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TEACHING THROUGH RHYMES AND STORIES

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Abstract: This article presents a didactic strategy that is currently the subject of the author's doctoral thesis research, in the doctoral program in equity and educational innovation at ``Universidad de La Coruña``, Spain; and that has been applied for more than fifteen years, by the same teacher, who, committed to facilitating and motivating the learning of her students, one day decided to turn the disciplinary themes into rhymes and stories. The pedagogical strategy is called "learning through rhymes and stories" and provides a new educational vision, which favors creativity, meaningful learning and interdisciplinarity; facilitating the processes of assimilation and accommodation of knowledge and therefore the improvement of academic performance in a classroom environment according to their age. From a holistic perspective, the results obtained after the application of the didactic strategy over the years have been favorable in terms of academic performance, motivation, improvement of interpersonal relationships and self-esteem. Therefore, the main objective of the doctoral thesis is to analyze the influence that the application of the didactic strategy has had since its inception, on the academic performance, motivation and coexistence in the classroom of the students involved, and to compare it with the results. of the application of the same, in a group of elementary students during an academic period. For this, a mixed methodology will be followed and the results will be the subject of a forthcoming publication.

Keywords: Rhyme, story, motivation, academic performance, learning.

Two questions have always bothered me: how to make students happy while they learn and how to awaken their interest in the knowledge taught at school. After many years of experience in the classroom, with students of all levels, from kindergarten to high school,

I could safely say that if a filmmaker needed a perfect shot with bored faces and another with happy faces, the I could get two of them in a school classroom.

The first, in the middle of a traditional class, especially in the last hours of the day, and the second, after the teacher informs the students that for some reason they will not have classes for one or more days.

Researchers such as Wilhelm Wundt, María Montessori, and Jean Piaget have talked about the relationship between feeling, emotion, and will. Several investigations in the field of neuropsychology and medicine have shown that emotion is linked to the acts of learning and remembering. And what better than the magic and emotion that stories and rhymes generate in children to awaken their interest in learning. These open up a range of possibilities to approach knowledge, regardless of their personal characteristics.

"There is no standard set of attributes that you have to possess to be considered smart in a given field." (Armstrong, 2000, p. 34)

In this sense, parents and teachers have hard and extensive work. From the earliest years, creativity, motivation and self-esteem play a very important role in development and especially in learning processes. Being very important that, both at home and at school, the child's abilities are discovered, their strongest interests and from this perception, as a base point, strategies and methodologies are developed to enhance less dominant abilities, creating harmonious learning climates, where motivation and creativity prevail and the self-esteem of each person is strengthened.

The pedagogical strategy has been developing and transforming in the five primary grades for more than fifteen years. It was born as an alternative to motivate curiosity and interest in disciplinary topics in the classroom. The adaptation of these, to stories and rhymes, favors interdisciplinarity and

gives meaning in context from the classroom. Directly teaching a concept to a group of primary school children as part of a specific area curricular planning does not generate an impact or awaken curiosity and the desire to understand and appropriate it in children's consciousness; however, if the same concept is presented through a story or a rhyme that involves a context and shows applicability and relationship with knowledge from other disciplines; the interest and disposition of the child, is easily captured. Let's imagine an example of this: in a third grade class, the teacher intends to teach the classes of sets and their operations. He carries out the pertinent induction and launches into mentioning specialized terms that are totally unknown to the students. Surely, what will happen will be that very soon the children lose their attention and the teacher, determined to move the class forward, asks them to please pay attention to him, "because this is a very important issue." Likewise, now let's imagine that the teacher begins his class by telling them the following story in verse:

One resplendent morning the groups met,
the universal patient, listened to what the others said. First the finite spoke, then the unitary did, the infinite took the floor, and the void could no longer silence him. That is why he was left without elements and heartbroken he began to cry, but he remembered that sets, operations could form. He first thought of the union to solve his problem, but the hateful intersection exacerbated his dilemma. A good start, he found the complement, since he did not have elements, he was missing one hundred percent. The repellent difference, he looked at him and he kept thinking about what made her different, to keep chicaning. (CAMACHO, 2011, pág. 71)

Later, he asks them to stage the story, play a little and have fun... What will happen? What will be the attitude of the students?... The didactic strategy promotes a motivating,

inclusive and interdisciplinary methodology. It seeks to generate curiosity and interest in learning in the student through the interconnection of concepts immersed in stories and rhymes. Therefore, this didactic strategy, in addition to bringing infants closer to disciplinary concepts in a contextualized way, opens the doors to socialization, research and is a breeding ground for the development of creativity and imagination.

According to (Lázaro Navacerrada and Mateos Sánchez, 2018; Vásquez Rodríguez, 2010). When talking about teaching methods, these can vary according to the judgment of the teachers; since sometimes it is necessary to include methodologies that are not conventional, with a view to seeking a better understanding of the students. The need to find a pedagogical strategy to teach basic concepts of mathematics to a second grade girl was precisely the reason that started this methodology. The little girl, like many children her age, had a special taste for nursery rhymes and songs, which she memorized easily; however, when it came to mathematical operations and concepts, she presented apathy and difficulty. Converting mathematical concepts and procedures into rhymes was the strategy that, at the time, not only allowed this little girl to find a window open to learning mathematics, but also all the students in the grade found a common element of encounter, which enlivened their desire to learn, to compete and to relate. That was how it was born and over the years, it was transformed and became the classroom work methodology of a teacher at the Normal Superior School of Charalá Santander, whose students were nicknamed "the children of rhyme".

Teaching through rhymes and stories has been applied in the areas of Spanish Language, Natural Sciences and environmental education, Social Sciences and mathematics;

but, it has also been an effective strategy for introducing values and rules of coexistence in the classroom. Every time the students became familiar with the rhymes and stories, which were previously written by their teacher, they became interested in the contents and wanted to go deeper. It was no longer the teacher fighting for the students to learn, but rather them asking questions, asking for explanations, more information, proposing and participating with pleasure in true laboratories in search of learning. The strategy was also applied to a group of students with special educational needs from the Escuela Normal Superior de Charalá, Santander, Colombia, in 2012, receiving an award as the best significant experience in educational inclusion from the Departmental Education Secretariat and the Fundación Neuroharte Learning Centers. Later, as a prize, the teacher was sent to San José, Costa Rica, to share it with other educational institutions.

The curricular standards and guidelines establish the reference point of what students are capable of knowing and knowing how to do in each of the areas and levels; however, it is the responsibility of teachers to seek effective strategies to successfully achieve this achievement, based on their experience and the different theoretical foundations of psychologists and pedagogues that have been relevant in education. "Having said this, adaptation can then be defined as a balance between assimilation and accommodation, which is like saying a balance of exchanges between the subject and objects." (PIAGET, 1970, p. 6)

The exercise of listening to or reading a text, with the musicality offered by the rhyme and the magic of the story, allows the child to acquire the ideas and knowledge immersed in them, and although he cannot accommodate and assimilate them immediately because he needs other knowledge and experiences that

allow him to understand it will be an important element that will positively predispose him and encourage him in his search and later lead him to the accommodation that becomes learning.

The approach to scientific and social concepts through rhymes, in addition to being a motivating technique, allows the stimulation of memory, an aspect of great importance in the life of the human being. In the 19th century, three German physiologists, Emil Du Bois-Reymond, Johannes Muller, and Herman Von Helmholtz, laid the foundations of electrophysiology by discovering that the electrical activity of one nerve cell affects the electrical activity of another cell in predictable ways. Sir Charles Scott Sherrington, in his book "The Brain and its Mechanisms" (1933), explains that a person whose brain is permanently stimulated with activities that require memorization processes develops more connections than another who has not received these stimuli. Knowledge creates these connections and takes up space. It makes the volume of the brain grow and therefore improves its agility in learning processes.

Pedagogical rhymes and stories not only become a motivating element for children in the search for knowledge, but also exercise memory, prediction and organization of thought, increase vocabulary, develop phonetic awareness, improve reading skills, -writer and enhance self-esteem. Of course, these elements are essential in any teaching-learning process. In this sense, how not to evoke the contribution that Howard Gardner has bequeathed to us from his research through multiple intelligences. These rhymes and stories, deep down, are a fabric that confirms respect for the talents of children. Linking diverse contents with music and literature becomes the best opportunity to open paths of exploration, motivation and learning, as permanent processes.

Let's see, then, how the proposal is structured when applying it:

For its development in the classroom, the strategy is organized into four phases or moments.

First phase: includes familiarization with the subject and specialized terms, to create affective bonds and generate questions that motivate students to search and interest in the construction of knowledge. Taking into account that each child presents a different cognitive development, either due to the action of the environment or biological conditions, this strategy opens the opportunity to make use of the senses, thus favoring learning styles.

In this phase, the rhymes and/or the story are presented to the children. They are read and reconstructed orally; unknown terms are clarified and there is a space for play and interaction. Small contests to memorize the verses and stories are held, performances and other activities that may arise and favor the development of creativity, socialization and happiness are carried out.

Second stage: seeks an approach to disciplinary content immersed in the story and rhymes and the emergence of problematizing questions. For this, an inquiry is made on the subject in texts and other media that the teacher has previously selected. The students raise questions both to their peers in the work groups, and to the teacher. Some are resolved immediately, and others whose answers require more information are recorded in the notebook, to be resolved in the next phase.

Third phase: At this time, the appropriation and understanding of the concepts is sought, questions are cleared through group discussions and explanations by the teacher, small investigations and field experiences are carried out. In this activity, contact is made with real objects and situations, as the case may be, and information is also sought in other sources that the teacher and the students themselves identify.

Fourth phase: This moment allows the teacher and the student to evaluate the level of competence reached, in a group and individual way. Here the group construction of concepts is carried out (it is not the teacher who dictates what they must record in their notebooks, it is the students themselves in a group exercise, which allows, in addition to internalizing the concepts, to start writing and synthesis processes). Concept maps are organized, materials such as posters, posters and simple presentations are made; supported by art and computing, for subsequent exhibitions that reaffirm their knowledge, boost their self-confidence, enrich the group and encourage collaborative learning. In the same way, the opportunity is provided to create a happy environment in which all children, regardless of their differences, learn and feel part of the group.

Finally, it is important to highlight that being an educator is a sublime task that commits to the path to excellence, and is a willingness to change, day after day, interacting in a world that is advancing and transforming by leaps and bounds.

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