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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

Contributions of an investigative and reflective teaching approach in school physical education.

DESENVOLVIMENTO HUMANO E EDUCAÇÃO CORPORAL:

contribuições da postura investigativa e reflexiva docente na educação física escolar

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ABSTRACT

This essay addresses the contributions of reflective teaching practice in school Physical Education to human development and body education. Through a theoretical essay grounded in specialized literature, it seeks to understand how critical reflection on pedagogical practices can promote the integral development of students, considering physical, emotional, social, and cultural aspects. School Physical Education, based on reflective and interdisciplinary methodologies, plays an essential role in the formation of critical, autonomous, and conscious citizens, capable of interacting positively with society. The study also highlights the importance of continuing teacher training as a central element for the qualification of pedagogical practices and for the realization of transformative education.

Keywords: School Physical Education; Reflective Practice; Human Development; Body Education; Teacher Training.

RESUMO

Este ensaio aborda as contribuições da postura investigativa e reflexiva docente na Educação Física escolar para o desenvolvimento humano e a educação corporal. Por meio de um ensaio teórico fundamentado em literatura especializada, busca-se compreender como a reflexão crítica sobre as práticas pedagógicas pode promover o desenvolvimento integral dos educandos, considerando aspectos físicos, emocionais, sociais e culturais. A Educação Física escolar, fundamentada em metodologias reflexivas e interdisciplinares,

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desempenha um papel essencial na formação de cidadãos críticos, autônomos e conscientes, capazes de interagir positivamente com a sociedade. O estudo também destaca a importância da formação continuada dos professores como elemento central para a qualificação das práticas pedagógicas e para a efetivação de uma educação transformadora.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física escolar; Prática reflexiva; Desenvolvimento humano; Educação corporal; Formação docente.

1 INTRODUCTION

Physical education in schools, embedded in a context of profound social, cultural, and educational transformations, faces the challenge of overcoming reductionist approaches that have historically prioritized athletic performance and technical improvement to the detriment of a broader understanding of the educational process. In a society marked by inequalities, the intensification of exclusion processes, and the increasing complexity of human relations, it becomes ever more necessary to understand the body not only as an instrument of performance but as a constitutive dimension of human existence and forms of social participation. In this scenario, marked by demands for inclusion, diversity, and the promotion of citizenship, it becomes essential to rethink the role of this curricular component as a space for the construction of bodily knowledge, the development of socio-emotional skills, and the stimulation of critical thinking (Darido; Rangel, 2005; Freire, 1996). Valuing the body culture of movement, in its multiple manifestations, broadens the pedagogical horizon of Physical Education, allowing it to effectively contribute to the formation of individuals capable of critically interpreting reality and acting in an ethical and democratic manner (Taffarel; Betti, 2006).

In this context, the objective of this essay is to analyze, from a critical and theoretical perspective, the contributions of an investigative and reflective teaching approach to human development and physical education within the scope of school Physical Education. It seeks to problematize traditional conceptions and point out paths for a pedagogical practice that values reflection, autonomy, and the integral formation of students. This is a scientific essay, a textual genre characterized by well-founded argumentation, interpretive analysis, and the authorial construction of thought, without the intention of exhausting the topic or presenting empirical results, but rather to provoke debate and broaden the possibilities of understanding the subject matter (Meneghetti, 2011).

This theoretical and qualitative research is based on critical frameworks from Physical Education, pedagogy, and the Humanities, articulating authors who discuss human

development, body culture, and reflective teaching practice. The text proposes an argumentative reflection, seeking to highlight how continuing education and pedagogical mediation can enhance emancipatory educational processes capable of promoting the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of students.

In summary, it is argued that school Physical Education, guided by critical-reflective approaches and grounded in a broad conception of body culture, plays a strategic role in the processes of human development and civic education. More than teaching bodily techniques or promoting the practice of physical activities, the discipline can constitute a space for the production of meaning, for the expansion of forms of social participation, and for the construction of more conscious relationships with the body, with others, and with reality. By problematizing technicist and sport-oriented perspectives, the centrality of Physical Education for the constitution of a democratic, inclusive school committed to the emancipation of individuals is reaffirmed (Freire, 1996; Bracht, 1999; Kunz, 2010).

2. School Physical Education and Human Development

School Physical Education, when understood in its formative potential, reveals itself as a privileged field for promoting human development in its multiple dimensions, articulating biological, emotional, cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions. Such an understanding requires breaking with reductionist approaches, frequently based on technicist and sport-oriented perspectives, which restrict the educational experience to motor performance or the reproduction of hegemonic models of body and movement (Bracht, 1999; Kunz, 2010; Darido; Rangel, 2005). On the contrary, valuing the body culture of movement, in its plurality and historicity, allows the school to constitute a space for experiencing, reflecting on, and re-signifying bodily practices, promoting the formation of subjects capable of critically interpreting reality and acting ethically and democratically (Collective of Authors, 2012; Betti, 1991).

Human development, from the perspective of Physical Education, cannot be dissociated from the processes of pedagogical mediation and educational intentionality. Body culture, when critically thematized, becomes a vehicle for the construction of identities, values, and knowledge that transcend the realm of the body, reaching the constitution of subjectivity and citizenship (Daólio, 2004; Freire, 1996). From this perspective, bodily practices cease to be understood merely as school content and become instruments of mediation between subjects and social reality, enabling students to broaden their

understanding of themselves, of others, and of the world in which they live. Recent studies show that pedagogical practices that promote reflection, cooperation, and inclusion favor not only motor development but also the strengthening of socio-emotional competencies, such as empathy, respect for diversity, and conflict resolution skills (Darido; Rangel, 2005; Oliveira *et al.*, 2022).

In this context, an investigative and reflective teaching stance emerges as a central element for the re-signification of school Physical Education. Teachers who adopt an investigative and critical stance can broaden the possibilities for problematizing their pedagogical actions, adapting methodologies, and constructing learning environments that respect the singularities of students, contributing to meaningful and emancipatory experiences (Freire, 1996; Santos; Montiel; Afonso, 2021). In this sense, continuing education plays a fundamental role by offering spaces for study, dialogue, and reflection on practice, favoring the collective construction of pedagogical knowledge and the critical confrontation of challenges present in daily school life.

Thus, far from being restricted to technical updating, it should be conceived as a permanent process of professional development, in dialogue with the concrete reality of the subjects and with the ethical-political demands of contemporary education (Nóvoa, 1995; Borges; Carvalho, 2020).

Data from qualitative research, such as that conducted with teachers in the municipal school system of Rio Grande/RS (Santos; Montiel; Afonso, 2021), indicate that participation in training processes that value the sharing of experiences, innovation, and critical reflection contributes to the improvement of pedagogical practices and the realization of transformative education. Such processes enhance pedagogical mediation, expanding the theoretical and methodological repertoire of teachers and favoring the construction of proposals that promote the social, emotional, and cognitive development of students.

The centrality of body culture in school Physical Education implies recognizing that students are not mere reproducers of practices, but historical subjects capable of producing, transforming, and attributing new meanings to bodily manifestations (Daólio, 2004; Betti, 1998). This understanding shifts the focus from a pedagogy centered on the execution of movements to a perspective that values the critical interpretation of cultural practices, allowing students to understand how certain bodily, aesthetic, and behavioral patterns are historically produced and socially legitimized. Critical dialogue with the media and with hegemonic social values, for example, is fundamental for the school to contribute to the

formation of a critical consciousness capable of resisting processes of exclusion and discrimination (Darido, n.d.).

Therefore, school Physical Education, in committing to human development in its multiple dimensions, must invest in pedagogical practices that articulate theory and practice, body and culture, teaching and learning, promoting meaningful and transformative experiences for all students. This commitment requires understanding that development does not occur spontaneously, but results from intentionally organized educational processes, in which the teacher plays a fundamental role as a mediator of cultural appropriation and the production of new knowledge. In this direction, adopting an investigative and reflective stance becomes a relevant condition for constructing pedagogical alternatives capable of critically responding to the contemporary challenges of school and society (Freire, 1996; Taffarel; Betti, 2006; Oliveira *et al.*, 2022).

3. Reflective Practice as a Pedagogical Tool

Reflective practice, beyond being an exercise in self-analysis, constitutes a dialogical and collective process that challenges the teacher to critically rethink the foundations, objectives, and meanings of their pedagogical performance. In the context of school Physical Education, this stance implies recognizing that the teaching of movement is not exhausted in the transmission of techniques, but demands the problematization of the relationships between body, culture, and society, as well as the understanding of bodily experiences as spaces for the production of subjectivities and resistance to normative patterns (Coletivo de Autores, 2012; Daólio, 2004). From this perspective, reflecting on practice does not only mean evaluating didactic procedures, but also questioning the educational purposes that guide pedagogical work, critically analyzing which knowledge is selected, which experiences are privileged, and which subjects are effectively contemplated by the teaching and learning processes.

Teacher reflection, when guided by a critical perspective, enhances the construction of pedagogical practices that value active listening to students, the negotiation of meanings, and the co-authorship of learning processes. This implies shifting the focus from the centrality of the teacher to the valorization of student protagonism, promoting situations in which students can express their experiences, question norms, and collectively construct new meanings for body culture (Freire, 1996; Daólio, 2004). This movement does not represent the negation of the teacher's role, but its re-signification. The teacher ceases to

exclusively occupy the position of transmitter of content and begins to act as a mediator of formative processes, creating conditions for students to critically appropriate historically produced knowledge and attribute new meanings to their bodily experiences.

Furthermore, an investigative approach favors the identification of structural and symbolic barriers present in daily school life, such as gender, race, and disability prejudices, allowing teachers to intervene more sensitively and ethically in the face of inequalities. Critical analysis of practices enables the creation of pedagogical strategies that promote inclusion, respect for diversity, and the valuing of multiple ways of being and existing in the world (Darido; Rangel, 2005; Pinto *et al.*, 2025). By recognizing that school experiences are traversed by different social markers, teachers broaden their capacity to understand the singularities of students and to construct pedagogical proposals committed to equity and the democratization of access to knowledge of body culture.

In this context, continuing education should be understood as a space for collective problematization, where dialogue among peers and reflection on concrete experiences fuel the construction of innovative and contextualized knowledge. Training processes that encourage action research, case analysis, and the collaborative production of pedagogical projects contribute to strengthening teacher autonomy and expanding teachers' critical repertoire (Santos; Montiel; Afonso, 2021; Borges; Carvalho, 2020). More than offering ready-made answers to daily challenges, continuing education should foster the development of a permanent attitude of study, investigation, and reflection, capable of supporting processes of transformation in pedagogical practice and the improvement of educational work.

Finally, reflective practice, linked to continuing education, not only improves teaching but also strengthens the teacher's ethical and political commitment to social transformation, making school Physical Education a space for emancipation, dialogue, and the construction of citizenship. By adopting reflection as a guiding principle of pedagogical action, the teacher expands the possibilities of building more conscious, contextualized practices committed to the holistic development of students, reaffirming the social role of the school in the production of knowledge, values, and forms of democratic participation.

4. Physical Education and Citizenship

Physical education, understood as an expression of the culture and historicity of individuals, broadens the horizon of school Physical Education by promoting a critical

understanding of bodily practices in their multiple dimensions. By thematizing games, sports, dances, fights, and gymnastics, the discipline not only diversifies the students' motor repertoire but also enables the analysis of power relations, identities, and values that permeate the bodily universe (Coletivo de Autores, 2012; Daólio, 2004). From this perspective, the body ceases to be understood exclusively as a biological object or instrument of performance, becoming recognized as a historical and cultural construction, marked by experiences, meanings, and forms of social insertion. This critical approach allows the content to be problematized in light of contemporary social, political, and cultural issues, favoring the construction of civic awareness and the appreciation of diversity.

In this context, an investigative and reflective teaching approach is fundamental for Physical Education to transcend the mere reproduction of techniques and become a space for dialogue, listening, and negotiation of meaning. Teachers who adopt a critical perspective broaden the possibilities of articulating the contents of body culture with the demands of society, promoting debates on inclusion, respect for differences, gender equity, and human rights (Darido; Rangel, 2005; Pinto *et al.*, 2025). By establishing relationships between bodily practices and the challenges experienced by students in their daily lives, the teacher fosters more meaningful learning processes, in which school knowledge begins to dialogue with the concrete reality of the subjects. This perspective contributes to the development of autonomy, critical thinking, and student protagonism, essential elements for building a critical and committed civic education focused on social transformation.

In high school, Physical Education can play a strategic role by linking physical practices to interdisciplinary projects, health promotion initiatives, and discussions about citizenship, ethics, and democratic participation (Maldonado *et al.*, 2018). By integrating knowledge of the body and culture, the discipline enhances students' education, preparing them to face social challenges and exercise citizenship consciously and responsibly. More than discussing healthy habits or encouraging physical activity, it is about creating conditions for young people to critically understand the discourses, values, and interests that permeate the bodily universe, developing greater intellectual autonomy in the face of the demands of contemporary social life.

Thus, school Physical Education, grounded in body culture and guided by critical-reflective approaches, reaffirms its commitment to building a democratic, pluralistic, and inclusive school. By promoting experiences that articulate corporeality, culture, ethics, and social participation, the discipline expands the possibilities for students to critically understand reality and act consciously in different spaces of collective life. In this way,

Physical Education strengthens its educational role not only in the physical development of students but also in the constitution of subjects capable of actively participating in processes of social transformation.

5 Challenges and Possibilities in Pedagogical Practice

The pedagogical practice in school Physical Education is traversed by structural, curricular, and cultural challenges that directly impact the quality and scope of its formative proposals. The precariousness of spaces, materials, and teaching resources, frequently reported in different educational contexts, limits the diversity of bodily experiences and restricts students' access to innovative and inclusive practices (Darido; Rangel, 2005; Oliveira *et al.*, 2022).

However, such difficulties cannot be understood solely as material problems. In many cases, they express historical processes of devaluation of Physical Education within the school, frequently reduced to a recreational or secondary function in relation to other curricular components. Furthermore, the students' disinterest, often associated with the reproduction of traditional and insignificant models, highlights the need to rethink the curriculum and teaching strategies, bringing them closer to the realities, interests, and needs of the students (Darido, n.d.).

Another relevant obstacle relates to gaps in initial teacher training, which, in many cases, still prioritizes technocratic and sport-oriented approaches to the detriment of a broader understanding of body culture and human development in its multiple dimensions (Bracht, 1999; Kunz, 2010). This limitation contributes to the maintenance of exclusionary practices and to the difficulty of engaging with the diversity present in the school environment (Sousa *et al.*, 2024). When teacher training remains predominantly focused on the technical dimension of teaching, the possibility of understanding students in their historical, social, and cultural complexity is reduced, which can compromise the construction of more inclusive and meaningful pedagogical proposals.

Overcoming these challenges demands strengthening an investigative and reflective approach and investing in ongoing training processes that promote dialogue, action research, and the collective construction of knowledge (Santos; Montiel; Afonso, 2021; Borges; Carvalho, 2020). Teachers who engage in permanent processes of study and reflection expand their possibilities of identifying barriers, reinventing methodologies, and building pedagogical proposals that are more sensitive to the singularities of students,

promoting inclusion, participation, and autonomy (Freire, 1996; Lima; Moreira, 2013). More than adapting activities or diversifying methodological strategies, it is about building a critical understanding of school reality, recognizing that educational challenges require collective responses that are constantly reconstructed in light of the concrete needs of the individuals.

On the other hand, successful experiences reported in research indicate that the adoption of interdisciplinary practices, the appreciation of body culture in its plurality, and the openness to student protagonism broaden student engagement and enhance the transformative role of school Physical Education (Maldonado *et al.*, 2018; Ferreira; Ramos, 2021).

These possibilities demonstrate that, even in the face of adversity, it is possible to build a Physical Education committed to human development in its multiple dimensions, provided there is pedagogical intentionality, critical reflection, and openness to the new. In this sense, challenges should not be understood merely as obstacles to teaching practice, but also as elements that drive the search for pedagogical alternatives capable of expanding the educational potential of the school and strengthening its commitment to critical citizen formation.

6 DISCUSSION

By deepening the discussion on the investigative and reflective stance in school Physical Education, it becomes evident that its power lies in its capacity to challenge traditional paradigms and open space for the construction of innovative and socially committed pedagogical practices. Critical reflection, as argued by Freire (1996) and Daólio (2004), is not limited to the revision of methods, but implies a constant reinterpretation of the meanings attributed to the body, movement, and culture in the school context. This process demands from the teacher an ethical and investigative stance, capable of recognizing the contradictions present in daily life and promoting experiences that challenge historically naturalized stereotypes, prejudices, and exclusions (Taffarel; Betti, 2006; Coletivo de Autores, 2012). In this direction, teaching ceases to be understood as a mere execution of curricular prescriptions and becomes an intellectual and political practice, committed to the formation of students and to the transformation of the concrete conditions in which educational processes take place.

The appreciation of body culture, in its multiplicity of manifestations, broadens the horizon of Physical Education by allowing different knowledge, practices, and identities to

be recognized and legitimized in the school environment (Daólio, 2004; Sousa *et al.*, 2024). This perspective challenges the prescriptive curriculum and the logic of standardization, paving the way for interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of themes such as diversity, inclusion, public health, and citizenship (Darido; Rangel, 2005; Maldonado *et al.*, 2018). By recognizing that bodily practices are historically produced and traversed by disputes over values, interests, and meanings, Physical Education expands its possibilities of contributing to a critical understanding of reality and to the formation of individuals capable of actively participating in social life. The dialogue between distinct theoretical frameworks, such as those of Freire, Kunz, and the Collective of Authors, demonstrates that critical reflection is also an exercise in listening and negotiation, in which the teacher acts as a mediator in processes of collective knowledge construction and re-signification of bodily experiences.

However, the implementation of this perspective faces concrete limitations, such as institutional resistance to innovation, the fragmentation of school time and space, and the insufficiency of continuing education policies that value teacher autonomy (Santos; Montiel; Afonso, 2021; Oliveira *et al.*, 2022). These obstacles demonstrate that pedagogical transformations do not depend exclusively on the individual effort of teachers, but also on objective working conditions, educational policies, and institutional projects that guide the organization of the school. Despite these obstacles, experiences reported in research and training projects demonstrate that the creation of learning communities, action research, and collaborative work among teachers are effective strategies to strengthen reflection on practice and promote significant changes in daily school life (Borges; Carvalho, 2020; Lima; Moreira, 2013).

Thus, an investigative and reflective approach, articulated with the appreciation of body culture and a commitment to human development in its multiple dimensions, constitutes the foundation for a school Physical Education that not only resists technocratic and exclusionary trends, but also reinvents itself as a space for emancipation, dialogue, and the production of socially relevant meanings. More than preparing students for the execution of physical practices, it is about creating conditions so that they can critically understand reality, position themselves in relation to it, and participate consciously in the processes of constructing collective life.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The reflections developed throughout this essay highlight the need for a school Physical Education that transcends traditional and technocratic perspectives, establishing itself as a privileged space for human development and the production of socially relevant knowledge. Grounded in critical-reflective approaches, the discipline expands its educational possibilities by articulating corporeality, culture, ethics, and citizenship, responding sensitively to the contemporary demands of the school and society (Freire, 1996; Daólio, 2004; Coletivo de Autores, 2012). More than promoting the learning of bodily practices, Physical Education can contribute to the formation of individuals capable of critically understanding reality, positioning themselves in relation to it, and actively participating in the processes of constructing collective life.

An investigative and reflective approach, when linked to continuing education, expands the possibilities for teachers to reinvent their methodologies, engage with the diversity of students, and build more inclusive and meaningful learning environments (Santos; Montiel; Afonso, 2021; Borges; Carvalho, 2020). This movement requires addressing structural challenges, such as scarce resources and curricular rigidity, but also demands the strengthening of public policies committed to valuing teaching work and the collective construction of knowledge. From this perspective, continuing education ceases to be understood as a mere process of technical updating and becomes a permanent space for reflection, knowledge production, and professional development.

Furthermore, valuing body culture in its plurality - games, dances, fights, sports, gymnastics, and popular practices - broadens the students' formative repertoire and contributes to the construction of socially relevant identities, values, and meanings (Coletivo de Autores, 2012; Daólio, 2004). By recognizing that such manifestations are historical and cultural productions, Physical Education expands the possibilities for a critical understanding of the world and fosters educational processes committed to respect for diversity, democratic participation, and social justice. By articulating theory and practice, body and culture, teaching and learning, the discipline reaffirms its relevance within the set of formative experiences developed by the school.

Therefore, the implementation of a Physical Education committed to human development in its multiple dimensions depends on the construction of pedagogical projects that recognize the body as an expression of culture, history, and social relations. Such a commitment requires the engagement of teachers in ongoing processes of study, reflection,

and training, as well as the consolidation of institutional conditions that favor critical and inclusive educational practices. Ultimately, defending a Physical Education guided by critical reflection and the valuing of body culture means defending an education committed to the holistic development of individuals, the democratization of knowledge, and the construction of a more just, participatory, and humanizing society.

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