

PERCEPTIONS OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN PORTUGAL SINCE THE 1970S

António Gomes Ferreira¹ and José António Moreira¹

¹Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Coimbra, Portugal

²Department of Education and Distance Learning, Open University, Portugal

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

doi: 105550/sgia.120801.en.021F

COBISS.BH-ID: 2934296

UDC: 371.14+371.12:796/799

SUMMARY

The aim of this study is to analyse how Physical Education teachers in Portugal organise their lessons, taking into consideration the most valued lesson models. Moreover, we sought to understand the existing relationship between those practices, their experiences, attitudes and the influence of training schools, ie, the existing relationship between pedagogical work and a *habitus*, seen as a product of history and a defining principle of group and individual practices learned empirically in specific contexts. Based on a qualitative methodology, the study focused on a group of fifteen teachers with varied degrees in Physical Education, who graduated from some of the most distinguished schools in Portugal, for e.g., the National Institute of Physical Education, Colleges of Physical Education, and some of the most famous Portuguese faculties in this field of study established in the early 1990s. We concluded that these teachers defend the use of well structured classes, based on strict planning, not neglecting students' motivations. Moreover, that the existence of different pedagogical practices (and attitudes) is possible due to different training, to the specific historical context and different experiences, personalities and motivations of each teacher. These differences suggest, therefore, there is a relationship between pedagogical practices and a *habitus*, which means experiences acquired in different cultural, political and educational environments.

Key Words: pedagogical practices, physical education; teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Physical Educational in Portugal during the 20th and early 21st centuries has been marked by many changes that have influenced its conceptual and methodological course (Moreira, 2011), with effects evident in the pedagogical practices adopted by Physical Education teachers. To understand these changes in practices, we need to consider the Physical Education teacher in his or her *habitus*, in the different scenarios in which he or she works, whether in terms of profession or of training (initial and continuing), or in personal terms, subject to the influence of personal and professional experiences (Borges, 2003; Lahire, 2002; Rezer, 2007).

Bourdieu (2005) sees this *habitus* as a system of durable arrangements which, integrating all past experiences, works at every moment as a matrix that generates representations, perceptions and practices,

making it possible to carry out infinitely different tasks thanks to the analog transfers of schemes, which allow problem-solving in the same way, and the endless corrections of results obtained, dialectically produced by these results. In the same line of reasoning, Silva (2005) assumes it as a product of history and a defining principle of individual and group practices that can be learned empirically.

In turn, Borges (2003) argues that much of the knowledge underlying Physical Education teachers training is the result of the experiences they acquire in their professional career (from the period of initial training), in the development of pedagogical activities experienced in institutions where they taught, and highlights the idea that *habitus* is the pedagogical practice of teachers through the incorporation of lived experiences and repetition of successful ideas. Thus, the *habitus* of teachers encompasses knowledge built not only throughout the teaching practice,

but also along the training course, as a higher education student and as a non-higher education student (Sançotene & Molina Neto, 2010).

Therefore, in examining the teachers' practice, we felt it was necessary to examine the ways of being in the profession and how they feel towards the profession, but also examine the paths of their initial training and the contexts that defined how they face the profession. These contexts were crucial to how these teachers performed, because in the 1970s, and especially in the 1990s, with the substantial increase (Brás, 1996) of Physical Education training schools in Portugal, many courses were established with very heterogeneous curricular structures and contents, which contributed to enhance the diversity of practices and different »Physical Educations« that have been in contact at the same time and in the same spaces, similar to a crossroads of different parallel dimensions in the same reality, forming, as understood by Lovisolo (1995), different »tribes« that use different »languages«, with reflections evident in their attitude and practice.

On the basis of these assumptions, we developed a study that aims to understand the existing relationship between those pedagogical practices and their experiences, attitudes and the influence of training schools, ie., the existing relationship between pedagogical work and a *habitus*, seen as a product of history and a defining principle of group and individual practices learned empirically.

METHODS

As already mentioned, the aim of this study is to analyse how a group of Physical Education teachers of Portuguese basic education schools (7th, 8th and 9th years of schooling) and secondary education schools (10th, 11th and 12th of years of schooling) organise their practices. The nature of this research led us to consider a qualitative study in which direct speech

submits to an interpretative logic, which in framing and explaining the position of the interviewed teachers intends to describe how Physical Education teachers relate within their subject group in the current Portuguese school context.

To stimulate the materialization of study data, we resorted to the use of semi-directed interviews, also called clinical or structured interview, and to analyse the data from this interview we used a research technique that encodes the apparently disordered statements: the analysis of contents (Bardin, 1977; Krippendorff, 1980; Vala 1986).

Our sample consisted of a group of fifteen interviews to teachers (Table 1) with different initial training in Physical Education, taken at well known institutions of our country during the 20th century: the National Institute of Physical Education (INEF in Portuguese), created in 1940, marking a truly significant moment in terms of Physical Education teachers' training in Portugal (Ferreira, 2002); the Schools of Physical Education Instructors (EIEF in Portuguese), created in 1969; the College of Physical Education (ISEF in Portuguese) in Lisbon and Porto, created in 1975 following the implementation of democracy in Portugal; the Faculties of Science, Sports and Physical Education (FAC in Portuguese), that proliferated from the early 1990s.

After deciding to study this group of professionals, we selected it in a non-random way without looking for a »representative« objective, given the qualitative nature of the methodology. This selection sought to ensure the greatest possible diversity of experience and personal characteristics, and was based on initial training courses (training institutions). With this procedure, we wanted our sample to be made up of teachers who had different training courses in different historical periods, with different lengths of service and career positions, in order to come close to the concept of maximum variation sample.

TABLE 1

Study sample.

Codes of interview	Institucije za početno obrazovanje
E2, E13, E14	Instituto Nacional de Educação Física (INEF)
E10, E12	Escola Instrutores de Educação Física (EIEF)
E1, E4, E7, E8, E10, E11	Institutio Superior de Educação Física (ISEF)
E3, E5, E6, E9, E15	Faculdades de Desporto de Educação Física (FAC)

Before presenting the results, we think it is important to note that the analysis of resulting data obeyed a logics of operation based on the alternation of two

phases. Initially, we carried out a vertical analysis of each interview of teachers trained in different schools, and then we performed a horizontal or comparative

analysis using the »constant comparative analysis method« (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to identify common and distinctive aspects of the teachers' representations and perceptions. To this end, we present the information from the interview in tables as well, to illustrate the relevance of some of their opinions. We believe that this organisational model of information, which allows us to study the perceptions of teachers in a systematic way, will provide us with a more adequate view of their ideas.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Representation of teachers trained up to the 1970s - INEF and EIEF

With regard to the representations of teachers trained in INEF and EIEF, we have, in this area, records distributed by the characterisation of the

Physical Education class and by the analysis of the different attitudes and practices in the teaching of this discipline. It should be noted that these teachers had initial training before 1975, when their training institution underwent major changes and changed their name to College of Physical Education.

A lesson is never a harmless act. It always contains an educational activity that cannot be ignored. The construction of the lesson, according to Pieron (1984), raises a set of concerns that will constrain its structure and organisation, for example, which activities should be suggested, which teaching style should be adopted, or which models should be used (Table 2).

Teacher -E13-, as seen in the first example record, when asked about the lesson model she values most, points out that whilst defending a lesson more focused on the student's motivations, does not neglect the planning of her lessons.

TABLE 2

Representations of teachers from INEF/EIEF

S	Record
E13	I defend a class more focused on students' motivations, although I always have a previously outlined structure.
E12	I think so. The different training, contexts, experience and personality of each teacher contribute to those different practices and attitudes.

This issue of planning is, in fact, very important, because the planning of any activity, including teaching, according to Arends (1995) improves the results of student learning. The research conducted by Pereira (2002), who sought to establish whether Physical Education teachers plan their lessons, revealed that 76.2% of teachers actually plan them; however, the same study showed that they devoted little time to this planning, which is nonetheless worrying.

Regarding its structure, the teacher always starts her classes »[...] with a warm up to the activity being taught. Then we get to the didactic part, or if I see that they need to relax, I let them follow their motivations, and sometimes the lesson ends like this, because there is no time for more [...]«. In her opinion, all exercises and games are important, but she particularly likes »[...] group games directed to the development of social skills. Sometimes, I give priority to games involving group dynamics«.

Another teacher from INEF, -E14-, with a slightly different idea, admits that, for many years, he was in favour of a more structured lesson, especially to contradict the rooted idea that nothing happened in the Physical Education class. One of his greatest struggles, as was the prerogative of teachers graduated in INEF, was always to try to change the image

that the school and surrounding community had of Physical Education. After this »struggle«, in his last days as a teacher, he focused more on the motivations of students. His classes, he says, were always: »[...] well structured, with an initial warm up period according to the sports activity. Then came the didactic part, and at the end the fun part«.

Regarding the structure of the lesson, the EIEF -E12- teacher feels that there should be a previously outlined structure, adapted »gradually to the motivations of students. Normally, her classes start [...] with a specific warm up period directed at the activity students will engage in. Then I give them the didactic component, and finally there's a period of relaxation, if there is time for it.« This seems to be a very logical system supported among teachers of Physical Education. Rodrigues (1994) conducted a study which focused on the construction and organisation of Physical Education classes, in which he defends the most important moments of a class. Similarly to the teachers of our study, Rodrigues defends a class divided into three distinct moments: initial or preparatory, the body or key part of the class, and the final part or closure. The first part of the session consists of two moments: first, when students have not started the class yet and are getting ready to enter

the gym; second, the actual class, with students prepared to start activities. This last period may consist of two phases: one in which the teacher makes an oral presentation of the contents and/or activities; another, an active part or »warm up«, which may eventually take place before the oral presentation of activities. The main part of the lesson aims to achieve the operational objectives defined for that class. The final part aims to lower the active state of students, using for that effect some flexibility exercises, stretching and/or relaxation. This part may be used to achieve the objectives of social-emotional and/or cognitive control. As we will see, most teachers involved in our research, from all training schools, in a more or less systematized way, and in more or less detail, ultimately define a structure very similar to the one described and defined by this researcher.

With regard to the existence of different attitudes and practices within the professional group, all teachers in this group are unanimous in admitting that differences exist. As we will see in the second example records in Table 2, the teacher from EIEF feels that these different practices exist and are justified, especially due to different training, different contexts and experiences of each teacher, and different personalities. She adds that it is normal »[...] for teachers who hop from school to school to have a wealth of different experiences, and a better notion of those practices«.

Teachers -E13 and -E14- emphasise too the issue of different training and individual experiences. While the first teacher notes that: »[...] the proliferation of training courses and new sports contributed to the different practices found in schools«, the second teacher chooses to highlight only initial training as a determining factor. In his opinion, »[...] initial training is the factor that influences the most how the Physical Education teacher performs.

The training school leaves a mark for ever. Sometimes, this mark is embedded deeper than it should [...]«.

Representation of teachers trained during the 1970s and 1980s - ISEFs

In respect of the representations of teachers trained at the ISEFs, we have sixty-two records, equally distributed on the basis of how they describe their classes and their work.

In their approaches to the construction of the lesson itself, most of the teachers trained at the ISEFs advocate a very structured lesson based on strict planning, not neglecting, however, the issue of student motivation, thus confirming the results of the previously cited work by Pereira (2002), which shows the importance that Physical Education teachers assign to planning, as it can enable a better structuring of the students' learning progress, ensure better class organisation and management, and boost the confidence of the teacher.

As we can see in the first example record (Table 3), when asked about the lesson model she values most, teacher -E4- refers that this issue is difficult to answer, because the situation often depends on external factors that are difficult to control, such as the motivation and mood of students. Showing a conformist attitude, she says that when a student is in an uncontrollable mood, she sends him or her home. However, she has no doubts in describing how a typical Physical Education should not be like, a situation that has happened to her a few times as a student: »I had a teacher before 25 April 1974, when the democratic rule was established in Portugal, who always came to school at 8 am holding a ball, he would sign the log-book for the whole day, go out for coffee sometimes, and at lunch time he would come back to pick up his ball. This is definitely a Physical Education class [...]«.

TABLE 3

Representations of teachers from ISEFs

S	Record
E4	The typical class always depends on many external factors, which the Physical Education Teacher is not always able to control. It depends on the motivation and mood of students, depends on the discipline and activity they had before. For example, if they had a 12th year test that didn't go well, however hard we try there's nothing we can do. At such times, I tell them to go home, to disappear, because it's not worth them being there.
E7	Yes, always. Different teachers with different training. In some schools, we had five or six Physical Education teachers with different training, which will not in any way benefit the discipline.

With regard to the sub-division of the Physical Education class, according to this teacher it »must

have a warm-up period and a flexibility period. Then the didactic unit being taught. The fun part, the game and fitness

according to contents must also be part of the lesson, and at the end stretching exercises and relaxation. Only sometimes this is not easy to pull through [...]» (UR¹ 10). It follows, therefore, a very consensual structure, which Rodrigues (1994) feels is adequate.

Teacher -E7- expresses a line of thought that is typical of these teachers, noting that he likes well structured and planned classes, but is aware that they need to be flexible because adopting a tough stance may cause some constraints. From his experience and knowledge, he states that: «[...] depending on the classes, we have to adopt different strategies. Later, he points out that it is often necessary to value the motivation part and the sports dynamics, where there is more freedom and the lesson is given in the sense of a game, which pleases the student». When preparing his classes, this teacher prefers the integrating activities. He says: «[...] if I'm teaching basketball or volleyball, there is no sense in running around without a ball. All the activities should be focused on the actual sport, and integrated. If the student has to master the dribble, then he or she will warm-up playing the ball».

The position of teacher -E8-, also from ISEF in Porto, is very similar to that of the former teacher, as regards the planning of lessons. He defends the ideal of having well structured lessons, and is aware that it is necessary to meet students' motivations. In this sense, he is very critical of teachers who: «[...] often forego the pre-defined structure just to please the students, neglecting the important exercises needed to learn a particular sport. This is why sometimes students reach the 12th year without knowing, for example, how to make a left pass using the left hand». And he concludes, in this regard, that we need to be aware that: «[...] in Physical Education classes there is much time for playing around, but there is also a time for more 'serious' learning. All disciplines have objectives to be met, and if I can achieve that objective in a playful way, fine, but sometimes it is not easy to find 'games' for everything».

Along the same line of reasoning, teacher -E10- highlights the importance of a directed class, goal-oriented and well structured. More assertive than the other teachers before, he strongly advocates a structured class oriented by the teacher, regardless of the students' motivations, because he believes that: «[...] it is the responsibility of the teacher to find strategies to motivate students into learning a particular didactic unit. For this teacher, it is important to divide the lesson into three parts: a warm-up period at the beginning, directed to the sport being taught, and always directed and supervised by the teacher and not by the students. The warm-up issue is so specific that I cannot give them a warm-up typical of gymnastics, and then teach them volleyball, or a warm-up specific for athletics, and then teach them basketball. After the warm-up, the lesson

follows along sequential stages or objectives according to the different course units, and ends with time for recreational and fun activities». Finally, teacher -E11-, whose opinion is slightly different from the previous teachers. Unlike them, the focus is on the students' motivations, whilst affirming the need to structure the lessons. But this is definitely not the most important. The lesson is based on a three-part model starting with a: «[...] specific warm-up for the sport in question, trying to motivate students in this phase. Then comes the most important part, in which I follow the annual plan, and then back to a calmer period, with the fitness part or the relaxation exercises».

With regard to there being different attitudes and practices in the teaching of Physical Education, teachers trained at the ISEFs are also unanimous in considering that differences exist and are mostly the result of totally different training in the past forty years, because the Portuguese historical context has changed and each person's experiences and personalities differ. As we can see in the second record in Table 3, teacher -E7- feels that different practices exist and are mostly the result of totally different training. Moreover, he also feels that: «[...] the different experiences, different historical contexts and different training are the main reasons behind those different attitudes». In this respect, he ends by saying that: «if there is only one Physical Education, the practice could also be almost exclusively one [...]».

Teacher -E8- also stresses this idea, saying that: «there are teachers with distinct training, who received a specific type of training, who lived in a specific historical, political and social context, with unique ideas». Despite this heterogeneity, he is sure of one thing, that: «[...] the teacher with no type of training whatsoever no longer exists».

Teacher -E10-, in addition to the reasons given, adds that the cause of those differences is: «[...] the degree of motivation and personal achievement. I don't believe that a teacher who comes to school 'bothered with his life', having driven many miles and with a precarious work contract will have a great performance and be motivated to motivate students».

Teacher -E11-, in turn, prefers to point out how each teacher acts and reacts, saying that initial training does not explain all the differences: «I, for example, refuse to hand out theory tests, and others with the same initial training do it. I believe this has to do with our personality and not with initial training».

Representations of teachers trained since the 1990s to date- FAC

With regard to the representations of teachers trained more recently, in this area we have 48 records, distributed across the themes set out above. The first

¹UR - Unit of register

question related to the characterisation of the class reveals that most of these teachers, as we can see in the example records, prefer a well planned class according to a predefined structure (Table 4).

It is interesting to note that Pereira (1999), in another study he developed on planning and thoughts of Physical Education teachers, reaches very similar conclusions, stressing that teachers without teaching experience tend to be more systematic in planning Physical Education lessons than teachers with experience. Moreover, for Physical Education teachers without teaching experience, the most often mentio-

ned reason, beyond the need to structure student learning has to do with the need to reduce insecurity and uncertainty in the interactive learning.

Regarding its structure, teacher -E6- always begins his classes: *»[...] with the warm-up, which can be done in several ways, or directed to what will be taught in class. For example, if it is basketball, we can warm-up by dribbling the ball, or simply running. Then comes the important part, in which you try to meet the objectives of the didactic unit you planned, and a calmer final part, so that students leave with a smile on their faces, or say that the class was 'cool'«.*

TABLE 4

Representations of teachers trained at the FACs.

S	Record
E6	I advocate structured classes. For me, this is fundamental, and if there was space, I would even create five levels within the same class. I would carry out a diagnosis and divide students into groups according to their development level, but unfortunately that is not possible.
E5	When these teachers started teaching, their motivations and the concept of Physical Education were also different.

Teacher -E5- has an identical view regarding the need to structure the lessons and comply with the annual programme; he organises his sessions into three distinct moments, not respecting, however, the moments mentioned by other teachers in our study and already cited by Rodrigues (1994). For this teacher trained at the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, *»the lesson always begins with a brief warm-up, which in our region (Bragança) is all the more important, because temperatures are not ideal for sports. For example, at 8.30 am is it inhuman. A sport such as volleyball is impossible to teach properly, because at that time the kids' hands are freezing and they cannot do the movements correctly. After the warm-up we have the individual technique exercises, and the final part of the lesson always ends with a game«.* As we have seen, this description lacks what Rodrigues (1994) called the closing of the session, aiming to lower the active state of students using, for that effect, some flexibility, stretching and relaxation exercises.

Teachers -E9- and -E15-, trained at the Faculty of Sports Science and Physical Education of Porto, also defend a structured class, but always bearing in mind students' motivation. They advocate a class in which there is a certain balance between these two dimensions. The opinion of teacher -E15- is quite clear on the commitment that must exist in a class, since it: *»[...] has to follow a certain structure, predefined, but also be focused on students' motivation«.* With regard to the structure of the lesson, teacher -E9- also points out three

moments: *»[...] a warm-up period, directed to the practice or an initial entertaining game with lots of 'good laughs' requiring some effort. Then follows the main part of the lesson, to work on contents. And at the end, a recreational period, with games some may find too childish, but then they always have fun and want to repeat them«.* Teacher -E15-, more in line with the structure defined by Rodrigues (1994), highlights: *»[...] a first part set aside for the warm-up and to explain the activities, a second part dedicated to the planned activities, to develop the specific skills required by that unit, and a final part for relaxing, and sometimes a bit of aerobics«.*

With regard to the existence of different attitudes and practices in the teaching of Physical Education, these teachers corroborated the opinion of teachers trained at other schools, saying that if differences do exist, they are the result of different experiences and personalities. As we can see in the second example of records, in Table 4 teacher -E5- feels that there are different attitudes, in particular of graduates from INEF and ISEF, because, in reality, the concept of Physical Education was rather different.

He also explains that: *»if you place someone who has graduated 20 or 30 years ago teaching next to someone who has just graduated, I have no doubt that the former will be surprised at the exercises used by the one who has just graduated«.* He concludes on a critical note, *»[...] if older teachers invested more in training, the situation would be different, but because they accommodate themselves or because of inexistent training here, this is the situation«.*

Teacher -E9- also stresses the different training and the personality of each teacher. In line with the previous teacher, he also mentions a certain slackness by the older teachers who: »no longer have the patience for teaching activities. Because their training was, in general, more limited, and because their bodies also resent it, they choose not to do the practical trainings«.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the interviews, briefly presented in the previous pages, we see that some aspects are more consensual or receive greater attention than others. One of the more consensual aspects is that most Physical Education teachers believe in a well structured and outlined class, based on strict planning, not neglecting, however, the issue of students' motivation.

On the structure of the class, we conclude that most teachers divide it into three distinct moments: initial or preparatory, the body or key part of the class, and the final part or closure. The initial part of the class consists of the active part or »warm-up«; the main part of the lesson aims to achieve the operational objectives defined; and the final part aims to lower the active state of students, using for that effect some flexibility exercises and/or relaxation.

In turn, from the discussion on the different attitudes and practices in Physical Education, we conclude that teachers attribute these differences mostly to training, experiences, historical contexts, personality and their motivations, which shows a relationship between the pedagogical practices of these teachers and their habitus.

Given these perceptions, it is interesting to note that these teachers trained since the 1970s, regardless of their training school, their professional experience and their motivations, have very identical representations about what should be the pedagogical work of the Physical Education teacher, which in a way suggests the existence of union in this professional group. Note that these results are consistent with recent studies developed by Martins (2010), Cortesão (2010), Moreira and Ferreira (2011), and Ferreira and Moreira (2011), who point to a cultural identity within the Physical Education group in Portugal, despite the fact that sometimes we notice some difficulties in the dialogue between these different generations.

Given these findings, it seems therefore important that Physical Education teachers continue to analyse the contexts in which their activity takes place, and continue to acquire new behaviours and formal and non-formal knowledge, in order to restructure the

profession, giving rise to a Physical Education with professionals who are responsible, caring, united professional and loyal to this identity matrix

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Received: April 1, 2012

Revision received: May 6, 2012

Accepted: June 14, 2012

Correspondence to:

António Gomes Ferreira, PhD

Rua do Colégio Novo

Apartado 6153

3001-802 Coimbra

Portugal

Phone: 00351 23 98 51 450

Fax: 00351 23 98 51 465

E-mail: antonio@fpce.uc.pt