

# Freirean principles in the university extension in Gymnastics for All

Priscila Lopes<sup>I</sup> 

Michele Viviane Carbinatto<sup>II</sup> 

## ABSTRACT

Practice and reflection are known as dialectical in Freire's pedagogy, surrounded by policy and dialogicity of pedagogy in different contexts, such as higher education. It was analyzed how, and which Freirean aspects were salutary in teaching-learning process in gymnastics from the perspectives of those involved in a university extension. Using qualitative methods, data were collected from field notes, focus groups and document analysis. For data analysis, it was used thematic analysis. To ensure validity and trustworthiness, there were data triangulation. Knowledge was built using critical, collective, collaborative, and democratic way, in which autonomy and horizontality were confirmed, resulting in awareness and social transformations in those involved into the experience. Therefore, relevant to use in Gymnastics for All and its possible reflexes to professional education.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

gymnastics; sport; Paulo Freire; humanizing education.

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<sup>I</sup>Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri, Diamantina, MG, Brazil.

<sup>II</sup>Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

## *PRINCÍPIOS DA PEDAGOGIA FREIRIANA NA EXTENSÃO UNIVERSITÁRIA EM GINÁSTICA PARA TODOS*

### RESUMO

A dialética entre a prática e a reflexão baliza os princípios da pedagogia freiriana, envoltos pela politicidade e dialogicidade do ato educativo em diversos ambientes, como o ensino superior. Analisou-se como e quais premissas freirianas foram salutares no fazer pedagógico em ginástica pela perspectiva dos protagonistas em uma extensão universitária. De cunho qualitativo, utilizou-se como técnica para coleta de dados os diários de campo, os grupos focais e a análise documental. Para análise dos dados, utilizamos a análise temática. A validade e confiabilidade dos dados perpassou a triangulação. Vivenciou-se uma experiência de construção do conhecimento de forma crítica, coletiva, colaborativa e democrática, na qual a autonomia e a horizontalidade foram efetivadas, resultando em tomada de consciência e transformações sociais nos envolvidos e, portanto, adequada e relevante para as ações em Ginástica para Todos e seus reflexos na formação profissional.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

ginástica; esporte; Paulo Freire; formação humanizadora.

## *PRINCIPIOS DE LA PEDAGOGÍA FREIREIANA EN LA EXTENSIÓN UNIVERSITARIA EN GIMNASIA PARA TODOS*

### RESUMEN

La dialéctica entre práctica y reflexión orienta los principios de la pedagogía de Paulo Freire, en que la politicidad y dialogicidad de lacto educativo en diferentes instituciones, como la educación superior. Se analizó cómo y qué premisas freiriana eran saludables en la práctica pedagógica en gimnasia desde la perspectiva de los protagonistas en una extensión universitaria. De carácter cualitativo, se utilizaron diarios de campo, grupos focales y un análisis documental como técnica de recolección de datos. Para el análisis de datos, usamos Análisis Temático. La validez y confiabilidad pasó por triangulación. Se vivió una experiencia de conocimiento crítica, colectiva, colaborativa y democrática, en la que se concretó la autonomía y la horizontalidad, tomadas en consciencia y transformaciones sociales en los involucrados y, por tanto, acciones adecuadas en la Gimnasia para Todos y sus reflejos para la formación profesional.

### PALABRAS-CLAVE

gimnasia; deporte; Paulo Freire; humanizar la formación.

## INTRODUCTION

The meaning of pedagogy in Freire's perspective is related to the concept of praxis, in which practice and reflection are dialectically tensioned. Teacher and student rebuild their knowledge during the teaching-learning process (Streck, 2016).

Two principles are directly related to the ideas of Paulo Freire (PF) and, therefore, underlie Freire's pedagogy: the politicized and dialogic of the educational act (Feitosa, 2003).

Politicized is the understanding that it is necessary to recognize oneself as a political being, that is, to read the world, work with restlessness, learn to doubt, ask and problematize, attitudes that make the pedagogical act break with the room and insert itself into a prism of hope, from which it is possible to become a citizen and fight for transformation in favor of a fairer world (Gadotti, 2000; Costa, 2016).

Education presupposes an attitude of the subject towards the real, through the construction and continuous reconstruction of meanings of a given reality that must be to question causality so that its action and reflection make it possible to alter, relativize and transform reality. It is the observation-reflection-readmiration-action movement that makes Freirean pedagogy an essentially political proposal (Feitosa, 2003). To be a Freirean educator, "[...] is to be or to become a political educator, who problematizes the concrete context through dialogue to transform the reality in which students and educators are inserted." (Dickmann and Dickmann, 2020, p. 85, our translation).

The dialogic of the educational act, in turn, refers to dialogue as a fundamental tool for pedagogical action through the inseparable relationship between educator-student-object of knowledge. Since the beginning of the pedagogical action, education must be configured as a dialogic process built through constant communication between all subjects. This allows everyone to have a voice and, at the same time, teaches them to have ears open to everyone and be attentive to everything. The world also participates in this collective communication as it is thought of by the subjects who are inserted in it (Gadotti, 2000; Feitosa, 2003; Dickmann and Dickmann, 2020).

Furthermore, the principle of dialogic is associated with social praxis. Through dialogue, the collective can discuss their ways of life, education, and language, among other elements that open spaces to rethink life in society and make it possible to act differently to transform the reality that surrounds them, enhancing critical-problematic thinking in the educational act (Zitkoski, 2016).

After experimentation with techniques, communication processes, correction of errors, and overcoming procedures, the PF proposal, which was once proposed as a literacy method, was expanded to various educational objects and themes and systematized a structure that had, as its main intention, the promotion of an education that allowed the subjects to free themselves through the development of higher degrees of criticality (Freire, 1963; Beisiegel, 2010; Brandão, 2016).

Different teaching spaces claimed the principles of Freirean pedagogy in their pedagogical process, including higher education (Beisiegel, 2018). In this, university extension — the locus of this study — began to revisit its perspective, which was

now assistentialist for the dialogic (Cruz and Vasconcelos, 2017; Gadotti, 2017). Instead of transferring the scientific knowledge developed within the university, Freire (1985) proposes communication to contribute to changing scenarios that present the need for transformations.

In the meantime, the present study brings to light a research carried out with the extension project Diamantina Gymnastics Group (Grupo de Ginástica de Diamantina — GGD) of the Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri Federal University (Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri — UFVJM), which proposed to use principles of Freirean pedagogy as a methodological basis for the development of a Gymnastics for All (GFA) choreography. More precisely, it analyzes the perception of the learners and educators involved in the process.

## THE FREIREAN PREMISE IN A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

Studies that punctuate the extension actions in the Freirean perspective (Alves, Dias and Silva, 2018; Santos *et al.*, 2019) indicate the participation of the community in the process of construction of the contents, which emerges from the desires and needs of the subjects, evidencing the stage of reading the world and the protagonism of the participants in the projects. It is also possible to notice the presence of moments when problematization (critical reflection on the life situation of those involved) is promoted during the activities.

For Freire (1985), the subjects who develop the extension actions need to understand that the knowledge of a community, although different from the scientific ones, is also valid and must be respected, and can be added so that the learning in the extensionist action is more significant. So, instead of imposing the replacement of less effective ways of acting by others that are proven (scientifically) more fruitful, the extension action must be able to promote a problematization, and dialogue with the community's world experience, so the people may develop a new way of acting through awareness.

So, we ask ourselves, how to develop an extension project based on the Freirean pedagogy? What are the evidenced paths to do so?

Researchers were guided by the work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1994) to explain the phases of the pedagogical proposal of PF transferable to different themes and areas of knowledge other than its trigger, that is, adult literacy, which can be summarized in three main moments: *Investigation*; *Thematization*; and *Problematization* (Brandão, 1981; Feitosa, 2003; Beisiegel, 2010; Almeida, 2015).

The *Investigation* consists of the moment of surveying the reality of the students, and their ways of life (Feitosa, 2003; Beisiegel, 2010). It is the stage of reading the world (Almeida, 2015) that, in the adult literacy experience, was necessary to understand the vocabulary universe of the students (Freire, 1963; Brandão, 1981), through field diaries and interviews without a predetermined script (the questions arose from coexistence) (Brandão, 1981; Beisiegel, 2010). Such research collectively (educators and students) discovers “[...] life through speech; of the world through the word [...]” (Brandão, 1981, p. 13).

Then, we move on to *Thematization*, which consists of selecting the generating words or themes (Brandão, 1981; Feitosa, 2003; Beisiegel, 2010). The expression generator is intentional and promotes global learning through interdisciplinarity. Different generative words can emerge from a single generating theme, which can be dealt with through different areas of knowledge depending on the social relations in which it is involved (Feitosa, 2003). It is also possible to add fundamental themes that were not suggested by the students, called hinge themes, which are considered by educators to be essential for understanding the whole (Freire, 1994).

After the selection of themes, the *Problematization* (or *Creation of typical existential situations*) occurs, which seeks to overcome a naive view with a critical view, that is, it creates possibilities for the subjects to be able to transform the context in which they live (Feitosa, 2003; Almeida, 2015). For example, if the word were *hoe*, the image of a farmer with this instrument could evoke a discussion about common situations in farm work.

Understanding the phases of the pedagogical proposal of PF allows us to build a path that considers the objectives established for the educational act and the circumstances of the context in which it will be developed — factors that allow the reformulation of instruments and working procedures. What is proposed is not to follow the moments created by the educator in a fixed way, but to reinvent the method, starting and returning to the political and social sphere through praxis as an articulating movement of the process (Paludo, 2016).

## THE OBJECT OF STUDY

The GFA refers to a branch of the broad universe of gymnastics that arises from the desire for a free, creative, and expressive body practice, a symbol of a contemporary relationship between movement and the body, which expands the codified model evident in sportive gymnastics practices (Ayoub, 2003). It does not have a punctuation code that determines rules for the elaboration of the choreography, a factor that makes its construction process more valuable than the final product — the finished choreography, enhancing the educational bias of this practice (Ayoub, 2003; Toledo, Tsukamoto and Carbinatto, 2016).

Its main form of manifestation is through choreographic compositions, which are presented at festivals (Patricio, Bortoleto and Carbinatto, 2016) or in the classroom environment itself (Toledo, Tsukamoto and Carbinatto, 2016).

Researches emphasize that the university may be the main responsible for its growth in Brazil (Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto, 2017; Patricio, Bortoleto and Toledo, 2020), with emphasis on extension actions (Paoliello *et al.*, 2014; Sargi *et al.*, 2015; Carvalho *et al.*, 2016; Ehrenberg and Miranda, 2016; Leles *et al.*, 2016; Oliveira *et al.*, 2016; Batista *et al.*, 2020; Lopes and Niquini, 2021). Although recurrent, the works that indicate the proposal of PF in their process of teaching and learning in gymnastics, in a systematic and detailed way, are still incipient in the area (Batista *et al.*, 2020; Toledo, 2020).

Furthermore, since the pedagogical processes linked to the experience of gymnastics in the scope of these extension groups have become benchmarks for

the performance of Physical Education and Sports professionals in the development of GFA in various contexts, such as leisure, third sector, and schools (Toledo and Silva, 2013; Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto, 2017), this article is justified by the contemporaneity in the discussions for a critical and creative training, but also emancipatory.

Thus, we ask ourselves: are the principles of PF pedagogy implemented in an extension in GFA with Freirean methodological alignment? If so, how, and what premises are evidenced by those involved in the process?

## STUDY CONTEXT

The GGD is an extension project open to the participation of the adult community of the city of Diamantina (MG) and region, internal and external members of the UFVJM. It involves holding weekly meetings to develop skills in the field of gymnastics in interaction with other bodily, artistic, and cultural manifestations linked to the experience of the protagonists. Among its goals, is the dissemination of the practice of GFA linked to regional artistic and cultural manifestations from original choreographic compositions that are presented at different scientific, artistic, and cultural events.

Between March and July 2019, GGD produced the choreography entitled “About chants, cries, and enchantments: the voice of Africa in the Vales das Gerais”, with the participation of 33 members and presented at the Popular Culture Festival of Vale do Jequitinhonha (Festival de Cultura Popular do Vale do Jequitinhonha – FESTIVALE). The production of the choreography was the main goal of the project, and its construction process was based on the principles that guide the choreographic composition in GFA proposed by Marcassa (2004) and on those that underlie the Freirean pedagogy (Freire, 1963; 1994; Brandão, 1981; Feitosa, 2003; Beisiegel, 2010).

The creation process began with the *Investigation*, a phase that consisted of the survey of thematic possibilities referring to the popular cultures of the Vale do Jequitinhonha that could boost the choreographic construction. Based on discussions about the previous knowledge that the subjects brought with them, the suggestions for themes were expressed through body experiments created individually and collectively, presented during the meetings, and debated in groups with the aim of arguing about their relevance. The research was also carried out on virtual materials (images, videos, reports, documentaries, etc.), bibliographic materials (books, articles, etc.), and participation in cultural and artistic events, which resulted in the gathering of more than 20 thematic possibilities.

*Thematization* was characterized as the moment to select the generating theme. The more than 20 themes on the popular cultures of the Vale do Jequitinhonha were reduced to three possibilities: Rosário Celebration, Games and plays in the Vale do Jequitinhonha, and Black culture, with the latter being chosen.

The *Problematization* phase consisted of creating planned problem-situations based on suggestions made by the project's members, which contained codes that needed to be decoded through debates. They comprised, mainly, workshops given

by guest professors who addressed elements related to the Black culture theme, noting its comprehensiveness. It was necessary to resume the *Thematization* phase to choose a more specific theme and, by voting, the theme *Vissungos* (songs sung by enslaved blacks in the region of the city of Diamantina) was selected, again using the pragmatic criterion.

Therefore, the *Problematization* also had to be resumed, with the problem-situations being planned again by everyone. At this stage, in addition to discussing various references about the *Vissungos* (scientific, journalistic, artistic materials, etc.), a technical visit to a *quilombola* community was carried out.

Concomitant with this repeated phase, the *Codification* and *Combination* phases were developed (Marcassa, 2004). *Codification* was used to create choreographic scenes. Both the knowledge acquired through the deepening of the selected theme, and the body movements learned and/or perfected and selected to compose the choreography, were re-signified so that they began to express the group's intentions of what they would like to physically represent about the *Vissungos*. The *Combination* consisted of defining the choreographic design (combination and sequencing of choreographic scenes) and other elements (feelings expressed in each scene, music, materials, costumes, etc.) to trace the story that would be told through the choreography.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This is a qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2006) of the case study type (Chizzotti, 2010) that proposed to study the specific case of the GGD extension project developed in 2019.

The literature recommends the use of multiple sources of data collection to obtain details about the case studied and ensure the necessary depth and credibility for the study (Yin, 2001; Chiazotti, 2010; Gil, 2010). In this way, we used different techniques for the construction of the data, which were applied at the same time as the development of the GGD project and after its completion, namely:

- a. pre and post-project questionnaires with information about the participants' profiles;
- b. field diaries (FD) were written by the researcher-educator after each meeting. The data reported conversation circles and general perceptions and described the steps and processes of each session. The information was identified by the letters FD, followed by the number of the analyzed session;
- c. information available in the GGD Collection: photos, videos, reports, among other media collected by the group and made available on social media (Facebook and WhatsApp);
- d. implementation of three focal groups (FG), with the aim of listening to the members of the GGD as a collective and being active in the educational act. The FG were carried out after the entire process. Four FG sessions were necessary to meet the maximum number of participants (6 to 12) suggested by the literature (Gil, 2010). The

composition of the subjects in each session merged members with different characteristics so that the debate could be enhanced, based on the following criteria: members belonging to different schools at the UFVJM; internal and external members of the UFVJM; even distribution between men and women; subjects with different ethnic and racial self-declaration; different age group; GGD newcomers and veterans. Due to unforeseen circumstances, of the 32 members, 28 participated in the FG. All statements were transcribed and identified using codes (fictitious names) to preserve the identity of the subjects. The speeches were represented by fictitious names of African origin.

## THE RESEARCH EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

The composition of the research subjects consisted of all 32 members enrolled in the GGD, who participated from the beginning to the end of the choreographic construction. These subjects were young people and adults between 18 and 31 years of age (average 22.12 years), with a greater number of women (19 women and 13 men), internal members of the UFVJM (28), and a few from the external community (3). Blacks were the majority (16 blacks and 6 browns), followed by members who declared themselves white (6), yellow (1), and those who did not want to declare themselves (3).

The planning team was composed of an educator-researcher (coordinating professor of the GGD and first author of this article), a grantee student monitor at the Bachelor's degree program in Physical Education at the UFVJM and a volunteer monitor, an outsourced employee of the institution, both of which were also accounted for in the group of members of the GGD.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The field diaries and the GGD collection were analyzed by the construction of the explanation, commonly developed in the form of a narrative, which is gradual and resembles the process of improving a set of ideas. In this way, the explanation presented at the end of the process may be different from the previously stipulated pattern (thought) at the beginning of the analysis (Yin, 2001). Due to its very subjective characteristics, the researcher must constantly refer to the research objectives during the development of the interactive process of construction of the explanation, so as not to deviate from the original point of interest of the analysis (*ibidem*).

To analyze the data regarding the FG, we used thematic analysis, which, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 7, our translation), refers to “[...] a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organizes and describes the dataset in (rich) detail.” In this research, data patterns were inductively determined, allowing themes/patterns to be identified without framing pre-existing codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

## DATA VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Data validity and reliability occurred through the triangulation process, which, in qualitative research, is recognized as the process of minimizing the researcher's interpretation and affecting the declaration of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2006). During the process, the profile of the protagonists, the perception noted in the session, the posts of the members, and statements of the participants of the process by the FG were related, that is, sources and methods were alternated in the synchronicity of the actions.

The research was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the UFVJM (CAAE No. 07643519.8.0000.5108), ensuring that all procedures involving human beings followed the ethical-scientific norms in force so that the subjects would voluntarily participate, signing the Informed Consent Form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The speeches grouped in the initial codes showed recurrent and relevant points that were related to each other, organized into five different themes, namely: *Reading the world; Criticality in the educational act; Intervene in the world; Social transformation; Collective, collaborative, and democratic process.*

As the statements grouped in each theme still had characteristics that, although similar, manifested different specificities, it was necessary to make other subdivisions, which culminated in the organization of sub-themes, as shown in Chart 1.

**Chart 1 – Themes and subthemes.**

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Reading of the world	Emerging themes
	Regional culture
Criticality in the educational act	Investigative spirit
	Immersion in the theme
	Exploration of issues related to the topic
Intervene in the world	GFA as language
	GGD's political stance
	Responsibility for communicating a message
Social transformation	Cultural appreciation
	Deconstruction of prejudices
	Ethnic-racial identity
Collective, collaborative, and democratic process	Autonomy
	Horizontality
	Democratic choices/decisions

GFA: Gymnastics for All; GGD: Grupo de Ginástica de Diamantina (Diamantina Gymnastics Group).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The theme *Reading the world* corresponds to the members' perceptions about the appreciation and analysis of reality, moments provided during the project. They were organized into two sub-themes.

The first one — *Emerging themes* — indicates that the members realized that the process of choreographic construction allowed the group to read the reality that surrounds their lives, especially in relation to emerging situations in the daily life of Brazilian society, as illustrated by the following statements:

*Malawa: I remember that the theme, at first, was not given. It's something that Pri arrives and says: I'm not going to give you the theme, the theme will be discovered by you. And we were very much on the agenda with the issue of racism. At the time, that guy had been killed, I think, with 80 shots, and it had all that repercussion. This topic was trending, and we debated about it. (FG)*

*Gatimu: [...] And why is our topic a topic of extreme emergency? We are here in Diamantina, which was built by black people, but which is still sold to white people, is consumed by white people. We have the Vesperata, which is the biggest event in the city in terms of publicity, in which we only see black people playing as waiters or cosplaying Chica da Silva for 60 reais and that is a horrible thing. We also have here the Path of the Slaves, which we know were slaves, but they were black people of culture who came to bring their culture, and they were not decimated, they are here, they built the entire culture of the Vale, but it is called the Path of the Slaves, it should be called something else, as professor Marcelo has already said. It should be the Path of the Diaspora and not the Path of the Slaves. We also have, here in the entire Jequitinhonha, several artists who are black. And if you look at the Vale region it is black, if you look at Lira, it is black, we have representatives of a culture like that, which is not just the culture from Minas Gerais, but of world expression, as we traveled there, and Lira received people from all over the world. And that was built by black people. So why not talk about it, and why not portray it in a more beautiful way? Different from how it is treated, for example, in the Vesperata. Chica da Silva walking through, posing with her husband. This is awful! Too ugly! Why not portray the happy, beautiful, creative, artistic, and genius side of the black men and women of Vale do Jequitinhonha? (FD8)*

There was a direct relationship between what is taught and learned and what is experienced today, since reading the world was configured as one of the first stages of the educational process at GGD.

For Freire (1994), *Thematization* along with *Investigation* and *Problematisation* are essential moments in the teaching-learning process, as they allow for a better understanding of what is already known, but which, through reflection and the construction of new knowledge, allow rapprochement and (re-)reading of the world from a new perspective. Specifically in the context of choreographic production in GFA, the importance of thematization is also highlighted (Marcassa, 2004; Sborquia, 2008). And, like PF, Marcassa (2004) argues that, when the choreography

theme dialogues with the reality of the subjects, there is a greater awareness of individual and collective circumstances.

The second sub-theme, *Regional culture*, points out the perception about the reading of the cultural reality of the region where the GGD is inserted, as can be seen in this subject's speech:

*Thabiti: But we came together on one point, which is the issue of the Vale do Jequitinhonha. So, everyone had... even those who are not from the Vale do Jequitinhonha became from the Vale do Jequitinhonha, they appropriated it. And some things you've seen since your personal formation. So, everyone brought a, a...: oh, I know this from such a place, this I know from such a place. So, it brings a... it's as if we take more ownership of it because we have this emotional, affective issue rooted in our daily lives. (FG)*

This factor may have provided the subjects with a sense of belonging and a greater appreciation of regional popular culture.

The literature points out that the awakening to the appreciation of the Vale do Jequitinhonha emerged from the organized action of artists and sociocultural activists from the activation of new facts, ideas, and images that deconstruct the unique stigma related to the region's afflictions (Ramalho and Doula, 2009; Martins, 2012; Servilha, 2015). The people's protagonism is evident in this region's history, which learned that art and popular culture are not separate from politics and configure as powerful tools in the struggle to overcome exploitation and regional development (Martins, 2012; Servilha, 2015).

In Freire's thought, it is possible to envision an educational perspective in the liberating political action through popular culture. However, emancipation in the face of a project of cultural domain needs to manifest itself in a conscious and organized action of the popular classes based on their own culture (Brandão, 2016). In the scope of university extension, Freire (1985) pays attention to the care regarding the cultural invasion that the university can exert when it does not consider the culture of those who participate in the extension action. Communication between scientific and popular knowledge must be constant to contribute to changing scenarios that present the need for transformations.

In this way, addressing regional culture in the GGD was in line with the UFVJM cultural policy proposal, which advocates promoting artistic and cultural activities in the academic sphere contributing to professional and human training of subjects based on the strengthening of subjectivities and social values that are present in the regional culture (UFVJM, 2012). The possibility of dialoguing with reality from the reading of the world leads to reflection about society, a fact that contributes to making learning have sense and meaning, in addition to encouraging subjects to reflect on life and act differently if necessary (Freire, 1994; Feitosa, 2003; Costa, 2016; Zitkoski, 2016).

The *Criticality* theme in the educational act corresponds to the reports on the critical aspects of pedagogical acts in the GGD perceived by the members and was organized into three sub-themes.

The testimonies referring to the *Investigative spirit* sub-theme indicate the perception of the members about the development of challenging activities in the project, which made the subjects feel instigated with the topics that were addressed in the meetings:

*Idi: [...] Then it came up, just like she said, and Palhares said this: since you guys want to do something and the GGD has this importance, this representation, so, try, try to study about the Vissungos. Do you know what it is? Vissungos is a corner that existed here. [...] That's when we started looking for them. So, what are the Vissungos? Since he spoke, we started to get interested. What is it? Then came the articles that we started to read and discuss. So, every class had a conversation circle first, then there was gymnastics, and, at the end, we always had a conversation circle about the topics. [...] Then, there was this visit there also that they talked about... that they didn't treat as Vissungos there, but they talked about the importance of music on the way to work, music on the way back, you know? So, we started linking, [...] we added one characteristic and another. So, we asked, what can we do? [...] (FG)*

*Idi: [...] but to understand that what touched me the most was when they said: "But the slaves that came to our region were not just any slaves, so they had to be specialized slaves once here there was a service for them that was specialized, which was mining". Then, he asked: "Have you ever stopped to think about what black people were? What was the black person there in Africa? What were these people in Africa before they were brought here, to become our slaves and from there to be treated as slaves for the rest of their lives?". Because people don't say "he was João, she was Maria, he was Pedro, he was Tiago", they were just the slaves of Diamantina. (FD13)*

Freire's pedagogy is emphatic regarding the discovery of knowledge by the students. Teaching is not donating or depositing knowledge but promoting conditions so that subjects feel provoked and exercise their reasoning, leading them to study, criticize consolidated knowledge, compare, formulate new questions, and move forward (Freire, 1996).

The testimonies allocated to the second sub-theme, *Immersion in the theme*, point out that the investigation on the theme of choreography was explored in different ways, which allowed the construction of a collection, registered in a social network, which subsidized several elements that could be represented in the choreographic production:

*Malawa: [...] And it was very interesting because when we started researching, after defining the Vissungos theme, is that right? Ok? Then the choreography construction part begins, but also the reading part, you know, for you to further deepen and know more, right? So, there was reading, she passed on some articles for us to read and to be able to have a text discussion circle. [...] Then, each person, for example, read an article talking in a different way, another person read another article, no one read the same thing, and each one read something different, to be able to talk during the conversation circle. (FG)*

*Pendo: [...] I read there, as you had already said here, right, in class, that they used to sing when they were mining and that was a way for them to reduce the torture of that place, the environment was horrible for them, and then they came up with the Vissungos' song to reduce this tension. That's what I understood, well, and that's what impressed me the most. (FD15)*

It is also verified that the members understood the importance of immersion in the theme and consider it an essential factor for the creation process.

The literature points out that, when one intends to form reflective, critical, and active subjects, planning is needed based on studies, research, and experimentation on the context addressed in the choreographic productions of GFA. Care must be even greater when themes related to popular cultures are addressed in the choreographies, as such deepening makes it possible to overcome a superficial treatment and allows a reflection on the reality of cultures that are often marginalized (Fátima and Ugaya, 2016).

Immersion in the theme can be configured as a tool that allows for a deeper interpretation of facts, which leads to overcoming the initial view, which is naive and allows for a broader understanding of a given reality (Freire, 1996).

This aspect could also be observed in the third sub-theme, *Exploration of issues related to the topic*. In addition to elements that contributed to the choreographic production, the testimonies of the members showed a certain sensitivity about the reality that surrounds black culture and the manifestation of the Vissungos' popular culture:

*Ayo: The specificities of the quilombola culture, a little bit of their history. They reported how the community was formed, how the community has several members, it remains united and resistant to this day, right? Seeing their past, you know, this past of slavery that they even reported to us, there is this in the present too. Like, they reported that slavery ended in the late 80s and that it came to the community. Until then, they had slave labor there. And this I think had an impact on most people who had never been to or visited a quilombola community. And the conversation with the people who live there, with the leaders, and the drumming sessions that they had, also influenced their own choreography. The clothes, [...] the dances we saw, some performances there. It was an exchange, we took some activities, and we learned several others from them, mainly about their culture, daily life, and the very idea of what a quilombo is. [...] (FG)*

*Gatimu: Because we're dealing with a topic like this, very big, right? For example, resistance, strength, diaspora, and music will have to accompany what we will show with the body. [...] (FD17)*

From the perspective of Freire's pedagogy, when students manage to extrapolate the superficiality of the content studied and understand that there is a series of subjective issues that relate to the subject, these subjects can reconstruct the meanings of a given reality (Freire, 1996; Feitosa, 2003).

In “Tempo de corer” (“Time to run”), a choreography produced in 2016, the members assumed the political character of the work that addressed the environmental crime that occurred in the city of Mariana in 2015 (Lopes, Batista, and Carbinatto, 2017). In “Do barro à arte” (“From the clay to the art”) (2018), which thematized the context of ceramic production in the Vale do Jequitinhonha, the collective was led to understand the uniqueness of regional popular culture (Lopes and Niquini, 2021).

The theme *Intervening in the world* corresponds to the speeches about the recognition of the members as active subjects in the unfinished process of humanization of the world.

The first sub-theme, *GFA as language*, refers to the potential of the GFA choreography to communicate a message, as observed in the subjects’ reports:

*Dingane: [...] You’re going to get it wrong, but what matters is the message you’re passing on. So much so that the construction of our choreography was to carry the message, not to carry the gymnastics. It was using gymnastics to pass on a message [...]. (FG)*

*Chaniya: [...] Back in the day, I was just that, someone nice. Now, when I think about everything we’ve lived through, you know? In the messages that we can send through gymnastics [...]. (FG)*

*Idi: [...] Not just a gymnastics presentation, but a gymnastics presentation that brings a little of that characteristic, of the human being behind anything related to black culture. (FD13)*

The testimonies make it clear that the members understood that, in addition to the practice of a pleasurable physical activity that contributes to a series of health-related aspects, gymnastics can also be a way of communicating feelings, ideas, and values.

The literature highlights the possibility of transforming movements in the GFA, which can be re-signified to compose a choreographic text that, as in a written work, expresses a certain message through body gestures (Marcassa, 2004; Sborquia, 2008).

Observed from the Freirean pedagogy perspective, when a GFA choreography is proposed to convey a message, the subjects assume a political position that will be manifested by the knowledge produced by the collective during the pedagogical act, which can be configured, therefore, to intervene in the world (Freire, 1994; 1996).

The testimonies referring to the second sub-theme, *GGD’s political stance*, indicate that the members recognize that the project takes on a political position based on the themes and ways it chooses to work in its choreographic productions, a fact that can lead to the understanding that, as an educational practice, this extensionist action is also political and ideological:

*Razina: I think it's the feeling of contribution, of being able to pass this message on, of contributing to something so that other people can understand what we are discussing there. It's not just... it's not just doing a choreography; it's not just passing on a little joy. There's always a little message behind it, which is the hallmark of GGD these days. (FG)*

*Malawa: [...] the GGD is a way, as I see it, it's a way to take it to the community, it's... a result [...] more accessible, easily accessible. [...] you go to a community, and you're not going to take a darn giant survey of I don't know how many thousand pages, like, it's not adapted. [...] the GGD brings this, it takes a certain content, we work on it, and we give something back to the society. [...] And through the GGD, we take it to people who are not here in a more accessible way and with more visibility for the topic [...]. (FG)*

*Malawa: You said in the last class that, if I'm not mistaken, GGD has a feature like that of touching on somewhat controversial topics, not just beautiful ones, and talking about things that everyone wants to hear and see. And I think that talking about black culture, in the current moment, would be important because of what happened and also to poke people. Especially because [...] many believe that racism is just whining, that it doesn't exist, but people are dying. So, we need to show, in any way possible, whether through dance, that it's happening, that people are dying, poke at the wound, to show these people, in any way, that racism exists, and that people die because of it, and it would be talking about a controversial topic. At a time when everyone denies that it exists and just wants to talk about good things. (FD8)*

The meanings and values that are attributed to education support the methodological proposal and indicate the characteristics that are intended to be developed, which always makes it an ideological action (Freire, 1985; 1994; Gadotti, 2000; Feitosa, 2003; Almeida, 2015; Almeida Filho, Benincá and Coutinho, 2017; Dickmann and Dickmann, 2020). In the academic sphere, it is necessary to understand the ideological meanings that characterize the extension nowadays so that its development takes place according to the guidelines that guide the dialogic perspective of this axis of the university tripod (Cruz and Vasconcelos, 2017; Gadotti, 2017).

In this way, the results demonstrate that the members understand the political intentions of the project, especially concerning the impact and social transformation, a guideline conducted by the FORPROEX (2012) that corresponds to the characteristics to be considered in the planning of extension actions to promote a transforming action, contributing to social and regional development, including public universities.

The third subcategory, *Responsibility to communicate a message*, corresponds to the testimonies that demonstrate the members' feeling of responsibility in communicating a message given its relevance:

*Razina: [...] it was crucial for us to understand the subject and know why we were there. Of this importance, even of... of this choreography for this moment. So, I think everyone felt it and even the audience, right? They were looking at us with those expectant looks. So, I think it was amazing for me, with another choreography by GGD, only with that kind of importance and knowing why we were there. (FG)*

*Yamma: I felt a responsibility, right? Because it was the culture of the Vissungos, we had to know how to pass it on in a way that others would understand [...]. (FG)*

This feeling was due to the processes developed during the project, which allowed the members to get in touch with an emerging situation in the national context. The lived experiences may have touched the subjects so that they were committed to the idea of being able to intervene in the world through the knowledge they built. This corresponds to the embodiment of words, doing everything that was discussed during the project, corroborating the principles of Freire's pedagogy (Freire, 1994; 1996).

The theme *Social transformation* concerns the reports on the personal transformations perceived by the members in themselves.

In the first sub-theme, *Cultural appreciation*, the testimonies referring to the acknowledgment/knowledge and appreciation of the culture as a whole and elements of black culture by the members were allocated:

*Abuya: [...] it made me have a totally different view of the region I live in, of the culture that I sometimes didn't pay much attention to, something that was very explicit in front of me. [...] Black culture is so... the matter of the dance, even the way we talk, the expressions we use, I had no idea that that was black culture. We were more focused on the European issue. Oh no... even the way we dress, we talk like black people, we dress like black people, and we had no idea about that. So, I think it opened my view a little on this cultural matter [...]. (FG)*

*Izegbe: [...] during this time, this cultural immersion that was happening until FESTIVALE, it's very cool to see that people were open and changed their thinking, you know? To understand more about what black culture is, what it means, what it was like to be black, what it is to be black, and what slaves went through. So, it was very important, it got a great result. (FG)*

The reports show that the experiences lived during the project contributed to the members identifying aspects of black culture in their daily lives and, therefore, recognizing themselves as belonging to it. Knowledge about the richness of this culture, which is often silenced, may have contributed to the appreciation of what has African origins.

It is important to note that most subjects declared themselves black in the diagnostic questionnaire and that the literature points to the influence of African

and indigenous culture on popular manifestations in the Vale do Jequitinhonha (Marques, 2000; Mattos, 2007; Servilha, 2015). Therefore, it is possible to verify the possibility of a certain refusal of this culture, prior to participation in the project. This fact may be due to the low participation of the subjects as members or spectators of regional popular culture groups, also reported in the pre-project questionnaire. This is in line with the idea of Martins (2012) about the need to know to like, defend, disseminate and develop.

Once again, the importance of popular culture as a liberating and emancipatory educational vehicle is highlighted (Brandão, 2016), as well as the dialogue between scientific and cultural knowledge within the scope of university extension (FORPROEX, 2012) to avoid the cultural invasion (Freire, 1985).

The second sub-theme, *Deconstructing prejudice*, refers to the testimonies both on overcoming racist attitudes identified in the members themselves, and on combating racial prejudice manifested during the project:

*Gatimu: [...] We even found out, ourselves, right, we are often homophobic, racist. We are people under construction too, right? [...] And several times..., and then we started to get a certain affinity with it, you know, being able to correct it, get intimacy, that was one of the most rewarding things for me. [...] And racism did not pass, right? Several lines, several grotesque lines like that, didn't pass. And over time, we made it an educational process, and not just someone is being rude to me. No! It was an educational process. And going to the FESTIVALE made it much more possible because we got there with a very good awareness about many people [...] doesn't she want to learn? Could she be racist? No, she was learning, and she learned. And that was really cool for me, it was one of the coolest things that happened in the group. (FG)*

The presence of conflicts is undeniable. But the results also showed that, despite the open space for dialogue in the project having been developed critically and reflectively, respect was maintained. Even in the face of conflicts, empathy seems to have prevailed, which shows that the availability of subjects for dialogue and that affection is not opposed to the ability to learn (Freire, 1996).

It is possible that the group's level of criticality increased in the *Problematization* phase, as the various problem-situations developed were intended to stimulate reflection on the broader problems of reality related to the choreography theme (Freire, 1963; 1994; Feitosa, 2003; Beisiegel, 2010), which inevitably included issues of racism.

In Freire's pedagogy, as a continuous construction and reconstruction of meanings in each context, education presupposes an attitude of the subject toward reality, guided by the certainty that causality is subordinated to the analysis of mankind so that his action and reflection allow the reality to change, relativize and transform (Feitosa, 2003).

The third sub-theme, *Ethnic-Racial identity*, concerns the testimonies on the reflection of the members in relation to their own ethnic-racial identity:

*Razina: [...] I discovered that I am increasingly white because brown doesn't exist, except for paper. [...] we managed to understand a little, right? These dialogues. Idi said that he thinks he is more toward black, that is, we learn more and more. Other people identified themselves, others didn't, but yeah... others managed to absorb it there, and I think that was the most important part of it all, each one learning a little bit. (FG)*

*Mashal: [...] But I think what else I could reflect on was the matter of placement, you know? What do you mean by saying I'm white, I'm brown, I'm black. Because this is really something very difficult to declare and that was present there, right? [...] (FG)*

The discussions promoted on ethnic-racial self-declaration made the members reflect beyond genetic and biotype aspects, that is, taking into consideration issues related to the meaning of belonging to certain ethnic groups. For Freire (1996, p. 22, our translation), an educational-critical practice must create conditions for the student to experience the “[...] deep experience of coming out.”. Cultural identity is an issue that is part of the individual and class dimension and cannot be disregarded in educational practice. The search for self-assumption by subjects and groups is always conflicting and involves a historical, political, cultural, and social experience of human beings.

Finally, the theme *Collective, collaborative, and democratic process* corresponds to the reports about the presence of such aspects in the development of choreographic construction.

In the first sub-theme, *Autonomy*, the testimonies referring to the recognition by the members as active subjects in the process of building the knowledge developed by the project were listed:

*Pendo: [...] We feel so much owner of the choreography, everyone. Because it was something like this that we have created, there's everyone's little finger there, in every little part of the choreography, you know? I think that was my favorite part of the building, the group's building process. (FG)*

*Malawa: [...] Its construction was very free, so Pri left it to us. There were times when she had to help us because we couldn't think of a way out, but then she would get there, and things flowed. [...] (FG)*

The results demonstrate the members' perception of the autonomy they were given during the conception of the choreography. With autonomy, they recognized themselves as creators of the choreography and, therefore, owners of a work in which they were co-authors. The feeling of collectivity was evident, and the members recognized the collaborative participation, in which everyone contributed with suggestions. This made the choreography represent the ideas constructed by a collective. Likewise, the feeling of pride was perceived, present both in the development of the process (the fact that they were able to create something from start to finish) and in the finished product (the choreography presented).

The literature is emphatic regarding the need for a collective and collaborative environment in GFA, especially at the time of choreographic composition (Ayoub, 2003; Marcassa, 2004; Toledo, Tsukamoto and Carbinatto, 2016; Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto, 2017; Menegaldo and Bortoleto, 2020). For Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto (2017), these are precisely the aspects that provide the formation of values intended by the GFA.

Autonomy is one of the guiding principles of Freire's pedagogy since in this conception education should enable the students to recognize themselves as the protagonists of his history, and no longer as mere objects (Gadotti, 2000). Autonomy strongly influences the process of emancipation and empowerment, once by placing students at the center of the educational process, it is intended that the subjects think for themselves, learning to govern themselves and to govern (Gadotti, 2013).

The second sub-theme, *Horizontalidad*, refers to the members' recognition of the relationship of freedom with the educator, which even allowed for a division of roles in the educational act, as illustrated by the following statements:

*Thabiti: [...] Generally, it's already formatted for you from top to bottom, and you must follow that schedule and that's how it will be. In GGD, however, there is no hierarchy, everything is more horizontal, not so vertical. (FG)*

*Gatimu: [...] She shared the role of director with the interpreters. Very cool, super new, and extremely difficult to do. [...] (FG)*

Although there was a certain hierarchy in the conduction of the project, the members realized that the decisions were not taken in an authoritarian way, from the top down and that they had the opportunity to play the role of mediators at different times, allowing them to exercise the role of leaders of the group.

GFA scholars are unanimous regarding the development of a horizontal process in this body practice (Ayoub, 2003; Toledo, Tsukamoto and Carbinatto, 2016; Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto, 2017). Allowing the experience of teaching for all members of the group contributes to the formation of subjects in terms of training (Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto, 2017). Likewise, the alternation of roles must be exercised during the choreographic construction, eliminating the role of a single person as the choreographer responsible for the creation (Ayoub, 2003).

To overcome the assistentialist connotation of education that insists on an active relationship of the teacher in donating knowledge to the student who remains passive, it is necessary to establish a horizontal relationship between these subjects (Freire, 1994; 1996). In this way, the educator must assume the role of *coordinator of debates* and the students of *group participants*. The balance between the learner's freedom and the educator's democratic authority favors the creation of a relationship of mutual respect, an essential requirement for establishing the discipline necessary for learning (Freire, 1996).

The third sub-theme, *Democratic choices/decisions*, concerns the subjects' perception of the democratic way in which decision-making was carried out during the project, as observed in the following comments:

*Thabiti: I think what is great about the GGD is this democratic participation, we are not used to having so much voice. And that's what generates so much conflict in us too because we have so much participation and so much, and everyone has an active voice or at least space. We end up having conflicts, like: oh, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do this. Indecision, each one wants to choose and then, it is very open. [...] (FG)*

*Gatimu: [...] But in a process that is extremely democratic, it is... everything moves slower, it moves much slower. Because everyone has a voice in all stages of the production, which makes the work rewarding for everyone, right? [...] (FG)*

The testimonies show that the members had the opportunity to participate in all the choices during the choreographic construction process. Although this has generated conflicts and delays in the completion of the work, the right to speak and to have the suggestions heard seems to have been something quite significant and gratifying for those involved.

The democratic aspect, together with the collective and collaborative, is evidenced by the literature as essential during the process of choreographic composition in GFA (Graner, Paoliello and Bortoleto, 2017; Carbinatto and Furtado, 2019; Lopes and Niquini, 2021). However, the authors also emphasize that democracy needs to be encouraged in all practitioners through the mediation of the responsible educator. In this environment, the educator must be aware that those who have a greater affinity with the leadership role are open to others to act significantly in the creation (Soares, Almeida and Bortoleto, 2016).

Democratic principles are of great importance for humanizing education, as they make it possible to develop a series of important attitudes for the exercise of citizenship, such as: not imposing your interests, not being authoritarian, respecting different interests and tastes, knowing how to argue, accepting diversity and new knowledge, renew yourself, etc. (Freire, 1996).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study showed that the principles that guide the Freirean pedagogy are adequate and relevant to guide university extension projects in GFA since the foundations that guide this corporal practice are in line with actions that strive for the human formation of the subjects who participate in it.

The presence of the principles of dialogicity and politicity in the educational act was evident during the development of all phases of the project. From the voices of the members, they actually lived an experience of building knowledge in a critical, collective, collaborative, and democratic way, in which autonomy and horizontality were made effective. Therefore, we consider that the dialogue and the reflective provocations potentiated humanizing formation by stimulating the criticality of the subjects.

Therefore, we believe that the articulation between the foundations of the GFA, the guidelines on the development of the pedagogical proposal of PF, and

the principles of Freirean pedagogy were adapted to the specific context of the GGD, evidencing that there was a reinvention of such propositions, a fact that demonstrates that the prescription of methodologies does not fit in the humanizing educational practice.

For Freire (2000, p. 40), “Education is always a theory of knowledge put into practice [...]”. And his writings testify to this, his educational proposal is nothing more than the reflection of reports and documentation resulting from his educational experiences, a fact that proves that educational practice is directly linked to reflective practice (Freire, 1963; 1969; 1985; 1994; Brandão, 1981; Feitosa, 2003; Beisiegel, 2010).

Guided by the reading of the world, mainly by the scenario of regional popular cultures and by the emerging themes in the national conjuncture, the members of the GGD felt the stimulus to the investigative spirit, which led them to an immersion in the theme and, consequently, exploration of questions related to the subject, factors that contributed to the expansion of criticality levels in them.

The effects resulting from this experience led to the subjects’ understanding of the possibility of intervening in the world using GFA as a language, a fact that made them realize the responsibility that each one assumed when proposing to communicate a message of such relevance. Likewise, they understood the assumption of a political position by the GGD as a collective, and by choosing to be part of the group, they also assumed the political and ideological intentions defended by the project.

Social transformations were inevitable, especially concerning cultural valorization, mainly of black culture; the deconstruction of prejudices, from overcoming racist attitudes in oneself to the anti-racist struggle; and the reflection on ethnic-racial identity.

Therefore, we consider that the educational process developed at the GGD impacted the subjects who participated in the project, since, through actions and reflections, attitudes about reality were taken, showing that there was a (re-)construction of senses and meanings about the context addressed.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

PRISCILA LOPES has a doctorate in Physical Education from the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). She is a professor at the Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM).

*E-mail*: priscila.lopes@ufvjm.edu.br

MICHELE VIVIENE CARBINATTO has a doctorate in Physical Education from the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). She is a professor at the same institution.

*E-mail*: mcarbinatto@usp.br

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