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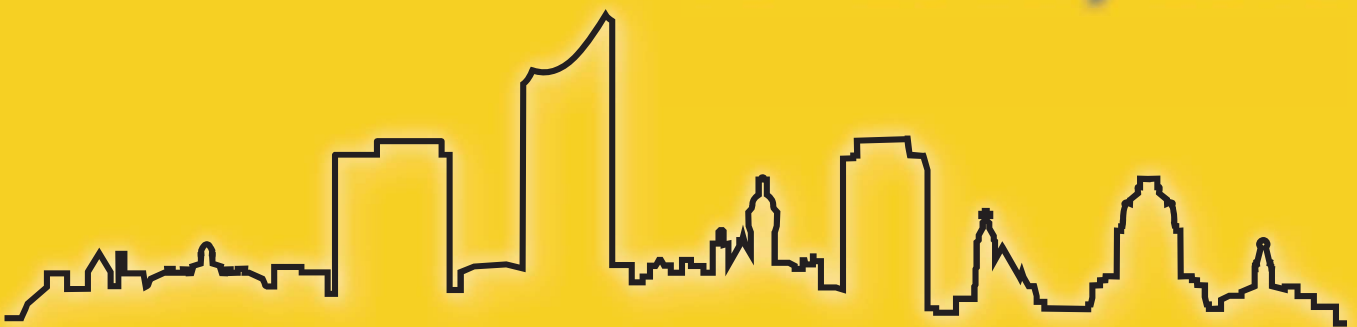
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4.1 BEING AND LEARNING WITH PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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4.1.1 Abstract

This study aims at improving the understanding of the importance of Physical Education (PE) in the promotion of child education, through childhood play and sports games. These activities, from the curriculum of PE, help children to learn more and surpass their difficulties, through the acquisition of multidimensional skills (individual / social; psychomotor / socio-affective / cognitive), and so, to acquire an educational basis in their group and society.

Our goal is to analyse the perception of the teachers about: the importance of PE, through the teaching of childhood play and sports games, to contribute to the development of children; the environment of PE teaching in infancy.

The data were acquired through a questionnaire that was sent to 36 individuals (17 pre-school educators, 18 elementary school teachers, 1 specific PE teacher). Descriptive statistics (percentage of occurrences) were extracted from the questionnaires, and the data was processed with SPSS 20.0.

In general, educators and teachers believe that the play and games offered in PE favors the multidimensional development of children, allowing the acquisition of internal interdisciplinary skills and of external interdisciplinary skills. Educators prefer work with contents that promote body knowledge and the motor domain, cooperation (+11.0%), acquisition of self-confidence (+15.7%) and respect for materials and equipment (+11.5%). Teachers prefer contents that promote the motor domain and physical health, acquisition of responsibility and attitudes – in skills of accountability (+14.9%) and of socialization (+16.5%).

In this study we are able to conclude about the perception of the importance of PE in contemporary childhood play, it is important in children education, in particular through the promotion of the development of social and emotional skills (Hellison, 2003; Condessa, 2011).

4.1.2 Keywords

Physical education, Plays and games, Skills acquisition, Children development

4.1.3 Introduction

Currently, Physical Education is an area that contributes significantly to the education of the children. This leads to the relevance of the investment of Physical Activity practices in educational context. According to the Declaration of Madrid, in October 27 of 1991, Physical Education in Europe promotes in the children and young:

- a. a wide basis of physical ability
- b. physical growth and development
- c. an understating of the importance of fomenting a healthy life style
- d. positive self-esteem in a context of physical activity
- e. ability to develop as an independent and responsible member of society
- f. interpersonal skills, such as problem solving and cooperation
- g. a life-long interest and eventually the right to experiment physical activities.

Throughout these items, we verify that, besides from the promotion of Physical Activity, Physical Education “[...] ensures also favourable conditions to the social development of the children, mainly through situations where interaction with peers, inherent to the activities (subjects) from Physical Education and the respective learning processes [...]” (Portuguese Education Ministry, 2006:35). This idea is directly connected with the area of the Play and Games, as the games proposed in the curriculum are of collective nature. This allows the children to develop cooperation behaviours with regard to their peers during the games. Furthermore, the exercises and games also promote respect in the relationship with peers and teacher, acting according to the principles of cordiality.

To Rink, 1999 (cit. In Condessa, 2006:18), in Physical Education the “games” are a type of practice situation that surge from the inter-individual work, mainly resulting from the need to work as a group and as a team, where the students should also learn to control their emotions that spawn from the confront with the adversaries, and to cooperate with their team mates.

In the end, children learn to direct, decide, and control their actions. This mechanism is adopted not only in game situations, but also in the daily life, corroborating the idea that “ [...] the game has its importance in the development of the ability to create of the children and as way to know the reality [...]”(Liublinskaia, 1973:27).

This study allows a better understanding of the importance of Physical Education in the promotion of the education of the children, through the game and team sports.

This activities, from the Physical Education curriculum, allow children to better learn and to surpass their difficulties, through the acquisition of multidimensional skills (individual / social; psicomotor / socioaffective / cognitive), and thus to acquire a basic education in their group and in society.

Being an integral part of the curriculum, Physical Education is characterized by an enriching are in the global development process of the children. Thus, this area not only promotes Physical Activity, but also the development of the person as a whole (being).

The games organized in Physical Education, from the simpler to the more complex, develop based on the gradual capacity for children to cooperate.

To Lopes and Silva (2009), the key points in the cooperation practices are the promotion of : i. self-responsibility and group responsibility – where each element of the group is responsible for fulfilling its role in the group, and the group assumes its function to reach the goals; ii. social skills – interpersonal and group skills such as learning to wait for the turn, learning to actively listen, communicating clearly, asking for help, helping others, participating with others, following instructions, sharing tasks, remaining in the task, registering and sharing ideas, accepting differences, sharing materials, celebrating success.

To this end, we approach the goals proposed by Hellison (2003) for the promoting personal and social responsibility in the children / young people through Physical Activity:

1. Respect for others feelings and rights
 - behavioural and verbal self-control;
 - respect for the rights of everybody;
 - peaceful and democratic involvement in conflict resolution;
2. Effort
 - self-motivation;
 - exploring personal effort and attempting new tasks;
 - enduring in the task;
3. Self-direction
 - being independent at work;
 - establishing progression goals;
 - resistance to peer pressure;
4. Helping others and leading
 - being compassionate and affective;
 - having sensibility and responsibility;
 - having a true inner strength;
5. Outside the gym
 - trying these ideas outside the gym and the PE curriculum;
 - being a role-model.

Huizinga (2003) deepens the cultural and social function of the game, from the simplest manifestations, associated with the greek concept of “PAIDIA”, to the more complex manifestations that are result of a competitive confront of game established between civilizations, associated with the

greek concept of "AGON".

The first manifestations of children are the most natural and are performed through the free movement games, characteristics in the lower ages, and the second manifestations of the children, to the organized and rule-oriented games of the pre-sport activities.

We believe that through the ludic activity of game, the children / student acquires and improves behaviors (psicomotor, cognitive, and socioaffective) in the physical education classroom.

This is, the children / student acquires skills that result from the three dimensions of knowledge: know how to perform a task, know how to be during a task, and know to be with oneself; that can be applied to a variety of academic situations.

Placek (2003) refers multiple types of interdisciplinary characteristics in Physical Education

1 – Internal – approaches concepts associated with movement and the principles of self and social responsibility; pleasures, challenge, personal expression, and includes other areas - such as psychology or sociology;

2 – External – connects the contents of PE with other contents and curricula, such as mathematics, sciences, languages, and the arts.

4.1.4 Materials and Methods

As educational professions, we should know the potentialities of the game, and mainly understand its role in the individual and social learning process of the children, for whom, the game as a part of Physical Education can promote the individual and social development

In this study, our goal is to analyse the perception from the teachers with regard to the:

Importance of Physical Education, through the teaching of games and team sports to children, contributing towards the children development;

Teaching environment of Physical Education in childhood.

The data were acquired through a questionnaire, and research instrument adapted the study performed by Carneiro (2006). The questionnaire was composed of closed questions with binary or multiple choice, according to the data to be collected, and some open questions. The questionnaire was structured in three different parts:

I - characterization of the educators / teachers;

II - organization of the environment for the education activity; III teachers opinion on the contribution of PE to the acquisitions of multidimensional skills in children / students.

The questionnaire was applied to 36 individuals (17 pre-school educators, 18 1st cycle teachers, and 1 specific teacher of Physical Education). We verify that our sample was, mainly, between 36 and 45 years old (51.3%), female (89.1%), with a Bachelor degree (75.7%), and consider themselves to have an initial formation that is adequate for Physical Education (56.7%).

The data were analysed, qualitatively and quantitatively, through the analysis of the content of the open questions, and through descriptive statistics (frequency and occurrences). The data analysis was performed using SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Sciences).

4.1.5 Results and Discussion

In general, educators and teachers believe that the play and games offered in Physical Education favors the multidimensional development of children, allowing the acquisition of internal interdisciplinary skills and of external interdisciplinary skills.

Performing an analysis of the questionnaires, namely with regard to the opinions of the educators and professors, about the importance of Physical Education and games in the multidimensional development of the children, we verify that a large importance is attributed to this are of the curriculum. It is their opinion that this are promotes the multidimensional development of the children, and the

internal and external interdisciplinarity.

The multiple responses presented by the educators and teachers orbit around three big development dimensions: psychomotor, socioaffective, and cognitive.

This conclusion is corroborated by multiple testimonies, such:

“In the consciencialization of their body, in the capacity to relate with the space, the objects, and the others, and also to contribute to the physical, social and mental well-being of the children.”

(Pré-School Educator)

“It is a great class to work on behavior, rules, and sociability, at the same time that physical competences are exercised.”

(Elementary School Teacher)

“Yes, definitely. [...] it is an area that is propitious for the multidimensional development of the children. [...] the game is an interesting way to acquire a variety of competences, such as the respect by the colleagues, opportunity for performing a specific task, knowing to wait, etc ...”

(Specialist Teacher of Physical Education)

Continuing the line of analysis about the transversal and longitudinal nature inherent to the game are and to Physical Education, educators and teachers present some differences with regard to the competences that are mentioned when replying to the following question: “In your opinion, what competences are transversal to Physical Education and to the game?” This difference is illustrated on figures 1 through 6.

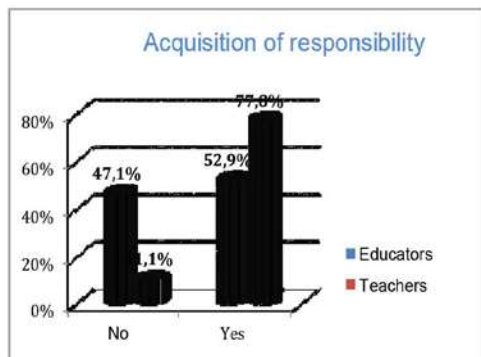


Fig. 1 – Comparative analysis of the opinion of educators and teachers about Competence - Acquisition of responsibility

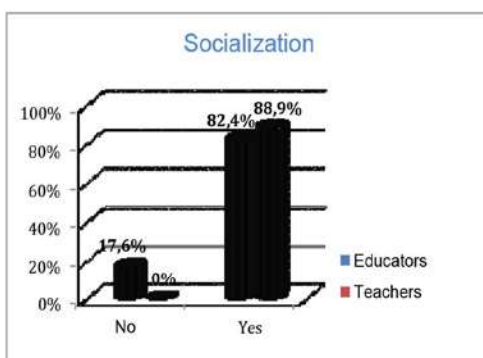


Fig. 2 – Comparative analysis of the opinion of educators and teachers about Competence - Socialization

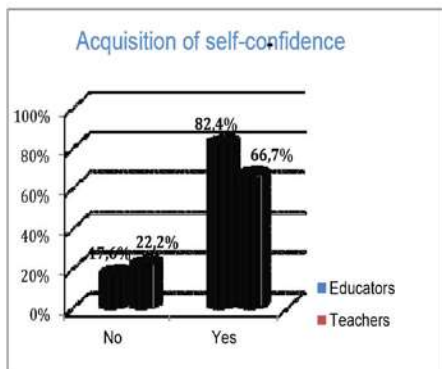


Fig. 3 – Comparative analysis of the opinion of educators and teachers about Competence - Acquisition of self-confidence

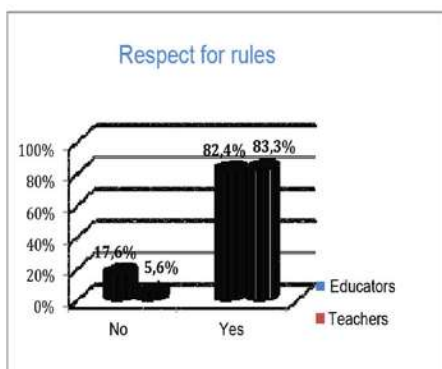


Fig. 4 – Comparative analysis of the opinion of educators and teachers about Competence - Respect for rules

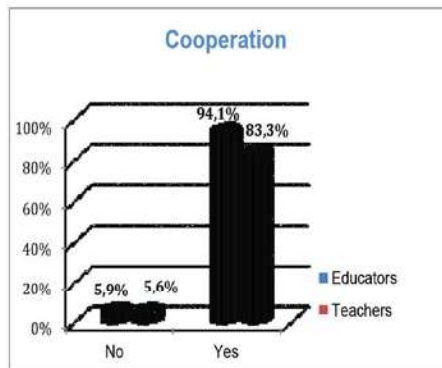


Fig. 5 – Comparative analysis of the opinion of educators and teachers about Competence - Cooperation

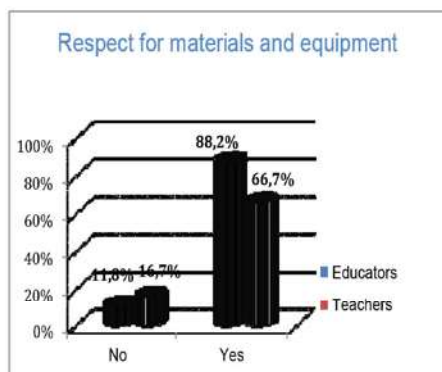


Fig. 6 – Comparative analysis of the opinion of educators and teachers about Competence - Respect for materials and equipment

Analysing the data in the figures presented, we can observe that “cooperation” was the skill most selected by the educators, with a frequency of 94.1%, whereas “responsabilization” was the skill least selected by the educators, with a frequency of 52.9%.

Roughly 90% of the teachers elected socialization as being one of the skills with the most transversal nature.

With regard to the remaining skills referred, it is possible to verify that all of the have frequency values close to each other, such as “respect for previously established rules”, even though 17.6% of educators do not consider it relevant, as it is typical of a game associated with a more developed school age.

The specialist teacher enumerated: “solidarity, respect for the others, respect for material, working a person self-esteem” as skills that are transversal to the area of Physical Education and relevant in the formation of the “Self”.

As a situation verified in which the skills acquired by the children in Physical Education have been relevant, we consider the following testimony:

“The expression of collective and pre-collective games contribute positively for the exploration of many behavioural and relational contents that are the core of many skills in the area of Citizenship.”

(Elementary School Teacher)

About the second objective, we can note that educators, teachers, and the specialist teacher believe that the organization of a teaching environment that favors Physical Education influences significantly the learning process of children / students.

This, Physical Education classes should happen in a specific space, equipped with the needed specific materials used in the area. According to Tuan (1983:3), children and students “[...] need a space and a place, as their lives are a dialectic movement between refuge and adventure, dependence and freedom”. Condessa and Matias (2011) also clarify the need for the valorisation of Physical Education practices directed to primary school children, thus creating better work conditions through the availability of better physical resources and materials, and providing the professions moments of reflection about their practices, in a way to drive them to the optimization of their professional performance towards the well-being of the children.

4.1.6 Final Considerations

We can conclude that the perception of educators, and teachers, both generalists and specialists, about the importance of PE in contemporary childhood clearly shows their relevance for the education of the children. In specific, through the promotion of relevant skills for the social and emotional development in childhood.

Educators prefer work with contents that promote body knowledge and the motor domain, cooperation acquisition of self-confidence and respect for materials and equipment.

Teachers prefer contents that promote the motor domain and physical health, acquisition of responsibility and attitudes – in skills of accountability and of socialization.

On the other hand, it is clear the importance that educators and teachers give to PE, considering it essential to the development of the skills of the children in a dual dimension: To Be and To Learn.

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