

# ROLE PLAYING, PERSONAL FULFILLMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT: OVERCOMING SOCIAL VULNERABILITY AND DEVELOPING SPONTANEITY

ROLE PLAYING, DESENVOLVIMENTO PESSOAL E AUTOCONCEITO: SUPERANDO A VULNERABILIDADE SOCIAL E DESENVOLVENDO A ESPONTANEIDADE

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**Resumo:** O presente trabalho é direcionado ao contexto latino e compreende a teoria psicodramática apresentada por Jacob Levy Moreno como uma alternativa pedagógica no desenvolvimento de um autoconceito mais sólido e positivo, bem como de bem-estar e auto-estima, a qual pode auxiliar na superação da vulnerabilidade social e na melhoria de um manejo mais saudável dos relacionamentos. A educação relacionada à vida cotidiana torna-se capaz de influenciar positivamente contextos e rotinas, utilizando a liberdade pessoal e institucional como dispositivos para converter normas que regem o pensamento educacional latino. As indicações são de que a intervenção por meio do role-playing é efetiva no desenvolvimento da espontaneidade e fornecimento de novos espaços de reflexão. O role-playing faz uso de técnicas, experiências e jogos psicodramáticos, contribuindo na produção e construção de espontaneidades capazes de assegurar novos espaços, comportamentos e maior realização pessoal, gerenciando a própria existência e resultando em melhores níveis de saúde e bem-estar. O contexto de crianças e adolescentes deve ser de um ambiente que discuta a autoestima como proposta do projeto de política pedagógica, que gere valores de gentileza e princípios de empatia e solidariedade, tornando a escola um local de humanização e construção de consciência, não apenas em seus aspectos cognitivos, mas também éticos, morais e afetivos. Quando os educadores criam vínculos afetivos com os alunos, proporcionando espaços de narrativa e iniciativa, emerge um suporte propício para melhor aprendizado e satisfação a ambos, aumentando o repertório comportamental e afetivo, a espontaneidade e tornando o viver num ambiente escolar algo mais reforçador.

**Palavras-chave:** Autonomia. Espontaneidade. Interpretação de papéis. Psicodrama. Vulnerabilidade.



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**Abstract:** This work is directed to the Latin context and comprehend the psychodramatic theory presented by Jacob Levy Moreno as a pedagogic alternative in the development of a more solid and positive self-concept, as well as one of well-being and self-esteem, providing aids in overcoming social vulnerability and in the improvement of a healthier handling of relationships. Education related to everyday life becomes capable of influencing positively contexts and routines, using the personal and institutional freedom as devices to convert regulations ruling the Latin educational thinking. The indications are that the intervention through role-playing is effective in developing spontaneity and providing new spaces of reflection. Role-playing makes use of techniques, experiences and psychodramatic games, contributing in the production and construction of a spontaneity able to assure new spaces, behaviors and greater personal fulfillment, managing our own existence and resulting in better levels of health and well-being. The context of children and teenagers must be of an environment that discusses the self-esteem as a proposal of the pedagogic policy project, that generates values of kindness and principles of empathy and solidarity, making the school a “locus” of humanization and construction of consciousness, not only in its cognitive aspects, but also its ethic, moral and affective ones. When educators create affective bonds with the students, providing spaces of narrative and initiative, emerges a support propitious to better learning and satisfaction to both, increasing the behavioral and affective repertoire, spontaneity and making the living in a school environment more reinforcing.

**Palavras-chave:** Autonomy. Psychodrama. Role-playing. Spontaneity. Vulnerability.

## 1 Introduction

The present work is directed, specifically, to the Latin context and comprehend the psychodramatic theory presented by Jacob Levy Moreno as a pedagogic alternative in the development of a more solid and positive self-concept, utilizing a work focused on increasing the well-being and self-esteem, characterized by greater dignity, honor, dedication to self, self-care, dedication to social resolutions, joy and good humor, helping in the overcoming of social vulnerability and in a healthier handling of relationships.

The importance of this material to the Latin American context is that the relationship between education and social vulnerability is very salient in the social

dynamics. Jacob Levy Moreno (1889-1974), was a physician, social psychologist, Romanian-Jewish philosopher and playwright, creator of psychodrama and pioneers of group therapy, with great access in this area (MARINEAU, 1992). His psychodramatic theory is the teaching method of dramatization, serving as a therapy where tasks are worked out, such as the work group, and the accomplishment of a self-help task and the surrounding world, representing the self, the other, and the relationships (BELL, 1970).

The Role-Playing is a scientific methodology of investigation and intervention of the interpersonal relationships that considers the exercise of spontaneity and creativity, the learning of roles and the development of transformative and facilitating relationships (MORENO, 2003). Moreno thinks the man as the protagonist of his own existence, as a being capable of performing one's existential project and determining one's own trajectory (MORENO, 2003). The psychodramatic techniques can be considered the facilitator of spontaneity, comprehended as a "thermometer" of personal fulfillment and self-concept, assuming that a spontaneous organism presents more flexibility, assumption of new roles, preservation of the self in front of the social demands and an attitude of confrontation in front of community impositions to the self in the objecting relationships, mainly during the teenage years (MORENO, 2003). In fact, the psychodramatic techniques promote playful and creative ways of handling daily conflicts, greater relaxation and freedom for discovering alternative ways of action facing daily events. By means of collective construction of personae and the creation of new mental representations, as well as the resolution of tensions, conflicts and anxieties coming from dysfunctional roles and maybe from roles still unknown by the subjects (MORENO, 2003), new response patterns start to emerge, different from those customary and programmed ones. For example, the technique of the "Training of Roles" allows the emerging and development of spontaneity, making use of a tool which works in two distinct phases. The first one is the social perception and self-knowledge, of which consequence is the beginning of an observation and evaluation of internal values, the elaboration of one's own fears and the breaking of taboos and traumatic situations, like deaths of close people, disabling illnesses, intense emotional tensions, divorces, and others.

The second phase deals with information about the environment, the possibilities and expectations of reality, which intercede aspirations and expectations about the self placed in front of them. In order to have greater success and effectiveness in the pedagogic and institutional productions aiming the development of spontaneity by means of role-playing techniques, the work must be divided in four phases, according to Camargo (2006), as it follows below:

- Group structuring phase: It consists in the initial presentation and the aggregation, in such a way as to structure a group, genuinely, and pave the way for the future of the work.

- Needs and identities assessment phase: Investigation of the desires, of the latent contents, of the expectations, of the absences, of the personal questioning and of those questionings formed based on the intersection of individuals as a group.

- Role-training phase: It is the role-playing, strictly speaking; where the elaborations, representations, symbologies and subjectivities are worked with.

- Information and elaborations phase: Only possible after the earlier ones are fully accomplished. This phase is about the perception of the surrounding information, including the possibilities and expectations of reality, which intercede aspirations and expectations about the subject placed in front of the explicit world.

The practice and application of psychodrama has excellent results in distinct contexts, being therapeutically beneficial. The change of attitude, increased self-esteem and self-concept, and overcoming traumas are aspects highlighted by the scientific literature on psychodrama. (BLATNER, 1996, 1997, 2007; BARKHAM E MARGISON, 2007; COSTA, ANTONIO, SOARES E MORENO, 2006; CRAWFORD, 1989; DAYTON, 2005; HAMAMCI, 2006).

## **2 The problem**

Social vulnerability is an indicator of social inequality and the fragilities of the individual, as well as their low capacity to cope with health problems (CARMO e GUIZARDI, 2018). In this way, I intend to investigate which institutional constructs are responsible for the precariousness of education in the Latin contexts, making perpetuate a high vulnerability rate in Latin contexts.

The precariousness of education and the focus on punishment as a didactic technique in basic education makes the environment aversive to students and leaves parents without active participation in the teaching-learning process and the social insertion of children. Thus, the system ends up perpetuating wrong practices and contexts of social vulnerability, by hindering the autonomy and development of spontaneity.

### **3 The role-playing, psychodrama and social roles**

Now, to continue, it is necessary to understand what social roles are. In order to achieve that, one can seek some concepts of theoreticians that have definitions for “social roles”. In order to achieve that, one can seek some concepts of theoreticians that have definitions for “social roles”. Beginning by the concept given by Janet (1936), social role is a proper answer that we inevitably aim to fulfill, sometimes in a seemingly natural way, in order to answer to expected or demanded roles. According to Janet (1936), we are educated intensively and constantly to preserve the submissive character regarding the social coercion and the roles in which we are conditioned. These social roles work in a paradoxically dichotomous and symbiotic way, for they perform experimentations of putting oneself in somebody else’s shoes, assuming some kind of fantastic self, also mimicking actions and reactions, fitting oneself in the social roles, in the functions of answering to the demands and to the objecting interrelationships. Thus, one constructs and elaborates one’s self as one limits one self in this process.

Bakhtin (1997) defends that the social roles assumed are like non-real selves, for they serve as a tool to experiment somebody else’s experiences through one’s own self, in some kind of representative internal dynamic and/or dialogue between real and ideal. As for Moreno (2003), the social roles are ways of acting and they manifest themselves in actions, that is, they can be observed; they are like a configuration assumed by the individual in a certain moment to react to a specific situation, in which exist other parties.

Thus, the role-playing can be prior to the emerging of the self, as it also works in the formation and re-elaboration of the actual self. The roles don’t emerge from the self; according to Moreno (2003), it is the self that emerges from the roles.

### **4 Spontaneity and extroversion as effect of role-playing practice**

In the work of Moreno (2003), the concept of spontaneity carries a meaning which is different from that held by the common sense and linguistics, describing people whose control over their own attitudes and actions is diminished. The family raising is regarded as the main factor of this constitution of spontaneity. According to Moreno (2003), spontaneity is a state of adjustment of the subject and personal readiness that ends generating and provoking more natural and faster answers and actions when they are requested to the organism; it is the emergency of the non-convenient. Spontaneity training and practice make

it possible to the subject to overcome situations through changing one's own behavior, habits and structures, starting to assume new responsibilities.

Therefore, an environment capable of instigating spontaneity and healthy extroversion is vital, firstly working on the individuals self-esteem and self-concept, and also as a device with potential to help in the anxiogenic management of the subjects over their sufferings and insecurities.

The techniques expose structured roles in the patients own desires; and the solid structure of the psychodramatic techniques set presents itself as capable of keeping the self aggregate in front of the practice of new roles or new social confronts, which end up providing an environment of reduced tension and of internal relaxation. The tension which always influenced the choices starts to occupy a smaller space in this new dynamics.

## **5 The project of the being-in-the-world and the overcoming of vulnerability**

The family, being the first set to which the children are exposed, provide certain apprenticeship models that influence in the identity formation in a social, historic and cultural context (MORENO, 2003). It works as an identity matrix in which the child develops itself and incorporates the cultural and group characteristics and heritages.

When the students faces crises in a familiar context where the parents relive conflicts of their own teenage years projecting it over the children, (SANTOS, 2005), a pattern of sickness is perpetuated. The family history is the zero point in the constitution of self-concept and comprehension of personal and interpersonal aptitudes. For example, the choices are influenced by the family models, which act over their judgment of values, self-image and character (LUCCHIARI, 1997). It is necessary a sense of meaning in the life of a teenager, however, when the past of the parents extends over the dreams of the children, it ends up being harmful.

Many factors influence in the choices and decisions in the life of a group member, specially teenagers, from their own personalities to the beliefs and philosophies of life, views on politics, family economy, love relationships, among others. Literature points family as one of the principal factors to help or hamper in moments of dilemmas and decisions, and these choices end up being key factors in the transformation of the family itself (SANTOS, 2005). To Pichon-Rivière (1988), we must comprehend that there will always be internalized figures present in the relationships, that is, in each and every bond there is a corporal sensory presence, but there is a third character that is always interfering in every human relation. That's why it is important to develop a solid self-concept ruled by

a manager tripod, composed by subject, family and school. Thus, the basis needed to a healthy development and education are achieved, as well as the structuring of a sufficient and well-elaborated self.

## **6 The aid of role-playing in the new personal constructs**

In 1970, the author Bell (p.189) already discussed the practical applications of psychodrama as having the potential to teach and help in the development of social skills. That, when brought to a Latin context of education and social vulnerability, becomes something indispensable. In 1976, Erik Erikson defended that the main developmental obstacle faced by teenagers is the establishment of an identity, a solid and coherent notion as to who they are and where they are going to. This process of identity formation involves important decisions to be made, from love and friendship relationships to religious, moral and political values and career. To Moreno (2003), the teenagers must carry a process of personal independence. The coexistence, the action and experience of this first phase demonstrate the dynamics among the child and the people and things surrounding he or she. Moreno calls it, in his theory, the “identity matrix” (2003), that which enables the basis of the personal emotional development.

The family, when notices its real influence value over its children, tends to place a stronger focus to the child at school and increase the motivation for he or she to study and fight for autonomy. The union among parents and teachers in the children learning process pays positive results, both cognitively and sentimentally, and also creates new meanings to everyday situations, reducing the stigmatization.

## **7 Final considerations**

There is an institutional construct responsible for the education precariousness in the Latin contexts. When the education system is unilateral and focused on punishment, that is, without the active participation of the parents over the teaching-learning process and social insertion of the children, this system ends up perpetuating wrong practices and social vulnerability contexts, hampering the autonomy, the development of spontaneity and valuing the automation and training, instead of reason and critical questioning.

In a certain sense, some environments still serve as an “elixir” whose purpose is the healing of rebelliousness and art, generating beings that only palpate the world without, however, perceiving it. The only relation stimulated to the students is that of competition, where the cognitive surroundings starts to be filled by a bluntness of reason and projects of life.

Education must be related to the everyday lives, touching contexts and routines, and use them as devices to freedom. The current educational model must be forgotten, and in its place a model without confinements must be adopted, one whose borders are heretical and whose essence participates in the everyday lives, converting these regulations that rule the Latin educational thinking. Children and teenagers don't belong to a world to be measured by it. It is necessary a practicality that slough caricatures off and, most of all, technical and methodological works that develop self-esteem, the self-concept and the spontaneity by means of opportunities that allow role-playing works and conditions.

The appointments indicate that the intervention through role-playing is effective to reach its goals of developing spontaneity and propitiating to the subjects a space of reflection, utilizing techniques, experiences and psychodramatic games, contributing in the production and construction of a spontaneity capable of guaranteeing new spaces, behaviors and greater self-fulfillment, providing better levels of health and well-being.

The context of children and teenagers must be of an environment that discusses the self-esteem as a proposal of the pedagogic policy project, that generates values of kindness and principles of empathy and solidarity, making the school a "locus" of humanization and construction of consciousness, not only in its cognitive aspects, but also its ethic, moral and affective ones. When educators create affective bonds with the students, providing spaces of narrative and initiative, emerges a support propitious to better learning and satisfaction to both, increasing the behavioral and affective repertoire, spontaneity and making the living in a school environment more reinforcing. The proposed alternative to instigate such practices in contexts, especially Latin ones, serves the purpose of trying to create contexts less anxiogenic and that promote better self-concept, spontaneity and well-being in the students, giving instruments to support and overcome spaces of social vulnerability.

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