

Research articles

Reflections on bullying in the classroom: a pedagogical proposal using the fairy tale

Reflexões sobre o *bullying* na sala de aula: uma proposta pedagógica utilizando o conto de fadas

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Abstract

This article evaluates the effectiveness of a teaching sequence in Portuguese language instruction, using the short story *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen as a resource to combat bullying. The qualitative and applied research was conducted in a 4th-grade elementary school class at a Municipal Public School in Ponta Grossa/PR, with 32 students aged 9 to 10. The method employed was intervention research, and for data collection, semi-structured questionnaires and materials produced in the didactic sequence were utilized. The data was verified following the content analysis technique. The results showed that bullying is present at school, that the didactic sequence promoted critical reflection through collaborative activities, strengthening empathy and respect for differences, making the school environment more inclusive and reflective for students, and highlighting the need for continued teacher training about the phenomenon.

Keywords: bullying; children's literature; didactic sequence; elementary education.

Resumo

Este artigo avalia a efetividade de uma sequência didática, inserida no contexto da Língua Portuguesa, utilizando o conto *O patinho feio*, de Hans Christian Andersen, como recurso didático para o combate ao *bullying*. A pesquisa qualitativa e de natureza aplicada, foi realizada em uma turma de 4º ano do Ensino Fundamental de uma Escola Pública Municipal de Ponta Grossa/PR, com 32 alunos entre 9 e 10 anos. O método utilizado foi a pesquisa-intervenção e para a coleta de dados, foram utilizados os questionários semiestruturados e materiais produzidos na sequência didática. Os dados foram verificados seguindo a técnica da análise de conteúdo. Os resultados apontaram que o *bullying* está presente na escola, e que a sequência didática promoveu reflexões críticas através das atividades colaborativas, fortalecendo empatia e respeito às diferenças, tornando um ambiente escolar mais inclusivo e reflexivo pelos alunos, além da necessidade de formação continuada aos professores sobre o fenômeno.

Palavras-chave: *bullying*; literatura infantil; sequência didática; ensino fundamental..

INTRODUCTION

Violence and oppressive relations at school are not new. Throughout educational history, practices like humiliation, exclusion, discrimination, and aggression among peers have always existed in schools. They were often naturalized or made invisible. In recent decades, these practices have been systematically analyzed in the academic literature. They received specific names and analytical categories. Bullying has emerged in this context as a widely discussed form of contemporary school violence.

Bullying can be understood as a set of aggressive, intentional, and repetitive behaviors practiced by one or more individuals against someone who is in a position of vulnerability or less power within a group. These aggressions can take different forms, such as physical, verbal,

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psychological, or symbolic violence, altering the emotional, social, and academic development of the victims (Lima, 2021a).

Similar practices have always existed in schools. Bullying began to be recognized as a distinct phenomenon mainly at the end of the twentieth century, when researchers began to study it systematically (Santos, 2015). It can be seen as a symptom of contemporary changes. These involve social relations, socialization processes, and the way children and young people interact at school.

Digital technologies and social networks have expanded these aggressive practices. Now, aggression can occur beyond the physical limits of school. Still, schools remain a main context for bullying. This is because they bring diverse groups of students together for intense social interaction. Students who differ physically, socially, culturally, or behaviorally may become targets of peer aggression (Menegotto; Pasini; Levandowski, 2013).

The word *bullying* comes from English and refers to tyrannical or brutal behaviors. This practice includes intentional actions that cause physical or psychological suffering. These actions cause embarrassment, humiliation, anguish, and pain, often leaving the victim feeling inferior (Dionísio; Maros; Matos, 2020). With new technologies and digital media, *cyberbullying emerged*. *Cyberbullying happens* in virtual environments and causes emotional and psychological harm¹ to victims (Lopes Neto, 2005).

This phenomenon involves three main figures: the victim, the aggressor, and the bystander. The victim is often someone who is not very sociable, with difficulties in reacting and characteristics that can range from shyness, low self-esteem, insecurity, or physical fragility. These factors make it an easy target for aggressors (Fante, 2018). On the other hand, the aggressor exhibits traits such as impulsivity, a need to dominate, and a lack of empathy, and initiates actions ranging from seemingly harmless games to hostile and offensive attacks (Silva, 2010; Olweus, 1993). The spectator, in turn, watches the aggressions without intervening, often for fear of becoming a victim or for insecurity, perpetuating the cycle of violence (Fante, 2012).

Aguiar and Barrera (2017) state that bullying victims are typically students targeted by repeated negative actions from peers. These actions include physical aggression, social exclusion, and verbal abuse. Victims often have low self-esteem, shyness, sensitivity, and little assertiveness. In contrast, aggressors have good self-esteem. They are physically and emotionally strong, aggressive, and want dominance. In public schools, most aggressors are boys. In private schools, this difference between the sexes is less significant. Most aggression occurs during recess and classes. This highlights the need for more supervision and preventive strategies.

Zequinão et al. (2016) say *bullying* involves different roles: victims, aggressors, and aggressor victims. These roles appear in dynamic school interactions. Bullying is not just physical aggression; it includes verbal, indirect, and newer forms like cyberbullying and extortion. The authors stress the need to strengthen school-student relationships and prepare educators to reduce social risks and violence in vulnerable schools.

Recent studies highlight the value of school-based interventions to prevent and combat *bullying*. Ferreira and Mendonça (2023) examined strategies that involve the whole school community. Pires, Tessaro, and Pedron (2022) note that preventive activities for Elementary students help understanding and awareness of bullying. These activities promote a more welcoming and safe environment. Amorim (2023) calls for reflection, debate, and public policies to reduce the damage of bullying. The Program to Combat Systematic Intimidation was created by Federal Law No. 13,185/2015 to protect victims. According to § 1, systematic intimidation means any intentional and repetitive violent act without apparent reason, aimed at intimidating, assaulting, and upsetting someone (Brasil, 2015). Article 4, item II, of the aforementioned law, mandates the training of teachers and pedagogical teams, assigning them an essential role in promoting actions aimed at preventing, discussing, guiding, and confronting *bullying*.

Understanding school violence requires social analysis. This analysis must consider cultural and economic contexts and how these practices develop among individuals. Bullying connects with prejudice and affects social relations. Contemporary society often struggles to accept diversity, which can harm psychological health (Silva et al., 2021, p. 173).

¹ Low self-esteem, insecurity, constant fear, anxiety, deep sadness, and depressive symptoms. In more severe cases, social isolation, difficulties in school performance, self-deprecating thoughts, and even suicidal ideation may arise.

Collaboration among the school, family, and health professionals is essential to identify signs of *bullying*, such as isolation, behavioral changes, and academic difficulties, as highlighted by Ferreira and Mendonça (2023). In addition, the school must transcend its educational role, promoting values such as solidarity, friendship, and cooperation, which are fundamental for healthy socio-emotional development (Pepler; Bierman, 2018).

Likewise, the school has the duty to ensure the protection of its students, and any action or omission that puts the safety of children and adolescents at risk is liable. It is important to note that this obligation applies to both public and private institutions. Based on this, those who bully or *cyberbully* can be held responsible for the damage they cause, including in the virtual environment, since legal rules apply in both the physical and digital environments (Lima, 2021a). Not long ago, in Brazil, Law No. 14,811, of January 12, 2024, was enacted, establishing protection measures for children and adolescents against acts of violence in educational institutions and the like. The law also institutes the National Policy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, in addition to promoting changes in important legislation, such as Decree-Law No. 2,848, of December 7, 1940 (Penal Code), Law No. 8,072, of July 25, 1990 (Law of Heinous Crimes) and Law No. 8,069, of July 13, 1990 (Statute of the Child and Adolescent) (Brasil, 2024).

Among the planned changes, Decree-Law No. 2,848 was amended to include Article 146-A, which deals with the practice of systematic intimidation. According to the text, systematically intimidating one or more people, intentionally and repeatedly, without apparent motive, through physical or psychological violence and through verbal, moral, sexual, social, material, or virtual acts, constitutes a crime punishable by a fine, provided it does not constitute a more serious infraction. Also, the sole paragraph of the article addresses that *cyberbullying* occurs through computer networks, applications, social networks, online games, or other digital platforms, with the possibility of real-time transmission. In these cases, the penalty provided for is imprisonment of 2 to 4 years, in addition to a fine, unless the act is framed as a more serious crime (Brasil, 2024).

Although prevention programs are expanding in schools around the world, in Brazil, this practice remains uncommon, requiring efforts to effectively implement existing legislation and sustain consistent pedagogical initiatives. The country has relevant regulatory frameworks, such as Law No. 13,185/2015, which establishes the Program to Combat Systematic Intimidation, and Law No. 14,811/2024, which reinforces mechanisms to protect children and adolescents in the school environment. However, it is observed that the presence of legislation does not, by itself, guarantee the consolidation of structured preventive programs, evidencing the need for articulated public policies, continuous teacher training, and systematic monitoring of actions implemented in schools (Fernandes; Dell'Aglio, 2021).

In this context, children's literature is an important educational tool to sensitize students to topics such as empathy, diversity, cooperation, and confronting *bullying*. Fairy tales, although they emerged long before contemporary society, have a strong symbolic potential, helping children to understand human conflicts and to elaborate emotions and lived experiences (Bettelheim, 2002). Likewise, over time, these narratives have been resignified as the very conception of childhood has been transformed, coming to occupy a relevant role in the cultural and social formation of children (Ariés, 1986).

Among these narratives, the short story *The Ugly Duckling*, by Hans Christian Andersen (1990), stands out, offering rich material for discussing issues related to *bullying* and enabling students to reflect on their own experiences, attitudes, and ways of living with differences. This study explores the effectiveness of a didactic sequence based on this tale, developed for a 4th-grade class at a public elementary school in Ponta Grossa, Paraná. By positioning the classroom as a space for dialogue and transformation, this article highlights the importance of pedagogical interventions that articulate literature and relevant social themes. In times of intense cultural and technological transformations, the role of the school goes beyond mere content transmission, becoming a space for the production of knowledge and human formation. In this context, the teacher assumes the role of a mediator of knowledge, promoting students' active participation, recognizing their prior knowledge, and valuing them as subjects of the learning process itself. Such a perspective is fundamental for the

construction of a humane and inclusive coexistence, capable of confronting practices of violence such as *bullying*. Thus, this work contributes to the discussion of educational practices, offering subsidies for teachers engaged in the construction of fairer and more welcoming school environments.

METHOD

The present study adopts a qualitative, applied approach and seeks to explore the effectiveness of a didactic sequence as a pedagogical resource for sensitizing students to *bullying* in the school context. According to Minayo (2006), the qualitative approach works with a universe of meanings, beliefs, and values, providing a more appropriate understanding of certain social phenomena, especially those involving subjective aspects and encompassing the entire context and reality when analyzing the problem (Lima, 2021b). In addition, according to Prodanov and Freitas (2014), applied research aims to produce knowledge aimed at practical application, seeking to solve specific problems. As a technical procedure, intervention research was chosen, allowing the integration of the investigative process with pedagogical practice. This methodology values the researcher's direct interaction with the studied environment, promoting dynamic, continuous adjustments to respond to the context's emerging needs. According to Romagnoli (2014, p. 45), intervention research is "[...] a study carried out in partnership with the researched population, with the purpose of promoting procedural changes in the research object through interventions in everyday life". Thus, the realization of this study requires that both the researcher and the participants be open to a change in attitude and be considered active agents in the investigative process.

The application took place in a class of the 4th year of Elementary School, composed of thirty-two (32) students, aged between nine (9) and ten (10) years, from a municipal public school located in Ponta Grossa, Paraná. This class was especially relevant to the research, as students experienced the literacy process during the COVID-19 pandemic, facing challenges related to remote teaching and learning gaps.

The data collection instruments included semi-structured questionnaires, adapted from the Olweus (1993) model with open and closed questions aimed at identifying the students' perception of the phenomenon, including questions such as: "Have you ever witnessed bullying situations at school?" and "How do you react when you witness a situation of aggression between colleagues?", and the materials generated throughout the application of the didactic sequence.

In this sense, as pointed out by Dolz, Noverraz and Schneuwly (2004, p. 97), the didactic sequence aims to "[...] help the student to better master a genre, thus allowing him to write or speak in a more appropriate way in a given communication situation". Based on this model, the sequence was structured in an organized and progressive way, contemplating the presentation of the proposal, the initial production, the intervention modules aimed at expanding reading comprehension and critical reflection, as well as the final production, enabling the observation of possible advances in the students' conceptions throughout the process. The activities were structured around the *short story The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen and included moments of reading, interpretation, debate, and textual production. This choice aimed to promote reflection on *bullying* and also to develop skills such as empathy, cooperation, and critical thinking among students.

Data analysis followed the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2016), organized in three main stages: pre-analysis, exploration of the material, and treatment of the results. During the pre-analysis, an initial reading was conducted to identify the most recurring themes and categories. The detailed exploration of the material enabled segmentation and categorization of the data into meaningful units, while the final phase involved synthesizing and interpreting the results, relating them to the objectives of the study.

Ethical rigor was maintained at all stages of the research, ensuring the anonymity of the participants and the obtaining of informed consent. The interactions were recorded and

analyzed according to the criteria of relevance and recurrence, ensuring that the emerging reflections were well-founded and consistent.

The combination of qualitative methodology, research intervention, and content analysis proved effective for understanding the dynamics of *bullying* in the school context and evaluating the didactic sequence in the classroom. This approach promoted transformations in the classroom environment and reinforced the importance of pedagogical strategies aimed at the integral formation of students.

This research was submitted to the research ethics committee Federal Technological University of Paraná – Dois Vizinhos Campus, through Plataforma Brasil, and was approved under opinion number 6. 872. 111.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the initial stage of immersion in the data, coding was carried out, in which the texts and drawings were segmented into units of meaning through excerpts that retained complete meaning and were associated with specific themes. From these segments, three main categories emerged that synthesize the central aspects worked throughout the didactic sequence: social inclusion and integration; awareness of identity; and respect for differences and diversity. It is noteworthy that the categories were defined later, based on a manual analysis of the data, without the use of *software*.

The first category, inclusion and social integration, emerged from classroom activities based on the short story *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen, which served as a starting point for reflections on *bullying*, rejection, and acceptance. During collective and individual readings guided by the teacher, the students connected the tale's narrative to their own experiences, discussing issues such as diversity and identity. Diversity was approached by recognizing the physical, cultural, social, and behavioral differences present in the school environment, understood as constitutive elements of human coexistence. Identity, on the other hand, was discussed as the process of constructing the subject, marked by how he perceives himself and is perceived by others, and influenced by experiences of acceptance or rejection. In this context, the tale prompted reflections on how exclusion can compromise self-esteem and a sense of belonging, fundamental elements in the formation of identity. This approach allowed us to explore the manifestations of *bullying* in a broader way, revealing that, despite knowing the term, many students were unaware of its different forms, such as verbal and physical violence (Medeiros, 2012; Balzan; Massola, 2021).

To preserve participants' identities, the students' names were replaced with alphanumeric codes (E1, E2, E3, etc.). The rewriting of the tale, centered on overcoming *bullying* by the main character, was an activity that stimulated the analysis of the causes and consequences of social exclusion, as observed in the excerpt produced by one of the students: "The duckling realized that he did not need to change to be accepted and found friends who liked him the way he was" (E3). This excerpt shows the students' understanding that valuing identity and recognizing differences are fundamental to coping with exclusionary practices. The students highlighted the need for awareness, with suggestions to support the duckling and encourage him to face the aggressors. Among the fragments produced, excerpts such as: "The duckling was sad because no one wanted to play with him, but he realized that he did not need to change to be accepted" (E5); "The other animals understood that they were wrong and apologized for having judged by their appearance" (E2); and also "The duckling learned that being different is not a defect, it is a quality" (E7).

They also proposed that the characters who bullied recognize their mistakes and apologize, evidencing an educational perspective focused on respect and empathy (Carmo, 2023; Silva, 2018). In addition, the exercise highlighted the conditional acceptance in the original narrative, in which inclusion occurs only after the duckling transforms into a swan. This point prompted important reflections on how cultural patterns shape perceptions of difference and perpetuate exclusion. Through the activity, the students began to question this logic, although they still reinforced the idea that acceptance depends on similarity (Lajolo; Zilberman, 2007; Stocker, 2022).

Teaching practice played an essential role in this process, promoting a space for dialogue that connected reading, imagination, and socio-emotional development. As Cruz, Silva, and Lima (2023) argue, children's stories, such as *The Ugly Duckling*, can teach fundamental values, including respect for differences, and prepare students to address social challenges, thereby fostering more empathetic and conscious citizens.

The second category, identity sensitization, emerges from the analysis of students' interactions and responses about the concept of *bullying*, collected through semi-structured questionnaires adapted from Dan Olweus (1993), diagnostic surveys, and artistic productions developed throughout the didactic sequence.

The emphasis was on understanding how students differentiate *bullying* from other forms of aggression and conflict, as evidenced in answers such as: "*Bullying* is when the same person always hurts" (E4) and "Joke is when everyone finds it funny, *bullying* is when someone suffers" (E6). In the rewritings of the tale, the character's identity was valued, with excerpts such as "He learned that he did not need to change to be accepted" (E3), while, in the drawings produced, the initially isolated character starts to appear integrated into the group, accompanied by phrases such as "We are all important" (E8).

These activities were conducted to stimulate reflection on diversity, empathy, and the influence of social and technological changes on contemporary dynamics related to *bullying*, as problematized by Medeiros (2012).

The quantitative data, analyzed qualitatively, revealed that most students were already familiar with the term *bullying*, but with limited empirical knowledge. They associated *bullying* primarily with verbal aggression (41%), followed by social (19%) and physical (15%) aggression. However, a quarter of the students showed difficulty in defining *bullying*, highlighting the need to deepen the topic in educational contexts (Ferreira, 2019).

The answers indicated that 44% of the students had direct or indirect experience with *bullying*, which affected the school environment and interpersonal relationships. The most cited causes were physical appearance (47%) and social differences (19%), reflections of inequalities and cultural standards present in the school. Verbal aggression and teasing were identified as the most prevalent forms of *bullying*, while *cyberbullying* was less frequent due to the limited connectivity among students in rural areas, a reality in which students engage in sabotage, although awareness of this type of violence is essential in the face of growing technological expansion (Silva, 2020; Valerio; Silva, 2023).

The discussions highlighted the importance of social support, especially in the school environment, to mitigate the emotional impacts of *bullying*, both for victims and aggressors. Educational strategies, such as case analysis and role-playing, were recommended to promote empathy and diversity, strengthen students' socio-emotional skills, and create a more welcoming environment (Martínez, 2013; Abreu et al., 2023).

These practices highlight the importance of addressing *bullying* in an integrated way, linking it to identity development and the strengthening of interpersonal relationships. Working on diversity and inclusion in schools contributes to the creation of a culture of peace, reducing the incidence of aggressive behavior and promoting a safer and more supportive space for all students (Cunha; Souza, 2023; Medeiros, 2012).

The third category, respect for differences and diversity, emerged from the analysis of artistic productions and from the students' discussions during the didactic sequence. This category shows how the students' representations reflected values of inclusion and recognition of cultural, social, and individual diversity, highlighting the importance of promoting empathy and understanding in the school environment. As Oliveira (2023) and Menegotto and Machado (2018) point out, active interpretation and appreciation of diversity are fundamental to building an education that celebrates differences and encourages conscious participation.

Diversity was explored in both artistic productions and group discussions, addressing aspects such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and individual capacities. The students' drawings depicted diverse situations, including people of different ethnicities united, same-sex couples, and social interactions that challenge stereotypes. These

artistic works reinforce the importance of welcoming environments that value plurality and promote a deeper understanding of social issues (Bazzo, 2015).

By relating diversity to *bullying*, the students identified that many aggressions originate from prejudice and intolerance. Verbal and physical bullying, as well as *cyberbullying*, were represented in the drawings, highlighting the negative consequences of these practices for the victims, such as emotional damage and social exclusion. The analysis of the drawings and reports revealed that *cyberbullying*, although less frequent among students due to limited connectivity, presents specific challenges related to the inappropriate use of social networks and technology (Silva; Sena; Bastos, 2022).

The students' reports, recorded after the application of the didactic sequence, show a broader understanding of the forms of *bullying* and the importance of respecting differences, as demonstrated by statements such as: "I understood that *bullying* is not just hitting, it is also excluding and making the person feel that they are not important" (E4) and "If we put a nickname that hurts, even if it's a joke, it can turn into *bullying*" (E6). Such records indicate recognition of the phenomenon's manifestations and the internalization of a more critical and empathetic posture towards interpersonal relationships. The reading and rewriting of the short story *The Ugly Duckling* helped students recognize how exclusion and rejection undermine self-esteem and the construction of identity. In the initial diagnosis, however, it was observed that part of the students associated *bullying* only with physical aggression, with records such as "*Bullying* is when you hit your classmate" (E2) or "It's fighting at school" (E5). After the didactic sequence, they began to broaden this understanding, recognizing that exclusion, pejorative nicknames, and humiliation also produce emotional suffering. Others reported changes in their postures, feeling more comfortable discussing *bullying*, and being prepared to seek support when needed. This integrated approach also connected science and technology to social behavior, allowing students to reflect on how these dimensions influence human interactions. The activities contributed to the development of socio-emotional skills, promoting empathy, solidarity, and respect. As Ferreira and Mendonça (2023) argue, valuing diversity is essential to building a fairer and more inclusive society.

Finally, the inclusion of *cyberbullying* highlighted the need to educate students about responsible internet use and to promote greater awareness of the effects of digital interactions. The analysis concludes that addressing diversity and the various manifestations of *bullying* is an effective strategy for transforming the school environment into a space of respect, inclusion, and meaningful learning, fulfilling the essential role of education in combating these harmful practices.

Previous studies, such as those by Medeiros (2012), point out that children's literature has the potential to foster empathy and encourage debate on complex social issues, thereby strengthening ethical values and collective conscience – aspects observed in this research. Using literary stories as a starting point for discussions about *bullying* allowed students to connect the characters' experiences to their own. This connection fostered a broader and more significant understanding of the theme, in line with Lajolo's (2001) conclusions, which highlight the role of literature in fostering remarkable and transformative experiences. In addition, students' active involvement in activities reinforces the importance of pedagogical practices centered on student protagonism.

On the other hand, challenges faced by some students, such as reading and interpretation difficulties, underscore the need for complementary strategies and ongoing pedagogical support. It was observed, for example, difficulty in identifying implicit information, understanding the text's central idea, and establishing relationships between characters' actions and their consequences, in the face of a more in-depth analysis of the tale's situations of exclusion. These difficulties, often associated with remote teaching during the pandemic, reflect the need for public policies and teacher training to recompose learning and strengthen work on socio-emotional skills, as discussed by Fernandes and Dell'Aglio (2021). Another relevant aspect is the impact of the didactic sequence on the strengthening of interpersonal relationships. The proposed dynamics made it possible to identify *bullying practices* and also the creation of a safe space for dialogue and cooperation,

evidenced in manifestations such as: “*Bullying* is when the person always suffers, and no one helps” (E3) and “It is not right to laugh at a colleague because he is different” (E5). These records demonstrate that the students began to recognize the suffering caused by exclusion and the importance of collective intervention, aligning themselves with the principles of inclusion and respect for differences. This finding reinforces Freire’s (2005) defense of education as a space for ethical and civic formation.

Although the didactic sequence has generated promising results, its replicability in other contexts depends on factors such as teacher engagement, institutional support, and the specificities of each class. The need for continuing education for teachers on *bullying*, identified in this study, underscores a critical approach to addressing this problem in the school environment, in line with the guidelines established by Federal Law No. 13,185/2015.

Thus, this study contributes to understanding the potential of literature as a pedagogical tool while highlighting the challenges educators face in contexts marked by social inequalities and learning gaps. In this way, the importance of integrative pedagogical practices is reaffirmed, which articulate academic content and social themes, promoting a more meaningful and humanized education.

CONCLUSION

The present research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a didactic sequence, inserted in the discipline of Portuguese Language, using the fairy tale *The Ugly Duckling*, by Hans Christian Andersen, as a didactic resource to combat *bullying* in the school environment. In the scope of this study, effectiveness was understood as the observable changes in the perceptions, discourses and productions of the students about the phenomenon, identified from the comparison between the initial diagnostic records and the manifestations subsequent to the application of the didactic sequence, especially with regard to the expansion of critical awareness, empathy and the ability to recognize the practices of exclusion. The sequence was applied to a 4th-grade class at a rural elementary school in Ponta Grossa, Paraná. The approach explored three main categories: social inclusion and integration, awareness of identity, and respect for differences and diversity, promoting meaningful reflections on the emotional and social changes caused by *bullying*.

Under the teacher’s guidance, the students participated in activities such as reading, interpreting texts, debating, and artistic productions. The teacher played a crucial role in guiding the students, formulating questions that stimulated dialogue, and adapting the content to the students’ interests and skills. This interaction encouraged critical analysis of the narrative and its connection to students’ experiences, highlighting themes such as acceptance, empathy, and diversity. The short story *The Ugly Duckling* was used symbolically and playfully, allowing students to relate the story to their own experiences.

The analysis of the results showed that the didactic sequence was effective in engaging students and stimulating deep reflection. Through the activities, students demonstrated skills for exploring the text, understanding the characters’ feelings and actions, and reflecting on the challenges faced by victims of *bullying*. The students’ artistic productions portrayed situations of exclusion and prejudice, addressing topics such as verbal, physical, and virtual bullying, as well as celebrating cultural and social diversity. The visual works highlighted the importance of combating stereotypes and promoting respect for differences in the school environment.

Despite the advances, weaknesses were observed in the process, especially in reading and writing difficulties among some students, resulting from educational gaps accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The interruption of face-to-face activities and the transition to remote teaching have hindered the development of these skills, limiting some students’ ability to establish broader connections between the text and their realities.

The research highlights the importance of continuing to explore the theme of *bullying* across different textual genres, such as chronicles, poems, and comic books, to expand students’ understanding of the phenomenon and its manifestations. In addition, it highlights the need for continuous teacher training to enable them to use innovative and inclusive methodologies. The promotion of pedagogical practices that integrate themes such as science, technology, and

society, combined with work on diversity, contributes to the formation of critical, empathetic citizens prepared to face social and cultural challenges.

In conclusion, the didactic sequence based on the short story *The Ugly Duckling* is an effective tool for addressing *bullying* and promoting an education that values respect, empathy, and inclusion. This practical and reflective approach broadened students' understanding of the topic and reinforced the essential role of literature in the formation of socio-emotional values and skills. The continuity of this work, combined with the diversification of didactic resources, is essential to consolidate a transformative and meaningful education.

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MHA: Conceptualization (study design, definition of research questions and objectives), Writing (drafting the original manuscript). MRC: Project administration (guidance, supervision or coordination), Review (critical review of the original manuscript and approval of the version to be submitted).

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