

Participatory planning and health promotion in PE classes

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Introduction

The Schools for Health in Europe (SHE) defines participation as one of its pillars, as well as empowerment and democracy as core values of its policies. In this way, they corroborate the need to use participatory school strategies in the development of democracy and empowerment, aiming at transforming the health reality of the citizens and their communities.

Brazilian Physical Education (PE) teachers often use participatory strategies in their classes to enable students to experience diverse manifestations of body culture, reflect and analyze social, political, economic, historical, biological and cultural aspects related to body practices, use different school spaces during the classes, effectively participate in the planning and contents of the classes (Farias; Nogueira; Souza; Maldonado, 2019; Maldonado et al., 2017; Nogueira; Farias; Maldonado, 2017).

Correia (1996) was one of the precursors in the application of participatory planning in PE classes, arguing that the methodology promotes an increase in student participation and motivation. Souza & Freire (2008) add that through more democratic relations, participatory planning can change the educational environment. Farias; Nogueira; Souza; Maldonado (2019) concluded that participatory planning enables a greater interaction between students and knowledge related to body movement culture.

Most of these studies use as a theoretical reference the idea of Popular Education from Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970; 1980; 1983; 1996) whose main point is the valorization of the student's knowledge (popular culture). In his vast theory, Paulo Freire proposes a dialogic and problem-based education, in the sense of raising awareness of the situations of oppression experienced by the people and the achievement of autonomy and freedom.

Specifically in Brazil, health-related content has always had its place in school PE classes (Oliveira, Gomes and Bracht, 2014). However, the concept of health commonly used continues to be guided by strictly biological principles, limiting the understanding and development of actions that meet the comprehensiveness of the human being (CARVALHO, 2005).

Regarding health promotion at school, from a broad perspective, Oliveira, Gomes & Bracht (2014) has been deepening the studies, supported by the proposal of “Health for Education” by Kottmann & Küpper (1999). The basic premise is the development of competencies that lead students to act responsibly and coherently with regard to individual and collective health, through diverse and meaningful experiences that collaborate with the promotion of lifelong health.

Despite countless experiences and a good number of publications on the subject of participatory planning and health education in schools, so far no study has been developed to analyze the importance of participatory planning in PE classes for health promotion.

For the past 13 years I have been strengthening a PE teaching methodology based on participatory planning. After developing my doctoral thesis, I began to see participatory planning as a powerful tool for promoting health in school. In this sense, the objective of this investigation is to qualitatively analyze the possible relationships between participatory planning in PE classes and health promotion.

Methodology

According to Moretti & Adams (2011) the development of participatory research represents an advance in the involvement of individuals and society in conducting scientific research. By having dialogue as a key tool, participatory research is characterized by understanding and valuing different knowledge, highlighting a science ethically and politically committed to social transformation. This qualitative research approach is identified with Paulo Freire's theoretical-methodological framework. For Sousa et al. (2018), through dialogue and problematization, it is possible to reveal contradictions and adverse situations to seek viable alternatives to transform the reality of social individuals.

While working as a PE teacher in a public school in Brazil, I developed this participatory research, which involved students from the seventh grade of elementary school to the third year of high school, who attended PE classes in the last 5 years. On average, each school year, 150 students attended classes.

For data collection, we used the records of the pedagogical intervention process in the form of annotations of class diaries and oral and written evaluations of students about the understanding of the themes, concepts and strategies used in the development of classes. These records were analyzed in the light of thematic content analysis that, according to Fontoura (2011), allows us to grasp meaning cores contained in the narratives. By comparing the

narratives with the class diary records, it was possible to assess the students' progress in understanding the concepts and practices of physical education related to health promotion.

Results and Discussion

In general, the discipline is evaluated positively, mainly by the diversity of activities it offers. In addition, students relate the participation of the whole students in class, the form of organization and choice of activities (participatory) and the good teacher-student relationship, as positive points. The main negatives listed are related to 'inappropriate' behaviors of the students themselves. Excessive competitiveness, lack of respect and disunity are the most cited.

Among the main suggestions for the improvement of classes, the school excursions and external classes are the ones that were more demanded. Most students suggest that classes take place in public leisure spaces around the school, so that they discover how to enjoy these spaces in their free time. They also request the inclusion in the school calendar of sporting events that can be organized by themselves, characterizing their empowerment.

Throughout this period, the records of the class diaries indicate a broadening of the understanding of the conceptions and practices of PE related to the health promotion by the students. They better understand the importance of participating in the planning and elaboration of classroom activities, gradually becoming aware of their responsibility for the success of their own learning. They have great motivation to practice different activities, as well as to create and innovate, escaping the conventional of classes. As a result of this diversification, they demand more out-of-school classes and gradually take the lead in organizing numerous school events.

The systematic and persistent application of participatory planning strategies has contributed to the development of skills such as autonomy, responsibility, dialogue, respect for diversity, critical thinking, as well as broadening the notion of health, with a focus on critical conceptions that advocate a more humanized and multidetermined health view. In this way, we believe that we are promoting health, not only when we talk about the benefits of physical activity in the life of each one, but also when we approach topics such as sustainable development, quality education, gender equality, reduction of social inequality.

Perspectives

As a result of the diversification of activities and the encouragement of autonomous participation, students began to increasingly request outside classes in public leisure spaces. This demand led us to develop entire school periods in out-of-school spaces. It is noteworthy

that in these out-of-school classes we encourage students to be the protagonists, actively participating in the planning, management, execution and evaluation of activities, and promote dialogue between them and respect for the environment.

In the experience of bringing the knowledge built collectively within the school to the public leisure space, students observe the limitations imposed by the social determinants of health and reflect on the possibilities of overcoming social inequities. In these classes, we often discuss poor conservation, insecurity, arbitrary occupation of public spaces, factors that limit the access of lower class adolescents to public leisure spaces in our city.

The experience of taking advantage of the city's public leisure spaces in a critical and reflective way is leading me to debate with students and to deepen investigations in the thematic direction of active and sustainable cities. This is a line of research I am considering starting to investigate when I return to Brazil.

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