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LITERATURE AND CITIZENSHIP

LITERATURA E CIDADANIA

LITERATURA Y CIUDADANÍA

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Abstract: The "Literature and Citizenship" project proposes the realization of meetings in which literary works are discussed among adolescents, high school students, aiming at the refinement of human and civic education. In this context, the inclusion of work with Hispanic culture also occupies a prominent role, considering the richness of reflections resulting from the observation/study of other cultures and languages. Guided, the scholarship holders research, study and analyze previously chosen works and, then, organize and mediate face-to-face meetings open to the community, with the objective of proposing interaction and exchange of knowledge between the internal and external public of IFPR-Campus Telêmaco Borba. Reading actions, both in foreign and native languages, interpretation, immersion in diverse cultures and discussion culminate in a human education, based on the inference of facts and refinement of senses and sensibilities, which ends up reflecting in the recognition and civic action. The objective is to provide this education through literature and contact with Hispanic culture, promoting reading and discussion workshops of literary texts, which encourage reading and discuss themes of the reality experienced by the participants, mediated by the scholarship holders. As a result, a greater integration between the IFPR Campus and the local community is expected, considering that this approximation of what is produced within the institution with the community gives the project its extension character.

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Furthermore, it is expected that the public encompassed in the project will develop their critical and civic vein, collaborating in their action and understanding of the world.

Keywords: Reading, Culture, Spanish, Portuguese.

Resumo: O projeto "Literatura e cidadania" propõe a realização de encontros em que se discutam obras literárias entre adolescentes, estudantes do Ensino Médio, visando a apuração da formação humana e cidadã. Nesse contexto, a inserção do trabalho com a cultura hispânica também ocupa papel de destaque, considerando a riqueza de reflexões consequentes da observação/estudo acerca de outras culturas e línguas. Orientados, os bolsistas pesquisam, estudam e analisam previamente obras escolhidas e, depois, organizam e mediam encontros presenciais abertos à comunidade, com o objetivo de propor a interação e troca de saberes entre o público interno e externo ao IFPR- Campus Telêmaco Borba. Ações de leitura, tanto em língua estrangeira quanto materna, interpretação, imersão em culturas diversas e discussão culminam em uma formação humana, calcada na inferência dos fatos e apuramento dos sentidos e sensibilidades, o que acaba refletindo no reconhecimento e atuação cidadã. O objetivo é propiciar essa formação por meio da literatura e do contato com a cultura hispânica, promovendo oficinas de leitura e discussão de textos literários, que incentivam a leitura e discutem temas da realidade vivida pelos participantes, mediadas pelos bolsistas. Como resultado, espera-se uma maior integração entre o Campus do IFPR e a comunidade local, haja vista que essa aproximação do que é produzido no âmbito da instituição com a comunidade é que dá o caráter extensionista ao projeto. Além disso, espera-se que o público abarcado no projeto desenvolva seu veio crítico e cidadão, colaborando na sua atuação e compreensão de mundo.

Palavras-chave: Leitura, Cultura, Espanhol, Português.

Resumen: El proyecto "Literatura y ciudadanía" propone la realización de debates de obras literarias entre jóvenes de la Enseñanza Media, desarrollando la formación humana y ciudadana. En este contexto, la inserción del trabajo con la cultura hispánica también gana importancia, considerando la riqueza de reflexiones que resultan de la observación de otras culturas y lenguas. Con orientación, los estudiantes becarios investigan, estudian y analizan previamente obras seleccionadas y, luego, organizan y median encuentros

presenciales abiertos a la comunidad, proponiendo interacción e intercambio de conocimientos entre el público interno y externo al IFPR - Campus Telêmaco Borba. Actividades de lectura en lengua extranjera y materna, interpretación, inmersión en diferentes culturas y el debate resultan en una formación humana, basada en la inferencia de los hechos y refinamiento de los sentidos y sensibilidades, lo que refleja en el reconocimiento y práctica de la ciudadanía. El objetivo es impulsar esta formación a través de la literatura y del contacto con la cultura hispánica, promoviendo talleres de lectura y discusión de textos literarios, que incentiven la lectura y discutan temas del contexto de los participantes, mediados por los estudiantes becarios. Como desenlace, se espera una mayor integración entre el Campus IFPR y comunidad local, considerando que el acercamiento entre lo que se produce dentro de la institución y la comunidad es lo que le da al proyecto su carácter de extensión. Además, se espera que el público participante en el proyecto desarrolle su vena crítica y ciudadana, colaborando en su actuación y comprensión de mundo.

Palabras clave: Lectura, Cultura, Español, Portugués.

INTRODUCTION

The “Literature and Citizenship” outreach project was created with the main objective of providing interaction and knowledge exchange between the internal and external public of the Instituto Federal do Paraná (IFPR) – Telêmaco Borba Campus and contributing knowledge about literature with regard to preparing the community for higher education selection processes. Since 2017, workshops have been held, mediated by high school students integrated with technical education, on works that would be addressed in these processes at universities in the region. However, this objective soon went beyond the community’s receptiveness to the project and the students’ acceptance of the topic. Especially because we have always understood that literature does not “need” to have an end in order to be studied.

Thus, after having addressed works of literature in general in state schools in 2018 – not only those required for university entrance exams – the project took on the proposal in 2019 to give greater emphasis to the importance of Hispanic culture in our reality and even for human development, considering the benefits arising from contact with and knowledge of habits and languages other than those of the mother tongue. The

idea for the change came about after the participation of the campus's Spanish language teacher in one of the workshops held and due to the reception and interest shown by the students.

The purpose of presenting the stages and experiences arising from this project is to propose and disseminate the reflections and challenges involved in carrying out an extension project in the area of languages, collaborating so that other actions of this nature can also be developed and encourage adaptations to what is already being done, both by us and by other institutions. It is worth mentioning that this experience materializes the long-awaited interaction between teaching, research, and extension, and, considering that this occurs with integrated high school students, the situation assumes this additional differential. We will present reflections on the idea and implementation of the project, theorizing about the concept of extension and the methodology used in the workshops held especially between the years of 2019 and 2020.

THE EXPERIENCE WITH THE EXTENSION

Knowledge about university extension often appears in the background in the daily routine of university education, given the culture that schools/universities are the places where people go to take classes. Access to the understanding that research and extension have a place and are part of teaching often only occurs when one is involved in one of these processes or knows someone who works with the subject. Thus, we believe that it is in the training of future professionals – and here we focus on the figure of the teacher in training – that theorizing and contact with extension need to happen, with a view to creating an important culture for society as a whole to understand the possibilities that the existence of educational institutions in the city can bring. Hence the importance of undergraduate courses having their extension projects publicized, supported and valued. A teacher who understands the concept of extension will be able to think about how to apply it to the reality of their students and involve them in this process.

The Federal Institute of Paraná has legislation regarding the exercise of extension activities, including the possible direction of the teaching workload , which allows for the performance of dignified and structured work. There are also annual programs that offer university and junior extension scholarships – such as the Institutional Extension Scholarship Program (PIBEX) – to students, thus offering conditions for them

to be included in the implementation of projects that are not limited to teachers. The guidance, in fact, is that the student should have a leading role in extension activities.

To characterize the extension, the external public has always been a challenge regarding the idea of organizing and offering workshops on literature. Thus, initially, in 2017, the project sought out state schools, spaces where extension is not always developed. Once authorized, in the first year of the project, two state schools opened their third-year high school classrooms to discuss works that would be addressed in the region's selection processes. At the same time, students learned more about IFPR and the higher education courses they could take at the institution after completing high school.

Having extrapolated the idea of thinking about selection processes, essentially because the students we served commonly requested discussions of other works, we understood that it would be important to seek other spaces for them to occur. Incidentally, it is worth defining, and remembering, the function assumed here when studying literature, often questioned, and which is very well represented in the comparison by Mirian Zappone and Vera Wielewcki (2009, p.29, emphasis added):

> Who cares about knowing whether a character is flat or round, or what the psychoanalytic explanation of a text is? If the purpose of these questions is merely to produce material for the classroom, it is of no interest to anyone, not even to teachers and students. On the other hand, *while these discussions provide "strange" ways of seeing the world and possibilities for transforming it, they are of interest to everyone.* Thus, the stories read help to produce new stories, unique to that reader. And that, after all, is literature.

We experienced this idea in practice when we witnessed the interest of many students when they delved into the analysis of literary texts. At that moment, the possibility arose, based on a suggestion from a student, to offer workshops, now more focused on civic education, at an institution that receives a large part of this public from state schools and is focused on extracurricular activities: the Associação Educacional Fanuel – Guarda Mirim de Telêmaco Borba. According to the educational director of the institution, the organization has the possibility of serving teenagers aged 14 to 21, characterized by families from low and middle income, for the most part, helping them prepare for the world of work, including referring them to vacancies.

The Youth Guard provides opportunities for the community to offer training opportunities, considering it a way to diversify activities. For this reason, during the project, lectures were organized by several IFPR professors, who addressed topics from other areas, such as the environment and the world of work. It was precisely during one

of these opportunities that a Spanish language workshop was offered, which was well received by the students, culminating in the change of the project to also address Hispanic culture.

Contact with Spanish as a foreign language was new for some of the students , since we know that not all schools have the conditions and public support to offer this type of education. By including the reading and understanding of various literary works, in addition to enabling the community to come into contact with Spanish culture and language, the project was aligned with the IFPR Institutional Development Plan – PDI 2014/2018:

> From the point of view of the specificity of IFPR, the first factor to consider is its nature, which is Professional and Technological Education. The teaching-research-extension relationship, therefore, must have contours defined based on this nature. The second dimension to consider is IFPR's social commitment to local and regional development, and to tackling exclusion, since its mission presents a proposal for inclusive education with a focus on training for the world of work (2014, p.62).

Learning a foreign language is often seen as something unattainable and difficult, especially when only the structural aspect of the language is considered. Not to mention the supposed elitism that associates it only with international travel. The fact is that working with knowledge of different cultures can achieve spectacular results in terms of citizenship, respect for differences, knowledge of the world, tolerance, and acceptance. Learning about other languages and cultures, in the case of this project, through literature, helps students reflect on what defines them, what surrounds them, and what constitutes them, allowing them to expand their ability to reinvent themselves. Offering students a variety of options expands their possibilities of choice in their professional and personal lives. “Recognizing and valuing cultural diversity is acting on one of the mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion, obstacles to full citizenship for all and, therefore, for the nation itself.” (BRASIL, 1998, p. 122).

On the other hand, in addition to valuing and recognizing differences, there are similarities that can be explored. The poem *Nós, latino-americano [We, Latin Americans], by Ferreira Gullar* (2004), emphasizes that we are all brothers. We have differences and peculiarities, but we are part of a community that also shares similarities. This is about building a Latin American identity:

We, Latin Americans

> to the Sandinista Revolution
> We are all brothers
> but not because we have
> the same mother and the same father:
> we have the same partner
> that betrays us.
> We are all brothers
> not because we divide
> the same roof and the same table:
> we see the same sword
> over our heads.
> We are all brothers
> not because we have
> the same birthplace, the same surname:
> we have the same path
> of rage and hunger.
> We are all brothers/
> not because the blood is the same
> that we carry in our bodies:
> what is the same is the way
> as we pour it out.
> (GULLAR, 2004, p. 378).

The workshops of the "Literature and Citizenship" project were preceded by studies and research on works that allowed the discussion of themes related to the reality of adolescents, whether in or outside the school or institution they attend. Then, the reading and discussion with the coordinators about the literary analysis of the works took place, considering the aspects of theory appropriate to high school. The Curricular Guidelines for High School themselves highlight the consequences of promoting this type of activity:

> we focus on reading practices through which students can have access to the symbolic production of the literary domain, so that they, interlocutionarily, establish dialogues (and meanings) with the texts read. In other words, it is expected that reading events will be characterized as significant situations of interaction between the student and the authors read, the discourses and voices that emerge there, thus enabling the possibility of multiple readings and the construction of various meanings. (BRASIL, 2006, p. 33).

At all stages, we had the participation of a scholarship student, who was a leading student, since we were awarded a PIBEX-Jr scholarship, which also allowed us to study research, in addition to our daily school routine. It is important to note how this diverse environment is also conducive to the scholarship student's experience, who interacts with other realities and can exchange study and social experiences about learning foreign languages, considering that IFPR promotes the teaching of English and Spanish in the high school course.

According to the teachers of the Guarda Mirim, the workshops took place in random classes. It was interesting to note how the organization of these moments brought

to light the experiences of these students with reading, experiences of interest in literary texts and the connections they had with what they had learned in the classroom. The person who led these meetings was the scholarship holder, always with the presence and support of one of the coordinators, which possibly gave a diverse character to the discussion, since they were perspectives from the same age group. After the discussions, we analyzed the development of the activities, the difficulties, the audience, the dissemination strategy, among other issues for the smooth running of the project.

We believe that this promoted interaction with the external public, since the Guarda Mirim institution has a number of professionals involved in the project, such as social workers and pedagogues, in addition to the local students. In the previous edition of the project, we had contact with the employees of the Municipal Public Library, due to the circulation of information that the project existed, which therefore allows for a real promotion of joint activities, in line with the Institutional Development Plan – PDI 2014/2018 of the Federal Institute of Paraná, which states:

> the development of cultural, social or technological activities enables society to appropriate the knowledge developed within the scope of IFPR and public facilities such as libraries, auditoriums, sports halls, among others, generating a spirit of belonging in the community neighboring the campuses [sic] (IFPR, 2014, p.56).

As we have already pointed out, the project promoted a combination of activities involving IFPR and external communities. The proposals created a learning environment, as there were moments of reflection on various texts, in addition to the holding of a cultural festival called *Fiesta Hispánica* .

In terms of Spanish, the students of the Guarda Mirim were presented with adapted or translated versions of texts by Hispanic writers, such as an excerpt from “Don Quixote - The Knight of the Sad Figure” (2001) and “Cervantes in Cordel: Four Exemplary Novels” (2014), both adapted versions of the work of Miguel de Cervantes. In addition to presenting the biography of the Spanish author, contextualizing the historical period, the scholarship student illustrated the discussion with the song “Don Quixote” by Engenheiros do Hawaii, reflecting on realism and idealism with the audience. During the activities, the scholarship student presented information about some places (Alcalá de Henares, Salamanca, Málaga) and typical foods (tapas, rosquillas, orejas de cerdo, etc.) that were mentioned in the texts. The short story “Two Words” (ALLENDE, 2001), the fable “The Naughty Little Bee” (QUIROGA, 2007), and poems by Pablo Neruda (2006) were also presented and discussed at different times. In addition to encouraging reading,

the project focused on sociocultural and historical aspects, expanding the symbolic horizon of those involved, considering language and culture as inseparable elements (KRAMSCH, 1998).

In this sense, the cultural festival called *Fiesta Hispánica* , a traditional event on the Telêmaco Borba campus, was held to promote a moment of appreciation for Spanish culture and language, going beyond linguistic prejudices. Due to the relationship with the Literature and Citizenship project, it was possible, in 2019, to bring the students of the Guarda Mirim to experience this cultural festival together with the students of the campus. On the occasion, students from IFPR performed music, danced, and read poems in Spanish, in addition to preparing typical dishes for tasting. A student from Guarda Mirim dressed up as Frida Kahlo and shared a song with the audience called "Color Esperanza", by Diego Torres. The experience showed that it is possible to "do outreach" in many ways, considering that the community was invited to visit the IFPR space, feeling welcomed.



Figure 1. Student production exhibited during the *Fiesta Hispánica*.

Source: Authors' archive.

In the Institutional Development Plan, the Pro-Rectory of Extension, Research and Innovation (PROEPI) highlights this type of action:

> In the cultural area, PROEPI policies are being developed on two major fronts: - structuring multicultural spaces – encouraging the creation of environments designed for the combination of art/teaching/linguistics,

> whose purpose is the development of learning through inter and transdisciplinarity; - development of cultural festivals – events that bring together members of the community, students and staff through cultural presentations in various forms (band meetings, theater groups, dance groups, literary discussions, painting, among others). (2014, p.58).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The opportunity to reflect on extension is beneficial on several fronts, as it serves to better understand its foundations and objectives, while providing a space for inspiration for the creation of new actions and strengthening this work, which is so important for the promotion of public institutions and their importance to the community.

In all editions it was possible to note how the project's actions achieved the desired objectives, such as promoting citizenship training through Hispanic literature and culture, encouraging the habit of reading, bringing the community closer to the Telêmaco Borba campus, in addition to producing materials that culminated in publications and participation in research events.

Social exclusion was tackled when the community was given the opportunity to come into contact with literary works and the discussions that arose from them, considering the range of topics that literature can promote. At the same time, by increasing the repertoire of cultural knowledge, resulting from contact with a foreign language, the horizon of expectations of the participants was questioned, also leading to critical thinking. As is known, the simple activity of promoting reading can produce benefits in society, both in terms of school subjects and in confronting violence.

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