Diversity of speeches on play and education: outlining the contemporary bulk of tendencies*

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Abstract

The main goal of this study was to find the relationships between play and education in contemporaneity. Specifically, the study aimed to outline a problem seen on the scope of speeches and practical experience. In that context, the study searched for conceptions of the relation between play and education that emerge from speeches and practices, thereby offering a systematic view of the situation that deserves attention and multiple approaches, since formative processes in various levels are to be improved. The methodology of this study was theoretical-bibliographic in nature. As results, the study provides an overview and appreciation of the bulk of current conceptions of the relation between play and education. In addition, the existence of a tension state is revealed in two senses: discrepancies of the value given to the role of play and the formative function of play are discussed; and complementarities and conflicts among conceptions are evidenced. The main result, however, is the conscience derived from the examination carried out in this study, which allows one to observe a hypothesis capable of explaining the reasons for the contrast and to offer theoretical solutions and accurate techniques for the formative fruitfulness of ludicity.

Keywords

Ludicity – Conception– Formative Processes.

Introduction

Play and education: distinct, excluding, complementary and/or identified activities? More important, however, is to pursue specificities of the formative potential of play, since they enable conditions to guide efficient and beneficial practices during the development of human latent virtues. By examining the way play is seen by educational institutions or other organizations, as well as how it is represented in academic speeches, the bulk of divergences that have not yet been appreciated in their correct proportions – at the expense of delaying scientific and philosophical researches and development of solutions – and reflect important aspects of the contemporary world can be fully outlined. By comprehending this state, however, it is possible to find an opportunity for deepening research and, therefore, the improvement of applications. The initial objective of this study was to envision the bulk of contrasts among the tendencies of relations between play and education, which emerge from speeches and practices.

The development of the science of education has currently reached a position where systematic research regarding the problem of the formative potential of human ludicity can no longer be postponed. This problem has been expressed in an especially sensitive way by the end of the 18th century, in *Schiller's Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*, although some of his most relevant unfoldings could only be proposed more recently. The problem partly assumes the following assertion: "we shall never be wrong in seeking a man's ideal of Beauty along the selfsame path in which he satisfies his play impulse" (SCHILLER, 2004, s/p).

In his assay *Man, Play and Games*, Caillois (1990) pondered over the possibility of the society's fundamental values expressing through their games. In that context, one could question whether the particular traces that characterize each society "can be correlated with certain games that are prevalent" (CAILLOIS, 2001, p. 66). In addition, the fundamental relationship between play and culture has been profoundly demonstrated in Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (HUIZINGA, 2008). Since the ideal of beauty plays a significant role in everyone's and whole communities' destinies,[3] and since the relationship between play and society has been noted, the science of education can no longer avoid a careful analysis of the formative possibilities of play and human ludicity.

The problem of the formative potential of human ludicity becomes even more visible as we discover the crescent interest of philosophy and science in play during the past decades, and as its importance is recognized– in different ways– in educational contexts. With special regard to this last point, educators should pursue in play a means of developing human capabilities or a support to improve the performance of their students in various levels of educational institutions. The strong presence of play that is made feasible through emergent technologies also comes to attention, since from a very young age, children are in contact with games or dynamic and mechanic programming.

3- It is important to emphasize the distinction made by Schiller with regard to the ideal of beauty corresponding to each individual and the ideal of beauty corresponding to the human species.

In his work *Emile*, Rousseau was not mistaken when he asserted that education concerns not only formative processes executed by humans based on certain planning and control, but also the nature (natural strengths and potential) and objects (ROUSSEAU, 1995). Regarding the *education of objects*, emergent technological artifacts available to youngsters are currently standing out, as well as online content from digital technology. In his conception of learning based on digital games, Prensky (2012) emphasizes that the efficacy of this model would rely on the formative impact of digital technologies on newer generations.

Science of education, while interested in knowing the formative potential of human ludicity more profoundly and systematically, is challenged to know and determine optimal possibilities of relating play and human formation. The analysis of contemporary practices and speeches on play and human formation, on the other hand, reveals symptoms that this study aims to outline. The clear knowledge of the discrepancy has the potential of contributing to propose solutions of theoretical nature to the matter, which will then provide the basis for technical solutions to be oriented, thus facing the particular contingencies of this context.

In this study, essential characteristics of the six conceptions of play and its relation to education are further outlined: [1] exclusion of play relative to educational contexts; [2] play as recreation; [3] spontaneous play; [4] educative play; [5] didactic play; e [6] gamification. These conceptions are substantiated by different models of perception of the formative potential of play, and they can also direct— except for the first— applications of play or elements of play at a number of contexts, provided these are not directly responsible for the efficacy of their promised benefits. They do not necessarily exclude one another, although the strong attachment to only one of them naturally reverberates towards more consonant applications of each option. In general, many levels of educational institutions tend to adjust to one or another of these concepts. Confrontation regarding the conceptions can also be found among educators from the same institution. As the contingency of possibilities relative to each conception becomes narrow, the bulk of contrasts between these conceptions of play is evidenced, which this study intends to demonstrate. With this in mind, one can then establish the conditions for science of education to engage in the pursuit of perfecting comprehension on the formative potential of play and ludicity.

Exclusion of play relative to educational contexts

While the work *Jeu et Éducation* has been published over two decades ago, Brougère proposed semantic aspects regarding the term 'play' that remain valid today.[4] In this context, the fundaments of the purely dichotomic and negative logic of designation related to the many uses of 'play' have been found. This semasiological pattern indicates that 'play' is inserted in a somewhat conscious binary system of oppositions comprised of the notion of labor, utility and seriousness (BROUGÈRE,

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4- Although written in French — and therefore using the term *jeu* —, the considerations ensued in this paragraph that are based on the work by Brougère are applicable to current Brazilian Portuguese. This certainly rises an interesting reflection upon the nature of historical and sociocultural development relative to the French and Brazilian societies, despite their notable differences.

1998, p. 26). Therefore, each context of enunciation of the term 'play' opposing each of these elements becomes more evident.

The idea of negativity present in the common uses of the term refers to the characteristics of certain games that are separate from important social activities. However, when studies addressing playful activities are performed in various fields of research, certain positive aspects that subvert the logic of designation of the term can be noticed. From this perspective, some authors do not limit 'play' to vulgar uses, while others try to name phenomena by using different words, thereby evoking senses not opposed to – or significantly distinct from – utility and seriousness, such as 'leisure', or 'sport' (BROUGÈRE, 1998, p. 26-27). The aforementioned logic of designation of the term 'play' is based on what one could call tendencies of *secondization* and *deterioration* of the value given to ludic activities.

The tendency of deterioration is not only historically evident in many judgments from philosophers and thinkers with regard to gambling, but is also present in educational institutions who search for mechanisms to exclude play from its environment. The essence of play is thus implicitly or explicitly recognized in its potential for addiction. By acknowledging games as distractive activities that can lead to addiction, the idea of not allowing play in educational institutions is thereby reinforced. Unharmful games that represent no hazard to the formative aspect do exist, however, despite the tendency of deterioration that continues to justify the exclusion of ludicity in educational scenarios.

The tendency of secondization of ludic activities is more moderated, though it may contribute to keep games away from educational institutions or at least activities that are intended as formative. Since there are unharmful games, this tendency might give play some function. In this case, play and games are recognized as secondary or less important activities. This yields play permission to become present in times of pause from important activities, between classes. In this last context, it can even be accepted as a means to rest from the fatigue created by formative activities, though it remains separate from these activities nonetheless.

In conclusion, the exclusion of play from important activities can be absolute, by tendencies of deterioration, or relative, by tendencies of secondization. Both tendencies can be favored by the logic of designation to which we previously referred, since their presence in speeches regarding play or ludic activities commonly refer to games that are harmful to the formative process, i.e. activities unrelated to the positive values given to labor, utility and seriousness. However, not every labor, utility or seriousness are good and beautiful, and there are ludic activities that can impair these qualities, even from a formative standpoint.

Play as recreation

To regard play as recreation means to accept the tendency of secondization where educational institutions, as mentioned previously, reserve a non-pedagogic place for play. The presence of ludic activities inside the environment of educational institutions is therefore justified by using recreation as extracurricular time, for distraction or spending

accumulated or exceeding energy. Games serve the purpose of balancing organic functions, thereby providing the needed recovery to resume educative activities. This is allowed provided that play remains within the range of less important activities. However, ideas of transforming educational institutions to a place where joy and enthusiasm are permitted and fomented might sell play as a positive exercise, despite neglecting its potential beyond recreation.

Two extremes can be identified in the scenario of play inside the educational environment and indicate the many conceptions regarding the degree of pedagogic intervention provided by play or the spontaneity of players.

One extreme can be called *laissez faire* conception of play, according to which the institution can even lay aside spaces to allow practicing games, but does not plan neither do interventions in those games, thereby recognizing them as natural activities and moments of freedom, as long as institutional rules be followed. Parks, playrooms, sports courts and stages are images that represent places for ludic activities.

The other extreme coincides with planning, intervention and control over games by the institution, be it to avoid addiction, be it to reach certain educational goals, such as physical conditioning, motor coordination, or psychological, social and moral capabilities. In this last case, the same spaces can be used for formative and recreative activities, although recreational games will continue to be intercalated with work and be supervised and directed by educators or other professionals.

Finally, play as recreation should be understood as something that surpasses the domain of educational institutions and becomes part of a type of activities that modulate, reinforce and/or carry the traces of a given society. To Huizinga (1980), play not only evokes a regularly verified distension, but also:

> [...] adorns life, amplifies it and is to that extent a necessity both for the individual-as a life function — and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function. (HUIZINGA, 1980, p. 9).

In these cases, ludic activities can be thought of as activities which the adult generally refers to in times of leisure, though the current work scenario is merged to many games that mobilize significant contingencies of people. Therefore, relating play to educational processes can be examined in a more amplified manner.

Spontaneous play

Chateau (1987, p. 126-127) agrees with the initiative of schools that are concerned with the student's interests, yet questions the abusive interpretations often given to those formulas. To Chateau, the principle according to which children, as well as adults, only do well things they enjoy doing (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 127), if not correctly stated, can lead to mistakes. According to the author, there are several types of attractions besides games, e.g., sweets. Nevertheless, the attraction evoked by games is special and superior. In addition, the abusive use of audiovisual resources — e.g., movies — leads to pedagogic

mistakes. This happens because the effort − typical of games − is the pre-requisite to learning, whereas transient images, despite their concrete character, fade rather quickly. Information not profoundly recorded in the memory becomes weak, and the live character of images is not capable of completely replacing other mnemonic resources (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 127).

By following that line of thought, Chateau (1987) believes it is not right to teach Latin by use of a chain of unpleasant tasks, but rather questions if suppressing all effort that revolves this subject would be efficient, or would it be possible to create activities that evoke effort without suppressing the ludic element (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 128).

As noted before, even Chateau (1987), while defending insertion of play in educational institutions, is aware that learning does require some effort. However critical of the excesses related to active methods used in the new schools movement, Chateau (1987) did believe that school should be supported by play, adopting the ludic behavior as a model to shape the scholar behavior (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 133). This was not a full acceptance by the author, given differences between play and labor that must be examined in order to determine to which degree should education be separated from ludic behavior.

In that context, Chateau acknowledges the insufficiency of an education based exclusively on play, which could not thrive over egocentrism, but rather replace individual with group egocentrism, or sociocentrism (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 134). Thus, to permanently transform play in an educational cell means to neglect the remainder of the social organism, whereas labor, on the other hand, recognizes and values other cells, for the obstacles it faces and the changes of its doings (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 134). From these considerations, Chateau states that an education based solely on play tends to isolate humans from life, thereby making them live in a world of illusion (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 135). Education, to prepare oneself for life, must consider employing labor in its activities. Indeed, play would be a substitute, a preparation for labor, since children, while unfitted for labor, resort to playing. This does not mean, however, that the other extreme is accepted, i.e., transforming educational institutions in a place where one makes a living. As asserted by the author, science comes less from dedicated labor than it does from uninterested activities born from play, as is the origin of religious activities (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 135-136).

If educational institutions are to prepare students for life without fully associating their activities with play or labor, what would then be the essential characteristic of school activity per se? For Chateau, it should be halfway between play and labor, e.g., a bridge connecting one to another. In preschool, it should resemble play, whereas in more advanced classes, it should resemble labor.

The previous considerations were all proposed by Chateau to address two excesses seen on educational institutions which could not find the proper measure of play or the bridge connecting play to labor. However, another midpoint deserves attention: the bridge that links the student to the taste for noble distractions at adulthood, due to their cultural potential.

These orientations are of paradigmatic and normative character in general, thus forming the basis to determine educational actions according to singularities in each context inside institutions. This topic, however, has a central problem that cannot be

prevented by such orientations, which relies on the question: to what degree do students really play in educational institutions? Or yet: is the pedagogically conducted game in fact genuine? Brougère (1998) addressed these questions and can help us comprehend how a given characterization of play can face certain obstacles when associated with pedagogic goals set institutionally.

In that subject, Brougère (1998, p. 208) believes that randomness is the main basis of the underlying structure to the term 'play'. Therefore, educational institutions can mitigate the uncertainty of the results from games taught to students through setting a proper environment or stimulation. The search for removing the casualty could actually suppress the ludic character of the activity, however. This leads to another important question: is it possible to find harmony between casual activities – games– and activities with fixed goals set by the institution? For Chateau, labor naturally comes from play, since play sets the ground for labor (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 124).

In that perspective, by imposing an obligation, a common trace can be found between play and labor. When these activities are compared, the quality of such imposition is changed: in the context of labor, the obligation compels one to produce their own means of survival, while in the context of play, it is freely accepted by the players. According to Chateau, the difficulty is easily overcome, whatever its nature, since a ludic obligation is purely formal and can fit to any scenario, including scholar contexts (CHATEAU, 1987, p. 132).

Brougère, on one hand, recognizes the spontaneously accepted rule as a mark of play; one the other hand, regards this mark as merely formal, since play is also marked by a decision, a metacommunication, a frivolity (extenuation of consequences) and an uncertainty as to its results (BROUGÈRE, 1998, p. 194). With this in mind, Brougère tends to use quotations marks with the term play when it regards activities with pedagogic goals set by the institution, therefore indicating the structure of play at the surface, not its essence. If play itself were to result in learning, it would be through methods unrelated to labor, because trusting its application would imply accepting the randomness of its results.

For Chateau (1987), educational work would ideally incorporate the main traces of play, so that learning would follow the student's interest in an enjoyable and substantial manner. However, even in the preschool scenario, play would function as 'nearly play', i.e., educational play. Brougère (1998), on another perspective, was interested in knowing whether play could be related to learning and, if so, how would this learning be specifically characterized.

Considering frivolity as an essential trace of games in general, Brougère (1998) states that games create the opportunity for experiences with minimized consequences, which therefore enable particular types of learning, albeit results might not be controlled or directed by the educator. This is the paradox according to which Brougère believes play cannot be fully trusted, however inevitable it may be. There is no certainty as to the final value of play, yet certain types of essential learnings can actually be benefitted by use of play.

Caillois (1990) believes that play has a tendency of choosing its own difficulties and restricting them to its own context, almost making these difficulties unreal. The player, while surrounded by ideal conditions and finding his own positive or negative solution to them, would experiment the only consequences achievable: satisfaction of

disappointment, equally ideal (CAILLOIS, 1990, p. 18). Thus, the frivolity of play might produce experiences resulting in some learning within restricted conditions devoid of severe consequences, but this learning would be susceptible to mistakes in real life conditions (CAILLOIS, 1990, p. 18).

In contrast, Caillois (1990, p. 15) is aware that psychologists recognize in play a vital role in the child's self-affirmation and the formation of personality. Some games could then function as exercises as well as fun, thereby maintaining a more vigorous, docile and resistant body, a sharper vision, a subtler tact and a more methodic and resourceful spirit (CAILLOIS, 1990, p. 15).

In order to maintain their ludic essence, games should be applied based on the player's initiative. The player determines when to stop, should the game assume an unforeseen direction. Therefore, according to Brougère (1998), it would not be possible to set a precise pedagogic program for games, since the educator aims to dominate the content of play as well as its results. The specific characteristics that make play are thus lost.

With the aforementioned considerations, a tendency of romantic valorization of spontaneous play can be found, where the institutional intervention is significantly limited, or different from the ordinary approach of educative work at best. Depending on the nature of the pedagogic endeavor towards a spontaneous play, play itself could be transformed into educative play, thereby losing the specificity of the learning potential it carries.

Educative play

Educative play is an expression used to refer to a particular conception of the relation between play and education evoking the particular tendency of pedagogization of play, i.e., a conciliation between ludic activity and pedagogic activity. In general, the interest comes from institutional goals of education that can be reached by use of a pedagogically invested play. In his *The Great Didactic*, Comenius states the importance of his own work for students, "who may master the sciences without difficulty, tedium, complaints, or blows, as if in sport and in merriment" (COMENIUS, 1907, p. 19). Yet the true usefulness of Comenius' work is not restricted to students, but to schools, "which, when the method has been established, will be not only preserved continuously in full vigour, but increased without limit" (COMENIUS, 1907, p. 19). Therefore, the father of didactics, in the 17th century, already did not belittle the function of play in education. Moreover, Comenius recognized the possibility and the necessity of play in his ideal school.

On another perspective, the conception of didactics proposed by Comenius (2013) implies associating play with processes that result in its utility. Brougère (1998), however, identified play with something not only unrelated to utility, but also to labor or seriousness. For that reason, Brougère (1998) was resistant to recognize educative play in the bulk of play per se, and his research followed another direction, assuming that play itself could perhaps establish learning or educative situations. One could then question if that use of the term play, when compared to reality, could not betray its original meaning, or does play really carry that utility. Well, if there are in fact educative games that benefit human formation, these games could then be used in this hypothetical context to reach the goals of educational institutions.

Educ. Pesqui., São Paulo, v. 46, e215597, 2020.

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Should educational institutions pursue their objectives through labor and educative games, thereby using play as part of their current institutional program? Or should they establish a rigid barrier between educative labor and educative play, thus enhancing their range of functions and partly including play in the dynamics of these functions? Nevertheless, this question suggests a dichotomy in concrete reality, which is not necessarily made of excluding alternatives. Furthermore, the use of 'educative play' should be cautious, given that specialized literature shows numerous uses for the expression and the context of its use can refer to spontaneous play with pedagogic intervention or play as an educational resource. Nevertheless, the distinctive character of educative play resides on it being planned and followed by educators.

Brougère believes that play will keep its ludic essence only when the unpredictability of its results is guaranteed. Yet, to his own conception of play, this would not be a real 'educative' play. When the educational institution tries to control the direction assumed by play, limiting the players' initiative, true educative play arises in the sense depreciated by Brougère (1998). Kishimoto (2003), however, states that every sort of play − spontaneous or didactic − is educative and its insertion in educational institutions implies revisiting the pedagogic investment, i.e., educators can propose, initiate or stimulate a nearly spontaneous play, as long as players accept it freely, direct it and finish it whenever they please.

Antunes (1998) uses the expression 'pedagogic play' with an explicit interest in distinguishing it from occasional play, which would happen without pedagogic planning or programming. The author does not exclude the dimension of spontaneity of play in the educational scenario, but rather believes that play − when appropriately pedagogic or educative − should be used only when *programming allows it* and only when they provide *efficient aid to reach a goal* inside that programming (ANTUNES, 1998, p. 40). The pedagogic investment over (educative) play can therefore assume a distinct character, depending on how its goals are understood in the educational context.

During moments of leisure planned by the scholar institution, spontaneous play arises without any pedagogic intention. If students in fact learn anything during these activities, the educative quality of play should be used to describe the activities with a clear notion that they assume a much different direction when previously programmed and conducted by the school.

Antunes (1998) proposes that pedagogic interventions over play should provide it with a direction to support the development of kinesthetic-corporal, logic-mathematic, linguistic, spatial, musical, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. The direction should not suppress the implicit enthusiasm of play, however. Therefore, this second meaning of 'educative play' evokes an interesting reflection on the function play can assume in educational institutions. As Chateau (1987) stated previously, it is not about play itself, but 'nearly' play, i.e., educative play.

Inasmuch as educative labor is not labor per se because it should comprise an aspect of play and function as a bridge towards future labor activity, educative play should, in a similar manner, comprise an aspect of labor and function as a bridge to real life. We also dare to say that educative play should be the bridge towards noble activities performed in times of leisure in adulthood. Educative play can act as the *vaccine* against the potential hazards of other games and human activities.

Didactic play

In this topic, didactic play is identified among activities performed in educational institutions as part of school subjects with ludic background. This is a tendency not only in the practical scenario, but also in literature. Thus, subjects from the curricular program can be developed as didactic play or educative labor.

Prensky (2012) acknowledges three benefits from didactic play based on digital games: [1] learning would be enticing, positively reaching out to those who do not like the subject in hand when outside of ludic contexts; [2] interaction would be supported by various means; [3] the relationship between play and learning would be variable, with solutions to problems based on context. Based on the theory by Robert Ahlers and Rosemary Garry, Prensky (2012) states that learning through digital games works due to four factors: [1] opportunities for success from the goals and rules set for the game lead to a feeling of purpose; [2] the appeal of curiosity that arises from surprise, complexity, mystery and humor leads to fascination; [3] the simulated danger stimulates the student; and [4] the social reinforcement, real or simulated, produces a feeling of competence (PRENSKY, 2012, p. 208-210).

As discussed previously, Chateau (1987) believes that play implies a purely formal obligation, hence school content could be made into the form of play, provided its difficulties be recognized. In that context, educative play could produce some capabilities of interest by the educational institution and even school content could be shaped by play. Students would thus overcome their own difficulties freely and with pleasure, thereby making learning more effective.

Chateau's perspective shows an advantage of educative play, which would not only provide learning through a ludic method, but also a bridge to labor, since play would function as nearly play, not merely fun per se. The difference between didactic games and educative labor would then reside on the fact that games provide an atmosphere of isolation from daily activities, whereas labor would connect students to the real world. Neither would be exclusively play or labor, but something else, activities carrying the specific mark of educational institutions, i.e., organizations that prepare humans to live autonomously.

However, with didactic play, the results of the experience must match curricular goals related to the level of the scholar content, which creates a significant distance between didactic play and spontaneous, random play. A contradiction regarding the educational value of play thus arises. Educative labor cannot be fully replaced with didactic play, since disguising scholar content with games could mask the very intent of teaching. Educators could lose the chance to clarify the didactic goals and motivate students to reach them intentionally.

Educative labor must not be suppressed by curricular activities, because this could result in the other undesirable consequence stated by Chateau (1987): the inability to overcome egocentrism or sociocentrism due to the evasive circumscribed property of play. Even Prensky (2012) recognizes the advantage of offering students a possibility of fulfilling curricular demands through means unrelated to play, since the student not always desires to play.

Gamification

Gamification is another tendency seen on contemporary literature and educational institutions or other organizations. Gamification is defined as an attempt to merge the mechanics, dynamics and components of games with non-ludic activities, thereby improving the interest of students in commercial, productive and/or learning contexts. The integration between elements of play and non-ludic activities is made possible with the support of digital technologies of information and communication. An interesting aspect of this application of play is the focus on activities that may be conceptually recognized as distinct, but are actually merged in the real world.

The dynamics of games comprises elements such as: [1] narrative; [2] progression (steps); [3] restrictions (limitations to induce creativity), [4] interactivity (competitive, collaborative, social etc.); and [5] emotions (tension, joy, rage, empathy etc.). The mechanics of games comprises: competition; [2] cooperation; [3] challenge; [4] turns; [5] transactions; [6] randomness and [7] feedback. Finally, the components of games are the gears that make the mechanics possible, for instance: [1] medals; [2] avatars; [3] interchangeable items; [4] collections; [5] rankings; [6] teams; [7] levels etc. According to Schlemmer and Lopes (2016), the process of gamification is about the way of thinking, the style and strategies of games and the elements in their design, such as mechanics and dynamics (M&D), inside non-ludic contexts (SCHLEMMER; LOPES, 2016, p. 187).

In other words, the key to gamification is to merge non-ludic activities to convenient arrangements with efficient dynamics, mechanics and components of games, thus improving the performance of students in reaching institutional goals. Schlemmer and Lopes (2016) partly consider gamification efficient because newer generations are very familiarized with games and therefore respond positively to the narrative, feedback, rewards, conflicts, cooperation, competition, goals, rules, levels, trials, fun, interaction and interactivity (SCHLEMER; LOPES, 2016, p. 187).

With regard to gamification of educational processes, Schlemer and Lopes believe that elements from games should be used as means to solve problems and draw students to the learning process (SCHLEMER; LOPES, 2016, p. 187), thereby resignifying and redesigning the curricular program or pedagogic interventions. The authors also believe that learning based on digital games and gamification is potentiated by mobile wireless devices, social media, ubiquitous web, global positioning systems, mixed reality and augmented reality (SCHLEMER; LOPES, 2016, p. 190-191). From an educational standpoint, these resources connect learning to multimodality, blended learning and ubiquity.

As previously noted, the concept of gamification approaches the category of didactic play. In both cases, play functions as a means to an end, a resource to help educational institutions fulfill their mission, i.e., prepare students for life through the knowledge of the contents of their curriculum. The difference seems to be that, while the tendency favoring didactic games seeks to adapt content to practices of games that draw the students' interest, the perspective of gamification comprises the possibility of merging elements of play with processes unrelated to it, without converting them to games. Both

perspectives are interested in reaching the same goal, but gamification seems to lead players towards a goal that is not random.

Didactic play and gamification seem to be part of the same interpretation of the educational function given to play. A much more significant difference, however, is that gamification is related to a particular type of play, i.e., games, whereas didactic play proposes something beyond that particular domain. Nevertheless, the potential to mask pedagogic labor with games can be dangerous, as previously discussed. The students must be aware of the effort required by the learning process, and their relationship with educators and other members of the educational institution should be transparent.

Conclusion

There is a significant contrast among the conceptions of play and its relation to education. To synthetize this study, the contrast can be seen on the following box:

Box 1 – Contrasting conceptions of play and its relation to education

Conceptions	Tendencies	Relation to education	Main aspects	Predominant contexts
Exclusion of play	Secondization and deterioration	Aversive, excludent	Play leads to addiction	Educational contexts in general
Play as recreation	Secondization	Restorative, related to social values	Play is leisure	Various
Spontaneous play	Romantization	Intrinsic, different from formal processes of education	Play as an end, a voluntary action with random outcome	Free spaces and proper conditions
Educative play	Specific pedagogization	Intrinsic, but mediated by a specific intervention	Play as a means to human formation	Educational institutions
Didactic play	Didactization	Play shapes the scholar content	Play as a resource to learn curricular content	Educational institutions and others
Gamification	Hybridization	Accepts elements of games in scholar activities	Play as an attraction to the learning process	Institutions in general

Source: the authors.

The overview provided by Box 1 does not show details of significant nuances inside each conception, which create subtle connections and proximities among categories. Furthermore, the analysis of these categories of relationships between play and education reveals a state of tension in two senses: first, it evidences anomalies in the value given to the formative role and function of play; second, while in some cases experience demonstrates that these conceptions do not exclude one another, in other cases it reveals conflict among them.

More importantly, the analysis allows us to formulate a hypothesis to explain the reasons of the contrast seen among conceptions and to provide theoretical solutions and techniques to address the issue. The hypothesis should be assessed first by studying human ludicity, with special regard to the contributions of Schiller (2017), Huizinga (2008) and

Caillois (1990). There is much to be done in this direction, which demands significant collective effort. The objective of this study was to formulate and appreciate a bulk of conceptions of the relation between play and education that arise from speeches and practices by providing a systematic view of the current situation. These results warrant further research on the subject.

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