

A Review on the Challenges of Teaching Physical Education

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ABSTRACT: *It is very common that teachers' degrees are questioned about the fundamental knowledge and methods one has to hold in order to teach. This kind of reflection concerning teachers' education requires constant research and education update so that the teachers' social meaning can be defined. Knowing something does not mean only being informed about some field, it is necessary that they are able to utilize these pieces of information to build knowledge. Therefore, teachers and professors are mediators between the social application of information and their pupils. Some other problematic factors are added to Physical Education teaching processes, in which teaching and learning active methodologies, as well as reflexive interventions about teaching practices, are not perceived. On the other hand, it is common that health majors in general also lack a capable and well educated student body who can build their own knowledge; involvement in real transforming actions (presenting different personal point of views); multidisciplinary relations (on the contrary, it can be easily noticed a certain detachment from other knowledge areas); monitoring criteria and evaluation of the teaching and learning processes.*

Keywords: *Teaching. Physical Education. Higher Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this article is to make the characteristics of health majors higher education (HE) intelligible, specifically concerning the Physical Education major, regarding a historic analysis. In the past twenty years, Brazil has been through an important growth process on its higher education system: the entrance test people need to take to get into universities changed, to be more precise, and it has made education more accessible to a larger range of people [1]. The democratization at this level of education is very significant, once it can be easily noticed that social growth and financial ascension are attributed to it, especially on health majors. The difficulties found on the HE in Brazil can be explained due to historical context, once, until 1878, this level of education was strict only to the public e private central power (richer people), provoking inertia within the population. The broadening and investment on this area were subjected to the government and its interests at that time [2]. Thus, the government used to decide what kind of institutions they wanted to open and their respective objectives, curriculum and programs, as well as the proximity they wanted to keep with the professors and deans of those schools [3].

The current higher education in Brazil presents a system which divides the education into two different cycles: the first one is the undergraduate school, considered to be the first professional formation and which are divided into technologist's (associate degree), licentiate (European academic degree) and bachelor's degree, which are responsible for students' professional development and their social applications; the second cycle is the graduate school, which may include *lato sensu* specialization, master's and doctor's degree [4]. The Physical Education major can be either under a licentiate or a bachelor's program. The latter was created recently and it has become an important issue when it comes to professors' formation on the higher education.

Researches show that more than half of the students who were accepted by universities revealed personal and academic difficulties, culminating in an increase of their disappointment levels [5], *i.e.*, although the number of students who get into higher education institutions is rising, certain amount of them is made of frustrated people because of what they get back from their major choices is not what they were expecting from it. Professors' potential is very questioned about the fundamental knowledge and work experience they should have in order to teach. This kind of reflection concerning teachers' education requires constant research and education update so that the teachers' social meaning can be correctly defined.

Knowing something does not mean only being informed about some field, it is necessary that they are able to utilize these pieces of information to build up knowledge. Therefore, teachers and professors are mediators between social application of information and their pupils [7]. The difficulties cited above, students' disappointment and professors' updates are part of a current problem, once education is nowadays considered to be a two-way road [8].

II. HIGHER EDUCATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Higher education in Physical Education and, consequently, professors who have taught in this major were all influenced by historical contexts. The history behind Physical Education in Brazil started out with the creation of the first temporary major: the Military Physical Education, in 1910. Mostly only servicemen used to participate in this major and the professors who used to teach it were former athletes and medical doctors. The first civilians major was created in São Paulo, in 1934, and in Rio de Janeiro, in 1939 [9].

Physical Education classes have been mandatory since 1930 and, by the time, it consisted of the practice of gymnastics in schools [10]. The main idea behind it, in that year, was to make Physical Education as a hygienic and moralizing tool, because practicing it would allow physical development and health promotion. Besides that, there were eugenic purposes – that is the reason why medical doctors were part of the teachers group – and also the idea of preparing people to defend the nation – justifying the first military centers specialized in this major [11].

Outside the governmental scope, the production of the official guidelines is measured by several learning fields among the science areas, *i.e.*, politics set up pedagogical trends which differ from the appropriation of schools' and professors' pedagogical speeches [12].

The history behind the profession of Physical Educator in Brazil can be divided into three phases: the first one is related to the professionals who used to demonstrate for and/or write about the necessity of regulating their profession; the second phase happened in the 80's, when a law project followed legal channels regarding this regulation; and the third part is linked to the process of regulating this profession, which was promulgated by the then president of Brazil on September 1st, 1998, and published on the Official Journal of the Union on September 9th, 1998. According to the Physical Education Federal Council, until that day, the universities which yet did not offer the major of Physical Education would have to offer it as classes to other majors (first as mandatory classes, but then it became optional).

Analyzing the curricular guidelines of the many undergrad majors in Physical Education in Brazilian universities, it is common to notice their similar organization concerning fields of study and professional formation through thematic axis of knowledge, drawing boundaries between the bachelor's degree and the licentiate (European academic degree) formation, turning them into two different academic-professional areas [13]. It is important to mention that some topics, such as the regularization of the profession and its later division into *Baccalaureate* and Licentiate, are very polemic among the teachers' and students' bodies, as well as in higher education institutes, which multiplies the divergent ideas regarding professional duties and teaching methods.

Formally, Physical Education is characterized by two distinct majors: licentiate, which allows professionals to teach the area in schools, from kindergarten to high school; and *baccalaureate*, which enable them to act at clubs, gyms, camping, etc. However, this distinction has always been target of controversial debates involving the professionalization and the Physical Education knowledge consolidation [13], whereas many other majors, for instance, Biology, are also divided into these two areas, but may differ from Physical Education because of their historical context.

This discussion is not limited to the other majors' topics, for example: transcript, teaching methods and evaluation. Some studies have shown the importance of approximating the type of the degree to the school and social realities, letting students in constant contact with trivial dilemmas regarding teacher and professional interventions [14].

The authors who defended the creation of the *baccalaureate* major believed that this improvement would promote qualification to professionals of the area, whereas the authors against it believed that this would cause a greater fragmentation on these professionals' formation, provoking a division especially among those who produce and transmit knowledge [15].

It is important to highlight that the particularities on teaching Physical Education add up to other problematic points, in which the practical applications of teaching-learning methodologies, the promotion of reflexive interventions about traditional practices, students' trainings as an autonomous being regarding the acquisition of their own knowledge, the involvement in reality-transforming actions (which is currently presenting certain divergence concerning other people's points of view), the interdisciplinary relations (which is in fact becoming less and less common), the criteria to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning methods applied to health majors, etc. could not be noticed [16].

Future Physical Education professors worry about the conceptions of pedagogical practices because, if they commit any misinterpretations, they will cause problems on the consolidation of both the program and the professors' university body [17]. The Physical Education entrance test until the 90s consisted of a physical test, which does not exist anymore, although students' practices and physical capabilities in sports disciplines are required. One of the most important factor responsible for professors' difficulties regarding their relation with the pedagogical knowledge content is the lack of a clear determination by the professors' teaching programs when it comes to justifying the application of certain pedagogical practices [18].

Thus, the professors' formation programs involve a broad and diverse range of fields of knowledge, and each discipline is characterized by their own culture. Due to the remarkable differences that exist on the practice of teaching Physical Education and their specific objectives, curricular conceptions, pedagogical speeches and fields of interest and action, it is a complex task, in which the initial step may be a better definition of the current professional context and their social role [19], and then the utilization of active methodologies so that the student can absorb this knowledge.

III. CONCLUSION

Within this context, the University, which should be compromised to overcoming social contradictions, can also play an important role by shortening the gap between academic community and society, which will provide the development of healthy life style practices, culminating in disease prevention and physical-functional capability maintenance in the individuals' both home and social environments. This can also provide benefits to future professionals, who will have the opportunity to live integral health care, broadening their horizons to future interventions.

This view of guiding professional formation demands the participation of both students' and professors' bodies, as well as the directors and the community, to accomplish collective expectations and to consolidate the professors' responsibilities, which can be achieved by developing thoughts that take into consideration different scenarios regarding teaching/learning development, culminating in the construction of contextualized and informed knowledge concerning education with abilities and attitudes that allow them to formulate propositions and solutions to questions found on their everyday professional life.

However, it is necessary that the predominant college graduation process, characterized by the flux of theoretical content transfer through disciplines that segregate and hierarchize scientific knowledge, is overcome. Nowadays, students learn from a solid theoretical base which does not allow them to fulfill their professional life with excellence, not to mention the several contexts and approaches they can find on field activities to which they are not trained completely. When it comes to health majors, this results in professionals whose actions are based on a technical application of their scientific knowledge that was previously passed on to them, turning their social role into a more straight-forward practice towards specific problems, and also respecting methodical execution standards of technical-scientific knowledge. Therefore, students become inert when they need to face problems and incapable of proposing and executing innovative solutions, not to mention utilizing their theoretical and practical knowledge to achieve transforming characteristics.

In this context, professionals who would like to teach not only Physical Education, but also in different majors, should present evolutionary and continuous characteristics, which should also be related to the context in which they are developed, given that the orientations that guide to these changes affect not only what surrounds them, but also the institutions themselves. Therefore, considering that an intense reflexion about the teaching-learning process is necessary, especially to professors' pedagogical knowledge, new point of views rise, bringing up new discussion events and thus new studies and researches.

Mas para tal, deve ocorrer a superação do modelo predominante de formação universitária identificado como assentado na transferência de conteúdos teóricos a partir de disciplinas que compartimentalizam e hierarquizam o conhecimento científico, para que o discente institua uma sólida base teórica que lhe permitiria a partir de sua aplicação uma atuação competente para alcançar a excelência profissional, sem considerar, no entanto, os diferentes possíveis contextos que podem se apresentar nas atividades de campo. Disto resulta, no caso da área da saúde, profissionais cuja natureza de suas ações se assenta no caráter tecnicista de aplicação de conhecimentos científicos que lhe foram repassados, restringindo sua atuação a uma prática assistencial, dirigida a problemas específicos, respeitando uma prescrição metódica de execução de saberes técnico-científicos, ou seja, constituem-se profissionais que não possuem o hábito de refletir sobre sua prática e sobre a realidade que o cerca, tornando-os, portanto, inertes diante dos problemas, incapazes de propor e executar soluções inovadoras e de utilizar seu conhecimento teórico e prático para atingir uma práxis transformadora.

Neste sentido aponta-se uma formação para docência com um caráter de evolução e continuidade também relacionada com o contexto na qual a mesma se desenvolve, sendo que a orientação para mudança que permeia esta prática afeta não apenas o que está a sua volta, como também as próprias instituições. Considerando, portanto, é necessária uma intensa reflexão sobre o processo de construção dos saberes pedagógicos dos professores, permitindo que novos olhares sejam lançados, novas discussões sejam realizadas e que consequentemente novos estudos sejam executados.

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