

Re(senhas)

ISSN: 3085-6434

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71263/fh3p1t89>

I Philosophical Gymkhana of the Sertão Pernambucano: An experience report

Diego Alves da Silva¹

INTRODUCTION

This writing is the result of the experience experienced in the I Philosophical Gymkhana of the Sertão Pernambucano, an event promoted by the Sertão Philosophical Research Group and by the IF Sertão-PE, Petrolina Zona Rural campus, on the occasion all public and private educational institutions were encouraged to participate in the challenge that involved philosophical knowledge, creativity, literature and a lot of work. Thus, imbued with the desire to see my students being instigated to a competition that involved a plural dynamism of

¹ Master's student in Philosophy Teaching – PROF-FILO (IFSertãoPE)

schools, I decided to enroll them to promote a greater proximity to the discipline and provide a different perspective of what philosophy is beyond the classroom routine and far from applicability.

In addition to this direction, the event emerged as a unique opportunity for students and teachers from the São Francisco Valley region to explore the relationship between Philosophy and Literature through the study of the work **"Sofia's World" which is undoubtedly a classic in philosophical literature and includes a dialogical journey through the periods of philosophy and its main actors and themes.**

Even though the event is on an unfavorable date, as it is the month of November, a period when there are weeks of final exams and entrance exams in our region, there was still a surprising adhesion. Thus, to the detriment of the a priori obstacle, the result of the entire process, which was about three stages, was impressive. From the involvement and synergistic atmosphere that permeated the students (enrolled) and those who did not register was exciting. Colleagues participated not only as spectators, but as participants in the gymkhana in each stage and in each result. Throughout my history as a philosophy teacher, I have rarely experienced this very pleasant feeling of seeing my students and class involved so strongly in philosophy. For these and several reasons, I decided to share in the format of an experience report, everything we experienced in this short period of time of the I Philosophical Gymkhana of the Sertão Pernambucano.

Re(senhas)

The objective of the report is to pulverize the effects that were perceived before, during and after the participation of the school and students in the event and in all stages of the contest, in addition to the expanded perception of the participants in relation to the discipline and its didactically differentiated formats. It is also important to emphasize that this academic instrument (experience report) also aims to share an experience that resulted in philosophical practice in a playful, yet reflective format.

Thus, it is inexcusable that contemporary education, in the face of so many complex and challenging phenomena, faces one of its greatest difficulties, that of making learning meaningful and attractive to students, especially in areas such as Philosophy and Literature, which demand deep and contextualized reflections. In this scenario, the motivating element among students emerges as a crucial indicator, as well as the pedagogical strategies that dynamize and become indispensable tools for engagement. Supported by what has been explained, the referential framework is based on Paulo Freire and John Dewey, where they offer a solid basis for understanding and implementing such approaches.

Freire (1996) argues that education needs to be dialogical and meaningful, connecting to the students' reality. He states that "teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its production or construction" (FREIRE, 1996, p. 47). This perspective highlights the importance of strategies that promote the active

Re(senhas)

participation of the student, aligning the content with their life experiences.

In addition, Dewey (1916) proposes that curiosity and interest are central drivers in the learning process, emphasizing that learning must be connected to students' practical experiences. He argues that "education is a continuous reconstruction of experience" (DEWEY, 1916, p. 89), suggesting that strategies such as debates and interdisciplinary projects are effective in stimulating interaction with contents.

Competition-based didactics can be an effective way to engage students, as long as they are implemented with balance and a focus on cooperation. Johnson and Johnson (1989) highlight that healthy competition can be a stimulus to learning, especially when aligned with common goals. For these authors, "the interaction between competition and cooperation generates an environment in which students feel encouraged to achieve their best results, while learning to value teamwork" (JOHNSON; JOHNSON, 1989, p. 53).

In practice, literary competitions, philosophical debates, and educational games based on problematizations can promote engagement. Gardner (1983), in his theory of multiple intelligences, suggests that these approaches allow exploring different forms of learning, adapting to the individual potentialities of students. For example, activities that involve creative writing or philosophical

argumentation can cater to linguistic intelligence, while rhetorical games can stimulate interpersonal intelligence.

In the field of Philosophy, the dialogical approach suggested by Lipman (2003) in his program *Philosophy for Children* is exemplary. He emphasizes that philosophical debate stimulates critical thinking and engages students by confronting ideas and solving dilemmas. According to the author, "the philosophical practice in the classroom not only teaches students to think, but also to think with others" (LIPMAN, 2003, p. 112).

Similarly, literature can be used as a tool to build empathy and explore complex human experiences. Freire (1996) argues that "the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word", reinforcing that Literature, when linked to the reality of students, can be a powerful instrument of awareness.

In this context and when considering all these points in detail, it is imperative to ratify that integrating motivational and competitive strategies in the teaching of Philosophy and Literature not only stimulates participation, but also resignifies the role of these disciplines in human development. By combining theoretical and practical perspectives, educators can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment that fosters both knowledge acquisition and critical and applicable development.

This report presents the experiences lived by the students of my class during the participation in the gymkhana, highlighting the

Re(senhas)

challenges, learnings and results obtained throughout the three phases of the event.

METHODOLOGY

The organizing institution of the event, Registration was conducted virtually between November 12 and 22, 2024. As a teacher and mentor of the enrolled students, I was responsible for organizing the necessary documentation, including the students' personal data, proof of enrollment and the completion of the virtual form, assisting and giving the necessary support for successful enrollment in the gymkhana. It is important to highlight that I am a teacher at three different institutions that total approximately 16 classes between the 1st and 3rd grades of high school, even with a significant number of students, the adhesion to the call for participation was small when analyzing the total proportionality of students. However, to a large extent the motivation was generated by the culmination of the last unit, sequences of test weeks, revision for the SSA (UPE entrance exam). Even so, we had 10 students enrolled.

As stated in the notice, the first stage was to carry out a test containing 20 multiple-choice questions and a discursive question, orbited in Jostein Gaarder's work "Sophie's World". This inaugural phase for the first sieve was one of the reasons that led to the withdrawal of some students, which ratifies the idea of low

attractiveness associating the discipline "philosophy" with the traditional method of evaluation.

This phase was carried out virtually through an online form, the link to which was made available one (1) hour before the start of the evaluation, which took place from 9 am to 12 pm on November 23, 2024. For this stage, all registered students participated.

The 15 candidates who obtained at least 70% of correct answers were classified for the next phase. The notice disciplined that if no student reached this percentage, the 15 with the best results would be selected. As a tiebreaker, the highest score in the open question was used. However, my students were able to successfully achieve the percentage needed to advance to the next phase.

This result generated a different movement in the classroom and in the school, as it was the first philosophy event in the Olympiad modality that they had participated in. This generated a motivation permeated by pride in having satisfactory results.

Subsequently, the students classified for the second phase were instructed to send a video with an artistic activity, namely: parody, anecdote or philosophical joke, or the presentation of a myth with a philosophical explanation. This stage was surprising, because not only those who were participating and classified for this phase got involved, but colleagues helped in the entire process of costumes, scenery, recording, editing and location of the environments. It is also salutary to highlight that the themes proposed as a plot or content cut to be

Re(senhas)

evidenced in the video demonstrated that students are able to abstract much more content than it is possible to observe in a routine with a weekly workload of 50 minutes. In this same collective moment of explosion of ideas by the students, the formats and didactics proposed by them about the elaboration and execution of the videos. The productive participation demonstrated a keen creativity and talents revealed by the I Philosophical Gymkhana. Those classified at this stage sent the videos from the link that was made available directing to a specific form.

The biggest challenge perceived among the students was the length of the videos, which should be between 3 and 7 minutes. The 10 students with the best results were classified for the final phase.

The last phase of the gymkhana was in person and held at the UPE (University of Pernambuco) Petrolina campus. It is important to point out that the screenings of the short films and the arguments were held within the context of the VII Meeting of the Philosophical Sertão, which is an annual initiative of academic and cultural prominence, organized by the Philosophical Sertão Research Group, in collaboration with the Professional Master's Graduate Program in Philosophy (Prof-Filo) of the IF Sertão-PE and UPE. This event brings together educators, students, researchers and the community in general, with the aim of debating contemporary issues associated with Philosophy, exploring the connection between classical knowledge and current problems. The current edition (2024), entitled "Philosophy and

Re(senhas)

Literature: connecting knowledge beyond the canons", proposes to expand the frontiers of philosophical dialogue, incorporating literary perspectives that enrich and diversify critical thinking.

The philosophical gymkhana that is the stage of my experience report is inserted in the event VII Meeting of the Philosophical Sertão, in this way the gymkhana became a pill in the macro universe of the event that embraced us. It is noteworthy that the students, as well as the teachers, had the opportunity to foster an inclusive environment of interaction, reflection and recognition of the plurality of ideas, reinforcing the role of Philosophy as an essential tool for the critical understanding of the world and for the formation of citizenship. In addition, by integrating several audiences at the end of the contest, the event contributed to the democratization of access to philosophical and literary knowledge, generating a positive impact both in the cultural and academic spheres.

In this atmosphere, the works were opened with the speech of the coordinator of the event, Professor Gabriel Kafuri with the presentation of the examining board of the short films and a brief speech by all. Afterwards, the videos were shown and the students were questioned about motivation, theme, experience and difficulties in the preparation of the script and execution.

After appreciation and convergence of the three judges, the results were announced with a medal for all participants and a trophy for the first place winner, my student Mariana Zaidan. In addition to

Re(senhas)

the medals, everyone who arrived at this stage was presented with a philosophical literary title that

The I Philosophical Gymkhana of the Sertão Pernambucano proved to be a transformative experience, both pedagogically and personally. The event revealed the students' potential to explore new horizons and the ability of Philosophy to promote deep and meaningful reflections.

In the composition of the participants, three private schools were invited and encouraged to participate in the event, totaling approximately 15 classes reaching more than 450 students. For the final stage, four students arrived, one of them being the winner of the first edition of the gymkhana.

In view of the above, it is recommended that similar initiatives be replicated in other contexts, expanding access and strengthening interest in Philosophy among young people, valuing the discipline, the faculty and the human sciences. Also added is the suggestion of a more favorable date of the process with spaces between the intervals of each phase more dilated, providing greater adherence among students and support from teachers, escaping the circuit of regular evaluations of schools and periods of the entrance exams in the region. This proposal will provide a feasibility for the enrollment of third-year students who would like to have participated.

DISCUSSIONS

Re(senhas)

The experience lived in the event to promote philosophy brought results that transcended the initial expectations, demonstrating the effectiveness of differentiated pedagogical practices in the teaching of this discipline. By proposing a playful dynamic that escaped the traditional school routine, it was possible not only to stimulate students' interest in philosophy, but also to promote a moment of integration between different pedagogical perspectives and interpretative views on the contents presented in short film format. This approach directly reflected on the motivation of the participants, who not only engaged in the activity, but also began to plan the continuity of their participation in future events, such as the National Olympiad and the International Philosophy Olympiad.

This success can be understood in the light of educational theories that emphasize meaningful learning, collective interaction, and the appreciation of multiple intelligences. John Dewey's perspective, which sees education as a democratic and active practice, found an echo in the proposed dynamics, by transforming the learning space into a living environment for the exchange of ideas and experiences. In the same way, Paulo Freire's teachings on the importance of stimulating student autonomy and dialogue in educational practice were concretized to the extent that students became protagonists of their philosophical discoveries, appropriating the content in a critical and creative way.

The use of the classic *Sofia's World* as a starting point for reading and philosophical reflection was also strategic. The book, which probably would not arouse the same interest in a traditional reading approach, became a central and mobilizing element in the dynamics, allowing each student to interpret and resignify the content from their unique perspective. This process refers to the ideas of Matthew Lipman, for whom critical thinking develops more fully in contexts of dialogue and collective problematization.

The collaboration between the participants also reinforces the importance of cooperative learning, defended by authors such as David and Roger Johnson. By sharing experiences and perspectives, students not only enriched their understanding of philosophy but also developed social and intellectual skills that transcended the syllabus. In this context, Howard Gardner's approach to multiple intelligences was evidenced, as the proposed activities allowed different forms of skills – logical, linguistic, interpersonal, among others – to be valued and mobilized.

The results of the event demonstrate that innovative pedagogical practices can transform students' perception of philosophy, promoting genuine engagement and building a more integrated learning community. The competition, while stimulating interest in the content, also revealed the possibility of creating an environment of cooperation and sharing. The students, by mobilizing for the next editions of the gymkhana and the Olympics, reveal not only the taste acquired for the

Re(senhas)

discipline, but also the desire to continue exploring and deepening their knowledge.

Finally, the experience provided significant lessons for the educators involved. It was possible to realize that philosophy can, indeed, infect the collective and instigate critical thinking, as long as it is approached in a creative and engaging way. The event showed that it is possible to break traditional barriers and awaken interest in philosophy, creating conditions for active and transformative learning. The articulation between theory and practice, in this context, not only validated the theoretical conceptions that underpinned the experience, but also offered a solid basis for future reflections on teaching practice and the teaching of philosophy.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participation in the I Philosophical Gymkhana of the Sertão Pernambucano brought significant benefits both to the students and to me, as a teacher. Students developed skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, creative use of technology, and oral communication. In addition, the gymkhana expanded the students' interest in Philosophy, showing its relevance in the contemporary context.

As a teacher, it was gratifying to observe the engagement and evolution of students in a project that transcends the limits of the classroom. The experience also reinforced the importance of initiatives that promote

the integration between theory and practice, stimulating meaningful learning, in addition to the protagonism of students.

REFERENCES

DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: Macmillan, 1916.

FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia da Autonomia: Saberes Necessários à Prática Educativa*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.

SILVA, A. P. G. C. Proposições de Conteúdos do Imaginário no Ensino de Filosofia. *Re (senhas)*, v. 1, n. 1, 2024. Disponível em: <https://resenhas.ojsbr.com/resenhas/article/view/9>

GARDNER, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

JOHNSON, David W.; JOHNSON, Roger T. *Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research*. Edina: Interaction Book Company, 1989.

LIPMAN, Matthew. *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

VAHIRE, L. F. V. O pensar Democrático-libertário na narrativa das independências africanas, hoje. *Re (senhas)*, v. 1, n. 1, 2024. Disponível em: <https://resenhas.ojsbr.com/resenhas/article/view/6>