EVALUATING A DANCE-RELATED ONGOING TRAINING PROCESS: ACTION RESEARCH IN FOCUS

AVALIAÇÃO DE UM PROCESSO DE FORMAÇÃO CONTINUADA EM DANÇA: A PESQUISA-AÇÃO EM FOCO

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RESUMO
A formação continuada é um tema de bastante relevância na área educacional. Por meio dessa o docente tem a possibilidade de desenvolver sua profissionalidade, buscando solucionar problemas cotidianos, lançando mão de informações adquiridas ou daquelas, fruto da reflexão com seus pares sobre a prática pedagógica. Dessa forma, o objetivo da pesquisa foi avaliar as possibilidades de uma pesquisa-ação na formação continuada em dança escolar com professores de Educação Física do município de Bagé, RS. Participaram da pesquisa 26 professores da rede municipal. A proposta metodológica obedeceu às distintas etapas da pesquisa-ação, contemplando a identificação das necessidades (etapa 1), o planejamento da ação (etapa 2), a implementação da ação (etapa 3), a descrição e monitoramento da ação (etapa 4) e a avaliação dos resultados da ação (etapa 5). Os resultados da ação apontaram a apropriação do conhecimento por parte dos professores; maior motivação para a prática docente na escola; troca efetiva entre os pares; a possibilidade de trabalhar dança na escola. O estudo revelou a importância da formação continuada, permitindo a construção de novas aprendizagens, constatando-se mudanças nas atitudes, saberes e práticas pedagógicas dos docentes.


ABSTRACT
Ongoing training is a quite relevant theme in the education field. It allows teachers to develop their professional skills, seeking to solve everyday problems by means of acquired information or of information resulting from reflection with peers about pedagogical practice. Thus, the objective of this research was to assess the possibilities of an action research in ongoing training involving school dance with Physical Education teachers from the municipality of Bagé, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

The study had the participation of 26 teachers from the municipal network. The methodological proposal followed the different steps of action research, comprehending the identification of needs (step 1), action planning (step 2), action implementation (step 3), action description and monitoring (step 4) and action result evaluation (step 5). Action results suggested the appropriation of knowledge by the teachers, greater motivation toward the teaching practice in school, effective exchange among peers, and possibility of approaching dance in school. The study also revealed the importance of ongoing training, allowing the construction of new types of learning, with changes in the teachers’ attitudes, knowledge and pedagogical practices.

Keywords: Ongoing training. Teachers. Physical Education.

Introduction

When it comes to the teaching job, the quality of education is associated with the central figure of the teacher with their experiences, training, qualification and professional development. Professional training is an ongoing process that starts from initial training and extends to ongoing training. The professional development of a teacher results from their own life journey. Moreover, it is a dynamic process that goes through constant changes with new interactions in different contexts¹,².

A teacher’s professional development may start early, even before the future teacher goes to college and enters the job market³,⁴. That is because previous experiences, such as influences from the family and from other professionals in the field, are configured as a primary or anticipatory socialization, developing in teachers the perspective of professional
activity, consolidating beliefs that are inherent of the performance of their pedagogical practice. In this sense, a study distinguished four stages in the professional development of teachers in general: anticipatory socialization (which would be the process that precedes admission to an undergraduate course, initial training (undergraduate course), induction (professional entry) and on-duty training (ongoing training). About the on-duty training or ongoing training of teachers and professors, it is an important matter and reason for concern, especially as to how to keep this process constant during the activity of these professionals. The quest for formative practices has become essential, aiming at changes and the refreshing of studies for dealing with problems within school context.

Ongoing training is a process that provides educators with alternatives through which they can develop their professionality in their own teaching job, giving them a way of acting and solving everyday problems, making use of information acquired or also information derived from reflection with peers about pedagogical practice. Moreover, the ongoing training process also takes place in school as discussions, dialogues and reflections with the purpose of bringing about changes that contribute to the development of teachers. For this reason, the involvement of teachers is necessary for the establishment of a correlation between training and research, with collaborative practices between educators and researchers.

Additionally, ongoing training must work as a tool capable of providing solutions to real teaching problems, contributing to changing the professionalization of teachers. When teachers and professors put their thoughts into their own occupation, they find modes of training and working that allow them to act as the main agent of their formation.

This formative process is meant for developing a professional who, besides knowing what to do and how to do it, is also aware of the reason for doing it. Thus, for the teaching formation process to be useful and meaningful, it needs to be adaptable to the reality of teachers. The greater this capacity of adaptation, the easier it will be incorporated into habitual professional practices. One of the objectives of every training is to give one the opportunity of developing a reflexive and competent practice. Training turns into the possibility of creating spaces for people to learn and adapt in order to live with the uncertainty and changes.

The action research methodology is found along the way where teachers solve practical problems and exercise their capacity of critical reflection about their everyday reality; it is an applied research method that allows a participatory and collaborative engagement between researcher and participants, representative of a situation, toward solving problems identified by the group.

In the PE knowledge field, action research has served as a methodology to several studies. One of them observed to which extent this methodology was an adequate ongoing training strategy for teachers, when the intention was to change the pedagogical practice from a critical perspective and assist in the identification of major obstacles/hindrances to changing the pedagogical practice in PE in schools. Results showed that action research is indeed a fruitful strategy, but also indicate a series of limitations that emerge from the sociopolitical, economic and cultural contexts and that expose the high level of complexity of both processes and attempts regarding pedagogical innovation.

Action research was also used with PE teachers from the municipal network of the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, working with inclusive classes. The objective was to investigate how PE teachers could change aspects of their practice and contribute with the learning of their students in inclusive classes. Results showed that the teachers embraced the proposal, changing conceptions and their own pedagogical action within the subject, in favor of an education that allowed everyone to learn.
In another study about curricular PE in Elementary Education, the curricular proposals of 17 Brazilian states revealed that dance is a PE curricular content that stands as one of the most relevant types of knowledge in the propositional field. However, the study also indicated that more significant elements are necessary to state that it is actually a content present in PE lessons.

About the factors that can interfere with the presence of dance as a curricular content in school PE, the few hours dedicated to this subject in PE undergraduate courses is a factor that does not allow it to be properly developed in training. Another issue that makes learning in initial training difficult is lack of prior experience as to practice in this modality on the part of future teachers. "The lack of a common denominator for curricular organization may mean a space not yet defined for the importance of dance and its training proposal in PE during initial training".

Therefore, the present research aimed to assess the possibilities of an action research in ongoing training regarding school dance with PE teachers from the municipality of Bagé, RS, Brazil. The relevance of this study lies on the need for teaching qualification, given the measure taken by Bagé's municipal government, through which, as of the second semester of 2011, the Physical Education subject began to count on specialist teachers in Children's Education and Elementary School (early years), which, up until then, had only one educator, in compliance with Law No 8.747/198815.

Methods

Participants

The investigated population was the permanent PE teaching staff from the municipal network of Bagé, RS. From the action proposal, those who followed through the whole period of the process were 26 PE teachers. Analyzing the individuals' profile, 73.1% were females, and 26.9% were males. As for age, 38.5% of the teachers were up to 35 years old, 57.7% were aged between 36 and 55, and only 3.8% were over 55 years old. Analyzing the ongoing training process, 80.8% of them had already completed Latu Sensu specialization courses. All teachers, subjects of the research, were working for the municipal education network, with 42.3% of them also serving other networks. Another analyzed item was their weekly working hours: 30.8% worked 20 hours, and 69.2%, 40 hours or more.

The ethical criteria of the research were complied with, as set forth by Resolutions 196/96 and 251/97 of the Brazilian National Health Council, according to ethical norms, with protocol No 11593912.9.0000.5313 and approval through legal opinion No 186.142.

Procedures

This study was characterized as an action research process with school dance as its focus. It is worth noting that action research is one of the numerous types of action investigation, being a term to describe any process that follows a cycle in order to enhance practice through a systematic oscillation between acting in the practice field and investigating it.

The researcher's role in an action research is to mediate actions among group members, applying research instruments and activities. Figure 1 represents the different steps involved in this study:
After the Education Secretariat was reached out, the action construction process began by means of an initial contact with the PE teachers, when they were invited to participate in the action. The action research lasted three months; meetings were held every two weeks, on the morning and afternoon shifts, totaling a workload of 40h/a, which guaranteed certification for the teachers.

First, a diagnosis was performed through a questionnaire with closed- and open-ended questions (Step 1), allowing the teachers to specify and contextualize the situation of school dance as a PE content and its difficulties. The questions referred to reasons for including school dance as a PE content, the teachers' interest in working with this content, their connection with dance, their experiences, and others. With the problem defined and the action planned (Step 2), the teachers joined 10 practical lessons on school dance (Step 3), during which they were provided, as a way of complementing the action itself, a notebook with information on school dance that contained classification, activity suggestions and supporting text for the teachers.

The next step was the description and monitoring of the effects of the actions (Step 4). As action-mediating instruments, the following resources were used: reflexive memorials to be filled out at the end of each lesson, video recording of the lessons, photos, and notes on the fieldwork by the researchers. The teachers were extremely participative in the action research, actively cooperating in the process, contributing with suggestions and testimonies to be discussed at every meeting. There was an actual exchange of knowledge, which assisted in their formative practice.

The final stage was the evaluation of the results of the actions (Step 5). The teachers filled out an evaluation questionnaire again, with open-ended questions on learning, what they found easy and difficult, and matters relating to school dance. The questions that composed the questionnaire concerned the potentialities and limitations of the actions; if, with the action, the teacher felt capable of teaching school dance lessons; which incentives were necessary for them to develop this work, and other topics.

In order to complement the evaluation process, the Focus Group technique was used as well. It consists of an interaction between participants and researcher meant for collecting data from discussions focused on specific and directive topics. In the process of constructing the interpretation of results, content analysis was used along with the data triangulation technique, whose "basic objective is to reach maximum coverage in the description, explanation and comprehension of the study focus".

Results

At different moments of the action research, the teachers revealed their needs, expectations, longings and level of satisfaction with the ongoing training. From the density of the collected data, Chart 1 was built with the research steps, indicating the instruments used, the objectives and the results, according to the research cycle.
### Steps and Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Objectives of the instruments</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem identification (STEP 1)</td>
<td>Diagnostic questionnaire for teachers</td>
<td>Identify the teachers' professional profile and needs.</td>
<td>Contact with dance solely in initial training; Challenges to be faced; Need for formative practices; Teachers' openness to approaching school dance toward bringing this content into the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action planning (STEP 2)</td>
<td>Lesson schedule; Notebook with information on school dance</td>
<td>Ensure the teachers' participation in the process; Provide teachers with a theoretical foundation that sparks their interest in the research theme.</td>
<td>Support from the city's Education Secretariat; Teachers' engagement and interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action implementation (STEP 3)</td>
<td>Actions/School dance lessons</td>
<td>Allow teachers to gain knowledge about school dance and experience this activity.</td>
<td>Effective participation of teachers in meetings; Collaboration and suggestions throughout the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing and monitoring the effects of the action (STEP 4)</td>
<td>Reflective memorials; Photos; Notes on the field work</td>
<td>Follow the teachers' involvement and compliance during the research. Generate a support that assists in the perception of the teachers' development during the process.</td>
<td>Knowledge appropriation in rhythmic and expressive activities; Greater motivation toward teaching practice in school; Effective motivation toward teaching practice in school; Effective exchange among peers; Break with paradigms; Changes in teaching practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the results of the action (STEP 5)</td>
<td>Evaluation questionnaire; Focus group.</td>
<td>What has been learned during the process? What changes will take place in the teachers' pedagogical practices?</td>
<td>Personal overcoming; Possibility of approaching dance in school; New teaching techniques; Demand for greater investments from the upper-level management.</td>
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**Chart 1.** Action research results according to its steps, instruments used and objectives of the instruments

**Source:** The authors

### Discussion

From the results displayed in Chart 1, the intention was to cross the pieces of data found, specifically at steps 1, 4 and 5, for having data collection instruments, described earlier. To do so, authors that discuss training were resorted to. Thus, analyzing the results for Step 1, it was possible to observe that the teachers participating in the research had an interest in working with school dance but had their concerns about approaching it. As difficulties, they referred to the fact of not having knowledge about this content and that the experiences along their personal and professional journeys had not been significant.

One of the factors that characterize a teacher's identity is associated with the relations that they establish with the profession themselves, both in initial training and in experiences that precede college\(^ {20} \). Therefore, it is very likely that those teachers who had a restricted contact with dance in their training will have trouble using it in their practice. The interviewees declared that their contact with dance happened isolatedly in college; they had only one class in the whole course that approached this content.

The teachers' positive statements on the possibility of working in the future with school dance derives from their personal journey linked to technical training practices in specialized schools that offered classic ballet and jazz during their childhood and adolescence, with investments made by their families. They also emphasize that, throughout their initial training, participation in extension projects with a focus on rhythmic and expressive activities made them more comfortable about developing dance-related bodily practices.

Resources for developing personal competences are enriched through life and training experiences, both on a formal and an informal level of curricular development. Teachers also

acquire a baggage of legitimization concerning their decisions, founded on their theoretical repertoire and on their experiences, which begin to be automated and used in their planning$^{21}$. Still about Step 1, the teachers evidenced the need for formative practices as to the school dance theme, reinforcing the importance of investments in training courses for teachers so that they feel confident while performing their job, enabling the mobilization of theoretical-practical types of knowledge for them to face difficulties within school context. Ongoing training represents a need in the education field, composing a professional development process for all education professionals$^{22}$. The idea of ongoing training must evolve to a more comprehensive conception of human being formation and not be restricted to formative actions in the conception of certification, refreshment, conformation. Training must lead to new types of learning, to new ways and new pieces of knowledge, making up a vicious cycle$^{22}$. Continuing the discussion, the data found at Step 4 (description and monitoring of actions) revealed that the participating teachers highlighted how much their experiences with the proposed activities were contributing with significant changes to their teaching practice in school. The fact that the investigated individuals were directly working in schools during the research favored the meaning attributed to the use of the experienced activities. With respect to the teachers' opinion about the action, the proposal met the need for refreshment within the school dance field as a contribution to development in the professional context. During the actions, the teachers were appropriating knowledge in this domain and realizing that there were several possibilities of applying it within their reality. A training program must provide means for teachers to carry out the changes they long for, meeting their initial expectations or other relevant aspects to the teaching action in the course of the formative process. The implications deemed favorable are those that consider the school contexts and the teachers' own practice in their reality, in their routine$^{22}$. Teaching quality is permeated by several factors that impact the initial and ongoing training process of teachers as they act and develop in their professional field. Ongoing training must render teachers capable of being autonomous, reflexive in every process involving their teaching actions and experiences, acting as the main training agent. Training must suit the historical moment experienced by them$^{2}$.

A relevant aspect was the commitment of the group of teachers and their willingness to learn, generating an appropriation of knowledge in school dance, allowing them to overcome their frustrations, their paradigms and their expectations about this knowledge. Action research as a research method allowed supervising all activities during the process, which facilitated the appropriation of subjectivity and interaction among the research participants. The relationship with knowledge is established by the individuals themselves as they must appropriate the world, learning how to build, transform themselves, and evolve with time$^{23}$. This statement is made evident in the speech below:

> Because it's very common, we know that, when there's a course with practical lessons, even us Physical Education teachers, some of us stay seated. No, I'm not doing that, I'll just take notes. And in all courses I took, at least I saw everyone there actively participating. (Teacher 1).

For teachers to appropriate knowledge and bring about changes in their professional exercise, formative practices must meet their needs and, at the same time, motivate them to apprehend this knowledge. Education must be rooted in the human being's characteristic of always keep learning and promote situations that allow teachers to make the changes they long for$^{22}$. 

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Thus, in the context of initial training, an investigation anchored on the self-regulation of learning conducted with trainees from a PE undergraduate course aimed to investigate the development of their individual journeys as to pedagogical work. Results showed changes concerning the trainees' individual paths within their behavioral and metacognitive dimensions. The action investigation proved to be an important, change-boosting initial training strategy that contributed to the professional development of these future PE teachers.

Furthermore, a study that used action research to experiment with and assess the use of televised stories as teaching content and strategy, in school PE programs, found that, besides results regarding the appropriation of contents from the PE subject, there were transformations in the pedagogical work of the participating teachers.

At step 5 (evaluation), the results found with both the questionnaire and the focus group showed meaningful statements that allow seeing the effective response of the performed action.

During the application of the Focus Group technique, the teachers talked about the relevance of action research, generating different opinions, evidenced in the speeches diluted during the analysis and fully transcribed.

While discussing the action, the research teachers addressed matters relating to personal overcoming as to dance and claimed feeling more confident and secure about new practices in school.

The action research was for the teachers an appropriation of new types of dance-related knowledge in PE, leading them to explore the possibilities of approaching this content in a simple and effective way and to understand that it is possible to work with school dance.

The work methodology used was also a positive aspect mentioned by the teachers as a facilitator of their learning process. They said that, from this formative practice, there was an instrumentalization toward the development of distinctive classes with school dance. This meets what is proposed in the action research method, which aims to intervene in the situation to be described, influence or produce changes in the social process, and promote its comprehension (research) as study object.

On the other hand, when focusing on training, it is possible to deem it legitimate as it contributes to a teacher's professional development when it comes to both professional learning and the workplace. "Training must propose a process that provides teachers with knowledge, skills and attitudes toward creating reflexive or inquisitive professionals."

A formative practice, in addition to triggering a process of knowledge appropriation, of reflection on professional exercise, also involves the matter of socialization. "The socialization process is marked by a series of role choices, that is, by meaningful interactions with others."

It's really nice to meet people from our field to talk to, [...] the encounter is really nice. I had a lot of fun, always laughed at the end, it was like a gym for me because I danced, played. (Teacher 2).

Teachers need to develop skills for learning about relationship, sociability, about the culture involving the context and interaction modes of every person in relation to the rest of the group. Training goes beyond education and becomes the possibility of creating spaces of participation, reflection and formation where people learn how to live with change and uncertainty. "Professional competence, necessary to every educative process, will be ultimately formed in the interaction that is established among the teachers themselves while interacting in the practice of their profession."
Continuing the analysis process, the teachers manifested their dissatisfaction with the offer of courses and workshops by the municipality, by the Education Secretariat, highlighting that, in previous years, training opportunities used to be more effective and that, to them, participating in constant refreshment is essential. There were indications that management boards should offer more workshops related to the theme, providing greater support and thus stimulating and motivating teachers. This reality is made evident in the speech below:

[...] another thing has also to do with what we discussed, about the lack of training opportunities, even on the part of the SMED, because I started last year and there was only one since then. [...] even I, in my case, need training because I work with the early years, have worked with the final years and higher education, which is quite the opposite. And I think this part of school dance is essential, this approach to rhythm, so we lacked that. But, in my opinion, besides that, ongoing training called our attention. (Teacher 3).

The research participants described some of the teachers' training needs, which include: a) those concerning students (learning, diversity, discipline and motivation); b) those concerning the curriculum (development of new curricula, new teaching styles, communication, evaluation); c) personal needs (teaching career development, satisfaction at work, anxiety reduction); d) matters referring to the school (the institution as a whole: curriculum, students, organization, teachers, internal climate, relations with the outside)\(^28\).

As for investments in ongoing training, it is a requirement for the exercise of citizenship. Promoting the articulation of national policies, as well as of public and private federal, state and municipal education networks, is a way of creating formation processes and working conditions that allow for a qualified exercise of teaching action\(^29\).

The research participants were critical about the strategies used by management entities responsible for teacher qualification in the investigated scenario. The following statement clearly shows the issues addressed by the teachers at the evaluation stage:

Moments like this. Imagine this, it took a master's dissertation to motivate the SMED to offer a workshop on dance practices. Not that we don't have conditions to work with dance, but the requirement usually is: work aiming at the JERGS, train for school tournaments, etc. So at the end of the day the time we have with the students is for us to organize our work and do sports. (Teacher 4).

Teachers need to be aware of the way they act, of the reasons for their attitudes. Therefore, they need to know how to ask for the knowledge they do not have in order to take advantage of processes aimed at building new types of knowledge around practice that they may be acquired with new training processes\(^29\).

From the moment that formative practices directly meet the expectations and needs of teachers, the process of knowledge appropriation by them becomes valid, reflecting the construction of new sorts of knowledge in their professional exercise.

**Conclusions**

It is believed that the results found, from the analysis of the different stages of the action research, reinforce the importance of formative practices to a teacher's professional development. Formative actions represent a possibility for teachers to reflect about their practices, in addition to discussing problems, the reality and the needs they experience in their professional exercise. The study also evidenced that formative actions must be in line with the interests of teachers to bring about changes in their attitudes, knowledge and pedagogical practice, contributing to a better teaching.
It is worth noting that the methodological choice of action research provided an environment of participation and resolution of problems, allowing teachers to reconsider and enhance practice in school. The action research brought the teachers closer to the "school dance" content and to the possibilities of developing it in PE classes. Such a knowledge emerges as an agent to modify contents and practices developed in school, which, most of the times, are dedicated to sports-related contents. The intention herein was not to generalize the presented considerations but rather create a space that can help readers establish associations with their reality, according to the contexts of which they are part. What can be concluded is that the teaching formative practice is a continuous process that develops throughout a teacher's personal and professional journeys, being essential for this individual to reflect about their practice and keep or acquire new sorts of knowledge. With respect to this, the action research proved to be capable of creating the necessary possibilities for reaching these learning conditions. Finally, it is important to highlight that reconsidering teaching formation, as well as seeking to bring the knowledge produced by universities closer to the school, becomes important to improve the quality of education as a whole.

References


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