NOTIONS OF IDENTITY OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF OLYMPIC EDUCATION COURSEWARE

NOÇÕES DE IDENTIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA ESCOLAR NA CONSTRUÇÃO DE MATERIAL DIDÁTICO DE EDUCAÇÃO OLÍMPICA

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RESUMO

O presente artigo debruça seu olhar, a partir de um novo enfoque teórico, sobre os dados apresentados por Basso¹ em pesquisa cujo principal objetivo foi validar qualitativamente um material didático em Educação Olímpica. Analisa-se neste artigo especificamente os apontamentos realizados pelos professores colaboradores da validação quando estes sinalizam para a necessidade de uma presença maior de atividades práticas no material didático. Utiliza-se para essa análise os conceitos de Santos² e de Hall³ quando estes autores tratam da questão da identidade pela diferença. A partir destes autores procurou-se analisar qual a noção de identidade atribuída para a disciplina Educação Física a partir dos apontamentos dos docentes e qual a consequência desta identidade para a construção de materiais didáticos de Educação Olímpica voltados para esse componente curricular.

Palavras-chave: Educação física. Identidade. Educação olímpica.

ABSTRACT

This article, based on a new theoretical approach, focuses on data from Basso¹, the primary objective of which was to qualitatively validate courseware on Olympic Education. Specifically, notes made by teachers involved in validating the courseware are analysed, in particular where they point to the need for a greater number of practical activities in the courseware. The concepts of Santos² and Hall³ that address the issue of identity by difference are used in this analysis. Those authors' work will be used as a basis to analyse the notion of identity attributed to the discipline of physical education in the teachers' notes and the consequence of this identity for the construction of Olympic Education courseware for this curriculum component.

Keywords: Physical education. Identity. Olympic education.

Introduction

Research conducted by Basso¹ entitled *Possibilities of an Olympic Education in School Physical Education* sought to examine the applicability of courseware⁴ for education in values by means of sport with reference to the Olympic Movement. The primary objective was to qualitatively validate the pedagogical material - Olympic Education Handbook (OEH) - examining how physical education teachers understand, selects and use its activities in their classes. In so doing, the aim was to obtain a structural evaluation of the OEH from those teachers participating in the research.

The research consisted of an exploratory qualitative approach with four physical education teachers working in primary education at different teaching levels and was developed as follows:

- Distribution of courseware - OEH - to the teachers:

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- Structured interviews with the teachers, covering issues related to initial and continuing education, reasons for career choice, outlook regarding sports and values attributed to sports;

- Periodic semi-structured interviews with the teachers to collect data on comments, criticisms and suggestions about the OEH's activities;
- Collection of manuals delivered to the teachers with their written observations;
- Application of an evaluative questionnaire on the courseware, taking into account criteria such as organisation and method (Is it organised coherently and functionally? Does it develop a facilitating and enriching learning methodology? Does it encourage autonomy and creativity? Do the applied activities stimulate participation? Does it encourage learning and the use of other sources of knowledge and other instructional materials? Does it allow for diverse educational pathways? Does it include suggestions for diverse learning experiences, including practical/experimental activities? Does it propose activities that are appropriate for developing interdisciplinary projects?); information (Does the text clearly explain the general and specific objectives of each chapter? Is it suitable for the development of skills defined in the curriculum of the respective year and/or educational level? Does it respond to the objectives and contents of the program/curriculum guidelines? Does it provide correct and updated information to its intended students? Does it provide relevant and appropriate information to its intended students? Does it avoid discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, etc.?); and communication (Does the graphical construction and organisation facilitate its use? Are the texts clear? Are the texts concise? Are the texts adequate in terms of teachers' understanding? Are different types of illustrationscorrect and relevant and do they relate adequately to the text?), along with an indication of the age range for which the courseware would be best suited.

The validation process consisted of a combination of three analytical steps: [a] analysis of how the teachers involved in the research appropriated the knowledge present in the OEH; [b] verification of the possibilities and limitations of courseware offering an Olympic education for physical education classes; and [c] adjustments in the OEH contents.

This article focuses specifically on the notes made by the teachers that identified the need for a greater number of practical activities in the OEH. This courseware has four chapters: sport ethics, health and active life, and the pursuit of excellence and social responsibility. All the activities in those chapters are divided into reading and discussion (entitled RD) and practical activities (entitled PA). The objective of the re-examination of these data is to adopt a new theoretical approach for further analysis that can contribute to a consideration of the courseware's construction of school physical education.

In this regard, when teachers indicate that a greater number of practical activities are needed in the OEH, which epistemic status are they claiming for school physical education? What are the peculiarities that this discipline adopts, according to the teachers involved in this research? Is it possible to speak of an identity of physical education based on these peculiarities? And finally, what are the implications of the recognition of these peculiarities in terms of the construction of school physical education courseware, focusing in this particular case on Olympic Education?

The concepts of identity assumed by Hall³ and Santos² form the basis of this work. Other ancillary studies appear throughout the article, giving support to the discussion of the peculiarities of school physical education and the consequences of these peculiarities for formulating didactic-pedagogic material that focuses more specifically on the Olympic Education perspective.

Questions of identity: Concepts, definition and identity by difference

In general, defining the concept of identity is no easy task, given the different meanings attached to this term. In this regard, Hall³, working with the conceptualisation of identity and clarification of the issues related to identity in post-modernity, states "[...] the concept itself with which we are dealing, identity, is too complex, too underdeveloped and little understood in contemporary social science". Perhaps the explanation for this difficulty in conceptualising identity lies in the fact that "[...] the first modern name of identity is subjectivity". and everything following objectivity becomes more difficult to define categorically.

The definition of identity considered here will assume the notion of identity and social belonging, or identity as a form of representation "[...] continuously formed and transformed in relation to the ways in which we are addressed in the cultural systems that surround us^{3:13}. According to this author^{3:13},

The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities that are not unified around a coherent self. Within us, there are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously shifting.

Santos^{2:31} reinforces this idea by saying that

[...] cultural identities are not rigid and are even less immutable. They are always transient and fleeting results of identification processes. Even seemingly stronger identities, such as woman, man, African, Latin American or European country, hide negotiations of meaning, polysemic games and temporality shocks in a constant process of transformation that is ultimately responsible for the succession of hermeneutical configurations that from time to time give body and life to such identities. Identities are thus identifications in progress.

However, the primary idea shared here is that of identity by difference. The central argument of Hall's³ work is the idea of the fragmentation and dislocation of identity in post-modernity, based above all on the phenomenon of globalisation, highlighting the primary outcomes and consequences of these processes.

Despite this discussion around the decentred identities of post-modernity, this author does not fail to make an argument about identity characterised by difference, an idea developed here. According to Hall³, societies in late modernity are characterised by difference: "[...] I know who I am in relation to others (e.g., my mother) that I cannot be"^{3:40}.

Santos^{2:31} reinforces this idea and adds that:

[...] Identifications as well as plurals are dominated by the obsession of difference and hierarchy of distinctions. He who asks about his identity questions hegemonic references but in doing so puts himself in another's position and simultaneously in a situation of need and therefore subordinate.

In the case of physical education, especially in the school context, is it possible to apply these concepts of identity?

These issues become relevant when we see that the concepts of identity used here refer to subjects that are initially difficult to imagine in the context of a social practice such as physical education. However, from the moment that we consider social practice as a cultural production carried out by subjects, the concepts presented have meaning in the analysis of the identity of physical education, because it is from these everyday social practices that cultural identities are constituted.

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The issue of the identity of school physical education: difference as a form of recognition

The methodological approach used by Basso¹ has produced a series of data relating to the notes made by teachers contributing to the OEH that provided the basis for the validation and better adaptation of this courseware for its use in the promotion of the so-called Olympic Education in school physical education.

However, some of the data, analysed from a new viewpoint, namely, that of the concepts of identity, point to a common and proper perspective of school physical education advocated by the teachers participating in the study. This perspective is considered as the identity assumed by this discipline from these teachers' point of view.

As stated previously, the data upon which this article focuses are those in which teachers point to the need for a greater number of practical activities in the OEH coursework. Such notes are made at different points during the study, sometimes more explicitly and sometimes more implicitly.

In this regard, in a manner that was more implicit, the teacher referred to as Teacher 3 notes that reading and discussion activities (RD) in the OEH could be structured as practical experience exercises that would generate reflection and discussion by students after the exercises were complete. The same teacher, based on an RD activity in the first chapter, makes the following suggestion:

In relation to this type of didactic sequence of study and reflection, I notice that its objective is for students to know themselves better. It leads them to reflect on the values that they believe are crucial to begin to have relationships with values practiced in their day-to-day lives. Following this idea, one day I asked the students to write about a value that they believe is fundamental to social life. Then, we drove to the football field, divided into teams and asked each student to use the chosen value during the game. At the end of the class, a dialogue was opened among the students so that each could reveal their chosen value and reflect on the limits and possibilities of experiencing it. On another day, I did the same for addictions. Instead of practicing in the game, students should overcome them. These educational experiences must be carefully rationed so as not to saturate students with discussions and reflections. The students' primary interest is to experience sport. Using this approach, there were pedagogical possibilities that allowed the integration of procedural and attitudinal goals (interview with Professor 3 in Basso^{1:79}, author's emphasis).

Pursuing this angle, Basso¹ notes more precisely that in observations written along side activities in the manual that was collected at the end of the study, especially in the chapters "In Search of Excellence" and "Social Responsibility", Teacher 3 reinforces his suggestion that discussion of activities should be based on practical experience: "[...] these questions are very interesting to discuss after the game" (Teacher 3 in Basso^{1:95}).

Similarly, this is what Teacher 4 indicates when he notes that his students are more interested in concrete practical activities than discursive activities, thus indicating a perspective on physical education that is not formed only by teachers but is also influenced by students.

The more explicit form of noting the need for a greater number of practical activities for courseware came from the seventh question - Are there suggestions for diverse learning experiences, including activities of a practical/experimental nature? present in the 'organization and method' criterion of the OEH assessment tool. With respect to this question, all of the teachers categorically stated that the OEH had an inadequate number of activities of this type and suggested the inclusion of more such activities. Basso¹ himself highlights this issue in his conclusions.

What is suggested here is that in addition to notes and suggestions for validating and adjusting the OEH for future use, the data presented above provide a specific perspective on physical education in the school context. Based on the concepts used in this article, this perspective constitutes one of the identifying dimensions attributed to the discipline from the viewpoint of the teachers involved in the research. By pointing out the need for courseware that favours more practical activities, or at least that is based on practice-experimental experience for subsequent reflection and discussion among students, these teachers are claiming their own epistemic status for school physical education that privileges a different relationship with knowledge when compared to other school subjects—an eminently practical knowledge based on bodily experiences.

One need only examine the ideas of Hall³ and Santos² regarding the recognition of identity by difference to consider that the peculiarities of this discipline indicated by the teachers participating in the study "Valores em Jogo: A Possibilidade de Educação Olímpica na Educação Física Escolar" (*Values at Stake: The possibility of an Olympic Education in School Physical Education*) constitute one identifying dimension of school physical education from those teachers' viewpoints. Specifically, that dimension constitutes a discipline of eminently practical bodily character that privileges another way of knowing different from those used in other disciplines present in the school environment, i.e., disciplines of a more theoretical nature that value knowledge embodied by verbal, written and textual language, to the detriment of body language.

In this regard, Santos and Maximiano⁵have conducted a study on the evaluative practices of physical education teachers and, in addition to data on the possibility of evaluating physical education classes, found further data that allowed them to question the epistemological status itself entailed by this discipline. In their studies, the participating teachers, by noting the possibilities and difficulties involved in evaluating students in physical education classes, also indicate a specificity of this discipline regarding knowledge in relation to other disciplinary components:

The difficulties presented by the teacher at the beginning of her professional career, along with the possibilities that she created/consumed for her evaluative practice, lead us to a wider discussion, because this is not just a matter of gathering information but of the meanings attributed to evaluation. In this case, we must emphasise the fact that we are dealing with a curriculum component that assumes an epistemic status that privileges another relationship with knowledge, compared to other school subjects. For Schneider and Bueno⁶, physical education does not privilege the *object-knowledge* that can be incorporated through an epistemic relation to objects, but rather knowledge achieved through mastery of an activity^{5:6}.

Even though they are studies with reportedly different objectives, Basso's¹ research (analysed here under a new theoretical approach) and Santos and Maximiano's⁵ research to a certain extent permit an understanding beyond their main objectives, i.e., the meanings and notion of identity attributed to school physical education by the teachers who participated in both studies. In this sense, as noted above, what is perceived is the construction of an identity for physical education as an evaluative discipline of practical and experimental knowledge related to body issues, which signals a change in the manner of legitimising physical education in the school context.

The trajectory of physical education, especially when present in school, reveals a history of devaluation of this curriculum component when compared to other disciplines, particularly those of a theoretical nature.

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Physical education, in dealing with the relationship of *domain-knowledge* and *relational-knowledge* that is centralised in the *doing with* dimension, subverts the school form. The school is the place of the word, of language, or of other forms of symbolisation of the world, of text, of systematised knowledge that exists through language, and therefore values in the *speak about* dimension are in opposition to those in the *doing with* dimension^{5:6-7}.

This caused and causes many physical education teachers to insist on attempting to legitimise the presence of this curriculum component in the school context either by finding common ground with more valued disciplines within educational institutions or by adopting strategies that bring the knowledge of physical education closer to the knowledge of these disciplines, thus devaluing the identity of physical education as a discipline of the experimental practice dimension in relation to body issues, but no less important than the others, especially those of a theoretical nature.

[...] physical education is not a school subject 'like the others.' And I add: thankfully. It is not like the others because it addresses a way of learning other than the appropriation of stated knowledge. Instead of trying to undo or hide this difference, it should be highlighted and clarified. The fact that it is a different discipline does not mean it has less legitimacy than other disciplines. Why does physical education tend to be devalued in schools? Because teachers of other disciplines restrict knowledge to what can be stated through language and therefore do not consider physical education as a whole school subject. It is not their fault: together with courseware consisting of sets of statements, they are victims of the dominant social representation of what islearning and knowing, a representation that expresses social relations of domination. Instead of striving to appear to be normal, conforming to the dominant norm of school legitimacy, physical education should, in my view, legitimise itself by reference to another norm, another figure of learning ^{6:243}.

By pointing to the need for more practical activities in the composition of the OEM, one can conclude that somehow the teachers have sought to legitimise this curriculum component by what it is, not by that which school logic indicates that it should be, thus ultimately understanding the identity of the discipline by difference.

School Physical Education identity and Olympic Education

To understand this relation, it is necessary to clarify some points that are based on both the Olympic Movement and Olympic Education.

With respect to the Olympic Movement, it must be said that its development and its ideology have affected and continue to affect how sport has been practised over the last 100 years and the values attributed to the practice of sport.

Although the Olympic Movement is not its only influence, traditional forms of modern sport and especially the belief that sport, inter alia, educates, brings people together, makes people equal, and teaches people how to win and lose have been modelled and universalised with the important aid of this Movement and its founder, Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

Baron de Coubertin restored the Olympic Games in modern times. He was born in the French capital to an aristocratic family. He studied art, philosophy, and law but became especially interested in education.

He later became a pedagogue and historian and decided to leave for Europe to understand the phenomenon of sports and its structure. He was primary influenced by the English schools and was inspired to improve the French educational system, an idea that he later addressed on an international scale in the Olympic Movement.

Two features of English society interested Coubertin and would greatly influence his work and his actions: one was the 'spirit of association' of English society embodied in private employers' associations; the second was the English educational system, in which one was educated for life within a society (TavaresapudRubio)^{7:72}.

From an educational perspective, Pierre de Coubertin understood that sport was "[...] a part of any young person's education just as much as science, literature, and the arts [...]"8:41 and therefore, the practice of sport was a tool for social change and a method of educational development. For him, sport could be a tool for education and individual and social transformation only if practiced according to a set of guiding values and its own ethics. These values and ethics are generically called "Olympic values" or the "values of Olympism."Currently the International Olympic Committee (IOC) defines the following as core values of Olympism: "friendship", "respect", and "excellence". These values can vary within national committees or from different proposals based on Olympism but are always linked to the core values identified by the IOC. The Olympic Values Handbook validated in the work of Basso¹ and presented to the teachers points to values relating to "sporting ethics", characterised by notions such as fair play, friendship, and respect; an "active life"; the notion of "health", focusing on encouraging sports practice as a way to build a healthy and pleasant life; the notion of "excellence", in being the best without losing sight of the healthy aspects of competition and self-improvement; and "responsibility" to oneself, to others, and to the environment that sport requires.

In this way, the Olympic Movement can be understood not as a simple sports competition but as an educational tool for civic life, with its own ideals, values, and cultural baggage:

In this sense, it is interesting to think that Coubertin sought to provide the Olympic Movement with a coherent philosophical message, giving Olympism a series of symbols and rituals in which all cultures have a place 9.155.

For Coubertin, sport is a universal phenomenon, in which all, a priori, are capable of participating. He thus strove to restore the Olympic Games as an opportunity to "[...] value fair and healthy competition, the cult of the body and physical activity [...]"^{7:72}.

Coubertin did not want to restore the Games as an exclusively athletic event but instead sought to introduce an educational legacy to accompany the festivities, which would consolidate ethical, moral, and educational values as the guiding principles of Olympism:

[...] The Olympic Movement's philosophy is supported not only through an excellent line-up of sports but especially in the use of sport as a factor of the improvement of mankind. By associating sport with culture and education, Olympism aims to create an attitude of life based on the joy found in effort, the ducational value of a good example and respect for universal, fundamental ethical principles 9:375-376.

Therefore, the Games are not, or should not be, simply shows of superiority and efficiency but rather a driver of the Olympic ideals of social and educational transformation from an internationalist perspective.

Here, the purpose is not to discuss whether and how the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games effectively fulfil the educational mission desired by their creator but to

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present them as an important reference for a values education through sports, here called "Olympic Education."

In this context, the term Olympic Education (OE) refers, according to Tavares¹⁰, to the pedagogical proposals of education through sport based on the Olympic Movement and its symbols, traditions, principles, and values.

Based on Ren¹¹, Miragaya^{8:41}adds that

[...] Olympic Education's objectives are to protect and promote the common interests of human society, such as peace, friendship and progress. Its pedagogical content includes humanist values that are universally accepted by human society, such as the pursuit of excellence, fair play, justice and respect.

According to Marcellino¹², the idea is to experience universal ethical values adapted to the cultural diversity of contemporary society, i.e., OE aims to develop universal positive values and to focus on the specificities of each social context, local values, and identities, understanding and giving visibility to these peculiarities, so that its initiatives can make sense of these contexts and so that its results are effective.

If OE, while working with universal values, also seeks to give importance and visibility to the values, peculiarities, and identities of the local contexts where it is deployed, it cannot and should not be different when its proposals are implemented in school physical education. Making sense of the environment where its proposals are implemented is just as important for OE as making sense of physical education, when the latter becomes the means of achieving the former. Any proposal for OE in school physical education classes and included in courseware cannot have characteristics that contradict the perspectives of this curriculum component; otherwise, it would be impossible to achieve the curriculum's goals.

For example: little will result or make sense for teachers who wish to provide physical education of a practical bodily nature if they are provided courseware that develops an OE perspective based purely on theoretical activities. We are not saying this is the case with the OEH—it is provided merely as an example of the idea being advanced. In the case of the OEH, the issue is to increase the number of practical activities or to consider RD activities that have practical experience as their starting points.

Thus, what consequences do this understanding of identity about physical education bring for the construction of OE courseware focusing on this curriculum component? The idea is that during its formulation, specific courseware for this discipline—in the case of this article, OE material—should consider the uniqueness, specificity, and identity that this school component assumes from the perspective of the teachers who will use the material; otherwise, it will make little sense.

Therefore, before formulating educational tools focusing on school physical education, it is necessary to know in advance which notion of identity this discipline assumes among its teachers.

Conclusions

As observed, under a new theoretical approach, the same set of data can offer different categories of analysis and views on a particular subject.

The data produced by the survey conducted by Basso¹, in particular those in which participating teachers point to the need for a greater number of practical activities in the OEM, provide clues about the peculiarities and specificities of physical education recognised by those teachers, indicating one of the identifying dimensions of this discipline. The term

"identifying dimension" is used here because considering only this curriculum component according to its eminently practical nature does not fully explain its identity, given the diversity of roles and goals attributed to school physical education by different teachers, students, teachers of other subjects, parents, and other agents, who also contribute to the construction of this curriculum component's identity. Moreover, the very dynamic and changing nature of identity is considered. In this sense, perhaps the studies of Figueiredo^{13,14,15} and Marques e Figueiredo¹⁶ may help to explain other identifying dimensions of physical education by pointing to the relationship among the trajectories of pre-formative, formative, and post-formative socio-corporal experiences and professional experience in the construction of physical education's identity by physical education teachers and how they constitute the discipline's identity.

It should be noted that although the recognition of physical education's practical bodily character is only one of its identifying dimensions, it converges with others, contributing to the construction of the identity of this curriculum component. This should be remembered when considering the construction of courseware for physical education in this particular case, i.e., when aimed at the proposals of OE. Materials that do not consider the peculiarities of this discipline tend either to lack effectiveness or to be entirely ineffective.

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