this study, a search in the Thesis Data Base of the Commission for the Improvement of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, connected to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development of Brazil, based on the will to support researches on Play Centres in the years from 2007 to 2010, to verify the possible existence of an inclusiveness approach and acceptance of diversity.

In the years 2007 and 2008, some Brazilian thesis records regarding Play Centres undertaken in Post-Graduate Courses (Masters and Doctorates), were located. In 2009, two theses were found; one at the Masters level, regarding a “virtual Play Centre” (Gonçalves, 2009), creating a playful environment through technological means for the use of students from the 1st to 9th year of elementary school in a public school located in Florianopolis, State of Santa Catarina/SC, with conclusions about the feasibility and importance of its use; another study, performed the Doctorate level, whose theme was “Play, what for? The school is a place to learn. Case study of a Play Centre in a school context” (Peters, 2009); based on observations carried out in a public school, also located in Florianopolis/SC, the study addresses the impasses and difficulties when using the Play Centre for students from the 1st to 4th year, which contradict and prevent the exercise of the children’s full right to play since, while playing, they acquire knowledge and values of coexistence.

In 2010, two additional theses were found: one about “The (re)cognition of leisure in hospital play centres” (Mol, 2010), at the Masters level, which researches and confirms the information about the importance and contributions of children to the hospital Play Centres. This study was performed in clinics in Belo Horizonte (State of Minas Gerais, Brazil). The other research, at the Doctorate level, focuses on the theme “Ethics of care and meeting: the possibility to build new forms of coexistence based on a Play Centre created for the healthcare system of the Sao Paulo municipal network” (Juri,

2010). The study was performed with the participation of the Neighbourhood Association in low-income areas and its results showed alternative leisure activities relevant for children.

Thus, in the years from 2007 to 2010, no records of academic researchers were found that provided information about the positive coexistence with diversity in an inclusive and welcoming manner, that, despite differences in gender, skin colour, socioeconomic condition and way to dress, were related in the Play Centre, approaching and participating to the games with affection and joy. This information provided sensitive and gratifying evidence for the students' observations at the La Salle Play Centre in Niteroi/RJ, proving to be consistent with the context of the Lasallian School marked by spirituality, affection, the principle of community (a common-unity) of people who live the human dimension of social life taught and witnessed by La Salle.

The human dimension is inherent to interpersonal relationships of coexistence (of living with) in society, in school, in the classroom. Affectivity, empathy, acceptance, the qualification of the other, respect, truth, sincerity, assertiveness, mediation, in short, relationships moved by the consideration for oneself, the other and the institutional environment that favour coexistence and work, are associated in the human dimension (Rangel and Weschenfelder, 2012, p.65).

The supportive and fraternal manner in which children coexist in the Play Centre is a deeply Lasallian concept. It is yet more gratifying to think that children have much to teach about the right to inclusiveness and how to practice it and preserve it under the natural and legitimate circumstances of social pluralism. Thus, the socio-pedagogical value of educational training is reaffirmed for coexistence in a plural, more human world, "in light of the need for acceptance, qualification and respect to overcome processes of exclusion in social relations" (Rangel, 2011, p.12).

Final remarks: what the children teach us to reflect on

Children teach us to think that difference is a condition and right to *uniqueness*. Equality is a condition and right to *humanity*. Understanding one's own uniqueness is something natural and adequate in human beings; what is not natural and adequate is "feeling different" and uneasy because we are different. "Feeling different" can be an indication that the treatment received is different from the one provided to the other people we live within a social group; it is a signal that there is "something" that distinguishes the person (and the "person", personality) of the other surrounding; this diversity may be attributed to the unique characteristics that catalyze, provoke and justify a "different" treatment. These same considerations about the "feeling different" apply to groups, categories of subjects that cause astonishment due to their way of being and of being a part of society.

Those who may be considered as "strangers" by the majority groups, presumably corresponding to the traditionally accepted models as "normal", may feel different. As they are strangers and do not correspond to those standards, their closeness may cause discomfort; thus they become (with a greater or lesser degree of discomfort) "dangerous", "threatening", therefore "marginalized", namely at the margin of the spaces (environments, contexts, relations) reserved for the "normal" ones.

We then notice the emergence of categories and classifications attributed to the "strangers" since categories and classifications reduce the threat of what is scarcely known or what we have no desire to know; categories and classifications "translate" into a comprehension criterion of difference and attribute to them a certain sense of "familiarity". That is how the "representations of the other" emerge,

which, also in a reflex movement, reinforce in that “other” his own representations, namely the representations formed by people around him or in the coexistence of each subject he senses and which could exercise an explicit influence on the representations that subject makes of himself.

With regard of the strength of the mutual influence between the concept of the “other” and the concept of self, the representations theory based on the terms of Social Psychology establishes ties with the principles and premises of the Vygotskian theory when it considers the learning potential of the zone of proximal development, mediating between the potential and actual one. This intermediate zone between the potential one (of the individual’s natural tendencies, his own internal conditions, perspectives or development possibilities) and the actual one reached by those tendencies, conditions or possibilities, experiences a synchresis (fusion) of factors that absorbs significant elements from the learning and development, and in them, representations which lead to the construction of not only the vision of the other and of the world, but also the one of the “self”, namely of the subject about himself.

The images and concepts that introject feelings are projected onto this flow, both internal and external, of mutual interference; and those feelings may include the one of “feeling different” from the others, attributing to them a “superior” status, a being “normal”.

“Feeling different”, can then be a way of considering oneself “minor” as compared to others and, in addition, a way to accept, through that comparison, the patterns and references of superiority and “normality” that justify the self-concept of inferiority, thereby affecting self-confidence, self-esteem with consequences on assuredness and ease, unfolding perversely in tensions that pollute physical, mental and emotional health.

We could (and must) also reflect on the effect of the pollution of the organic body, on the pollution of the social body health, since with few doubts (and many certainties) we may confirm, as a principle and premise, that healthy subjects contribute to a healthy society and that tense, oppressed and subordinate subjects are an evidence of an ailing society that calls for reflection and reinterpretation in favour of human promotion.

In an extension of this reasoning, we may resort to the common sense knowledge found in the wisdom that emerges from popular experience acquired and consolidated by subjects in their everyday life. The reliance on popular knowledge includes a relevant piece of information that allows an analogy with the feeling of “being different” due to an uncomfortable perception of oneself as outside the standards of “normality”. This is the principle of discomfort in an area of the body when it disturbs us, when it is ailing. Similarly, the “feeling different” may reveal an emotional discomfort. However, rather than from a part of the body, said discomfort comes from the soul; therefore, the significance and origin of said pain are especially deep and also constant since it accompanies the human being through all times and spaces; it is introjected in his thoughts and self-assessment.

The discomfort of “feeling different” may cause effects such as stress and depression that apply pressure and weaken the physical and mental health. This depressive context may lead to subordination which, among many possible social and political consequences, can generate a passive acceptance of a value, a place, a “lesser” position in environments and social relationships. Even silence, fear and invisibility can become an option for those who “feel different” and do not want to be noticed, because being noticed would highlight “difference” and with it, a “lesser” social value and exclusion, in several perverse types and processes.

It is at this point of this reflective essay that we perceive how exclusion reaches the human being and how it can become a self-rejection, that is, a rejection of oneself and of one's "difference". This results in an especially oppressive and destructive significance of self-exclusion.

The fear of being noticed, of being recognized in social spaces is a frequent occurrence in those disturbed by their "differences" since they absorb and introject rejections moved by preconceptions. And that type of introjections is especially strong in the everyday social, work and study relations.

The synthesis (union, articulation and systematization) of assessments, concepts and preconceptions occurs in school, as well as the factors of social pressure. Those factors are found in the surroundings and are reflected in relationships within the school environment, thus on the curriculum, programs and classroom interaction.

The daily coexistence in a school environment for a significant time, throughout the development of studies and the systematization of knowledge during school years, favours maturity, the building of emotional ties and the consolidation of friendships. Meanwhile, if there were attitudes of exclusion in a long-term coexistence with so many opportunities to establish relationships with professors, colleagues and employees, those affected could also consolidate a feeling of frustration and maintain it for the rest of their lives. It would be far worse to hide, become invisible, silenced, to control gestures or the tone of voice, to avoid being recognized, by fear of this exclusion, because of suffering and shame.

Each reflection of that nature especially reaffirms the effects of excluding processes and attitudes, noticing the duration and intensity of these effects and the power of personal deconstruction of self-esteem, self-confidence, hope and awareness of the rights that must be respected. Thus, in addition to the physical complaints caused by stress, many consequences of the exclusion take away the life of the spirit, of the soul, the happiness that is the fundamental human aspiration.

These reflections bring up sensitive issues that are obscured by the silence of many, since they wish for no visibility and few actually dare to be visible, to speak, to make claims out loud for themselves and on behalf of the others that are silenced, for their right to inclusion, respect for the difference that characterizes human uniqueness and that in fact represent the contents and continents of humanity.

Thus, social representations of differences become, with increasing academic adhesion, the object of a research aimed at contributing to their understanding, especially to provide the necessary reinterpretation to overcome preconceptions that are far from reality, that are supported and diffused by mistaken judgements and discourses. It, therefore, worthwhile to reaffirm the subsidies of the social representations theory in the researches concerning the disclosure of underlying meanings that express value judgements. Those attitudes allow and promote information which may be concealed by preconceptions that set up the knowledge of facts, people and roles and that form opinions which then circulate through social communications means.

In 2011, the theory of representations according to Serge Moscovici, with an approach based on Social Psychology, reached its fiftieth anniversary from the appearance of its original formulations. The commemorative publication for the fiftieth anniversary includes an analysis that underlines its evolution and theoretical consolidation (Almeida, Santos and Trindade, 2011).

Thus, during this time, we consolidated the understanding that the perspective of the imagined reality and of the ideal moved by concepts (or preconceptions) are found in the creation of representations,

that envision them and identify them with the “reality” that is being imagined or that we wish to confirm. There is therefore an emergence of the significance attributed to the objects of representations that, according to studies compiled by Jodelet (2001), may be people, roles, processes and other elements of context and functions in social groups. The preconceptions summarize the impressions projected of the imagined reality, as well as the ideal, formatted by preconceived models of behaviour and roles that refer to people and groups that are more or less socially appreciated.

In a similar perspective, we find in “Critique of indolent reason”, by Bonaventura de Souza Santos, “the conception of the other as an object and therefore, the non recognition of the other as a subject”, thus missing the sense and feeling of “solidarity”:

[...] In this form of recognition, ignorance is colonialism and colonialism is the concept of the other as a subject. In that form of recognition, to know is to recognize and to progress in the sense of elevating the other from the condition of object to the status of subject (Santos, 2002, p.30).

We therefore go back to the fifty years of the theory of social representations and we note that the categories of the dimensions of social representations persist with greater substance, theoretic argument and application perspective: the attitude, the value judgement of the object represented; the information or systematization of knowledge and conception of the object; the field of representation, centred on a core set of concepts/images of objects surrounded by peripheral patterns that include, at various levels, complementary meanings that confirm and illustrate the ones located at the core.

Changes in concepts and judgement criteria require a deconstruction of the core, or further studies and broader reflections that promote new meanings and new understanding parameters of facts and roles different from those guiding the previous representations in their imaginary and idealized manner of preconceiving what is real.

Just as they contribute to understanding processes and actions that are stigmatizing and excluding, while revealing them, the representations theory also collaborates in their reinterpretation, namely their symbolic reconstruction with new meanings, less idealized and closer to reality.

What we find in reality is especially the value of differences and the plurality that characterize environments and social relations. What is at odds, what represses normality and social balance is the rejection of differences and in that rejection, manifestations of abuse, of arbitrariness, of practices that humiliate and make the other unworthy while harming his self-esteem. This external movement of exclusion and rejection unleashes the corresponding internal movement that leads the excluded subject to also exclude himself, feeling lesser, since he assimilates the “lesser value” attributed to his “difference” to justify his lesser social value. Thus, the subject by a reflex to external rejection manifested at various degrees, whether explicitly or not, can “feel different” in many ways: socioeconomic, ethic-racial, religious, cultural, gender identity and others in a unique way of being.

Socio economic diversity gives rise to specific effects within the scope of the terms of quality of life. Poverty may be represented as a situation that influences the social devaluation of subjects, as it may affect their subordination. This process may also bring about low self-esteem as an internal reflex of external assessments, recalling the possibility of mutual recurrence between the representations of the other and the representations of oneself. It is in this sense that Goffman (2002) addresses the “representation of me [I] in everyday life”.

The ethnic-racial differences can be subject to impressions of estrangement, when the preconception, concealed in attitudes and intentions is also hidden in excluding actions that, although unrevealed explicitly, appear in social relations to the extent they are perceived in the ways to “avoid” the “different” subject, under various circumstances, as an example of institutional or entrepreneurial leading positions, or a role of family member.

Religious differences generate discomfort and stress in those who suffer discrimination to the extent of feeling “less” of those “equal” to the predominant patterns in society, thus excluded by them. Uneasiness and stress can also become the reference for a devaluation process with that same feeling of inferiority.

The differences pertaining to the gender identity even led to situations in which the fact of “being a woman” induced the naturalization of “being less”: a mechanism of creation of social and self-representations. These situations are reflected in researches such as the ones performed in 2007 and 2010 as part of the project “Building gender equality” of the Special Secretariat for Women’s Policies (Brazil, 2007; 2010).

Those considerations about the reception and the socio-cultural and political value of diversity confirm the understanding that the inclusion/exclusion process is dialectic, polarized and with a broad scope, not just within the horizon of the differences that constitute the various contours of each area of their manifestations, rather in the broad spectrum of the traits that make up the contours of the world, humanity and of plural society.

Meanwhile, although differences are an element and characteristic of humanity and nature, they do not define us. The difference in the socioeconomic status, or religion, culture, gender identity or other “differences” from the predominant patterns are not what defines humanity, rather its human condition (Arendt, 2001) worthy of consideration and full opportunities for fulfilment and social insertion.

Lastly, we also confirm the premise that guides these reflections: *we are different to the extent of our singularities and equal to the extent of our humanity*. Our human condition is what defines us and our own set of singularities broaden the terms of the possibilities to reinterpret, with more realistic and less preconceived perspectives, thus more fraternal and supportive, to build environments and social relations. Those perspectives help redesign, with more sensitive tones, the social environments and relations.

It is therefore understandable that reinterpretations are necessary through new parameters, new representations, new ways to search for knowledge with greater proximity to reality and in that proximity, we must also find greater willingness to learn, re-learn and if necessary, to un-learn.

And, in that search, through reinterpreted knowledge, we may find subsidies that help understand the value of unity in diversity: a value that is the basis to replace considerations of hegemonic models, preconceived and uniform, with considerations based on the premise that diversity is the standard.

References

- Almeida, A. M. de O., Santos, M. de F., Trindade, Z. A. (Orgs.). (2011). *Teoria de representações sociais – 50 anos*. Brasília: Technopolitik.
- Arendt, H. (2001). *A condição humana*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária.
- Arroyo, M. G. (2001). *Ofício de mestre: imagens e autoimagens*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Brasil (2007). Presidência da República. Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres. Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia. Ministério da educação, CNPq, UNIFEM. *2º Prêmio Construindo a Igualdade de Gênero*. Brasília: Presidência da República, SPM.
- Brasil (2010). *5º Prêmio Construindo a Igualdade de Gênero*. Brasília: Presidência da República, SPM.
- Candau, V. M. (Org.) (1990). *Rumo a uma nova didática*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Chizzotti, A. (1998). *Pesquisa em ciências sociais*. São Paulo: Cortez, 1998.
- Cutri, P. de O. y Oliveira, R. M de. (2002). *Brinquedoteca: uma proposta de inclusão escolar*. São Paulo, SP: IPA.
- Forquin, J. C. (1993). *Escola e cultura: as bases sociais e epistemológicas do conhecimento escolar*. Porto Alegre, RS: Artes Médicas.
- Goffman, E. (2002). *A representação do eu na vida cotidiana*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Gonçalves, M. M. (2009). *Brinquedoteca virtual escolar*. Tese de Mestrado em Educação. Faculdade de Educação – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC.
- Jodelet, D. (Org.) (2001). *As representações sociais*. Rio de Janeiro: UDERJ.
- Jurdi, A. P. S. (2010). *Ética do cuidado e do encontro: a possibilidade de construir novas formas de existência a partir de uma brinquedoteca comunitária*. Tese de Doutorado em Psicologia. Faculdade de Psicologia – Universidade Federal de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP.
- Kishimoto, T. M. (1998). Diferentes tipos de brinquedotecas. In: Friedman, A. (Org.). *O direito de brincar*. São Paulo: Ed. Sociais, p.49-59.
- Macarini, S. M. y Vieira, M. L. (2006). O brincar de crianças escolares na brinquedoteca. *Revista Brasileira de Crescimento e Desenvolvimento Humano*. São Paulo, v.16, n.1, p.1-14.
- Mezzomo, L. (2004). *Brinquedoteca*. Brincar e jogar são outros modos de aprender. Disponível em <<http://www.ilv.com.br>>. Acesso em 4 set, 2006.
- Mizukami, M. da G. N. (2004). *Escola e aprendizagem da docência: processos de investigação e formação*. São Carlos, SP: EduFSCar.

- Mol, T. L. S. (2010). *O (re)conhecimento do lazer em brinquedotecas hospitalares*. Tese de Doutorado em Educação. Faculdade de Educação – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, BH.
- Moscovici, S. (1978). *A representação social da psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores.
- Peters, L. L. (2009). *Brincar pra que? Escola é lugar de aprender! Estudo de caso de uma brinquedoteca no contexto escolar*. Tese de Doutorado em Psicologia. Faculdade de Psicologia – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC.
- Rangel, M. (Org.) (2012). *Diversidade, diferença e multiculturalismo*. Niterói, RJ: Intertexto.
- Rangel, M. (2007). *Os significados da prática para a formação de professores: processos, atividades, materiais didáticos*. Relatório de pesquisa. Curso de Pedagogia. Instituto Superior de Educação La Salle. Niterói, RJ.
- Rangel, M. (2009). Diversidade: o cuidado necessário na formação docente. In: Sarmento, D. F., Nörnberg, M. y Fossatti, P. (Orgs.). *Formação de professores e cuidado em educação*. Canoas, RS: Editora Salles.
- Rangel, M. y Weschenfelder, I. L. (2010). *La Salle na atualidade e na história das correntes pedagógicas*. Niterói, RJ.
- Sacristán, J. G. y Gómez, P. I. P. (1998). *Compreender e transformar o ensino*. Porto Alegre, RS: Artmed.
- Santos, B. de S. S. (2002). *A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência*. São Paulo: Cortez.
- UNESCO. *Global alliance for cultural diversity*. Disponível em:<www.unesco.org.br/areas/culturas/areastematicas/diversidadecultural/index-html/mosta-documento>. Acesso em 20 dez.2005.
- Vala, J. (1999). Representações sociais – para uma psicologia social do pensamento social. In: Monteiro, M.B. *Psicologia social*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, p.1-41.
- Veiga, I. P. A (Org.) (2003). *Repensando a didática*. Campinas, SP: Papirus.