

Professional Intervention at School's Physical Education: Considerations about the Teaching Work

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Resumo: O presente ensaio aborda os principais problemas enfrentados no trabalho docente, mais especificamente dos professores de Educação Física da Educação Básica. O ambiente de trabalho nesta área tem favorecido o surgimento de doenças laborais, tais como Síndrome do Esgotamento Profissional, estresse, dependências químicas, doenças no aparelho fonador, entre outras. Deste modo, a necessidade de realização de novas investigações que abordem a qualidade de vida no trabalho e o estilo de vida dos docentes é apontada. Além disso, alerta-se para a necessidade dos problemas detectados serem considerados pelos gestores e pela comunidade escolar para favorecer a melhoria do ambiente da profissão docente.

Palavras-chaves: Docentes. Educação Física. Condições de trabalho. Doença. Satisfação no emprego.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the school Physical Education area, several investigations have been predominant regarding educational aspects, considered of great importance for the improvement of professional intervention. However, researches on the teaching work, more specifically its relations with the working environment and its interferences in the life of the teacher, have been attracting the attention of researchers.

Quality of life at work, Burnout syndrome, teaching discomfort and professional stress are some issues addressed by the academic community in a low number of works, but with a very large effect among basic education researchers and teachers.

Work is the cornerstone of people's lives, becoming the main center of human interests (HOPF, 2002). In fact, this situation was caused by the industrial revolution (CASTRO, 2005), which changed the whole society. This change was marked by the emergence of bureaucratically organized institutions, with determinate time and functions, and strict office organizations that, until then, did not exist in society.

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In the context of teaching, we see that teaching is often linked to the priesthood, both in the past and today. This analogy is not difficult to be built, as priests of the 19th century also played the role of teachers. This perspective led teaching not to be tied to the proletariat or bourgeoisie, but take another step between these two classes (NÓVOA, 1995a; NÓVOA, 1995b).

Considering the changes that have occurred in recent years, Nóvoa (1995b) confirms that teaching has not changed substantially in comparison with other labor functions. One of the factors mentioned to justify this situation is the fact that the teaching class is one of the largest of contemporary society, yet it has a difficult trade union organization. On this subject, the author comments:

The professional statement of teachers is a journey full of struggles, conflicts, hesitations, and resources. The educational field is occupied by many players (State, Church, families, etc.) that see the consolidation of the teaching staff as a threat to their interests and projects. (NÓVOA, 1995b, p.21).

In order to organize the teacher class, we need to consider not only the organizational aspects, but also the training of professionals. In this perspective, teacher training has been designed in two stages (initial and continuing) that complement one another; both are linked to the professional development. Pacheco and Flores (1999) emphasize that the processes which assist in the training of teachers have been the object of analysis for researchers seeking to better understand the professional development of teachers.

In addition to the acquisition and development of skills in the work situation, the continuing education also aims at promoting educational innovation. In order to implement this process, teachers need an organization in the school contexts, which includes personal, professional, and organizational issues. While the personal issue represents self-development and the acquisition of status in society, the professional context is linked to career progression, job satisfaction, enhancement of the curriculum vitae, and the sense of belonging to the professional group. Finally, the organizational issue seeks the adequacy to social, economic, and technological changes in the world, which the teacher must understand in order to teach (PACHECO; FLORES, 1999).

The environmental perspective of the teaching profession is clarified by Corrigan and Haberman (1990), who highlight that teachers' characteristics are based on knowledge of the issues addressed in the classroom, assessing the quality of the educational work, and

the availability of resources and conditions for work. Note that this set of characteristics is influenced by society, the state, the university, fellow teachers, and schools.

One aspect highlighted by Teodoro (1994) is that teaching is increasingly less attractive due to problems faced every day, contributing to the occurrence of the “identity crisis” in the profession, resulting in discomfort to teachers. While considering that times of crisis and uncertainty occur in various professions, the author noted that violence against teachers, administrative fights, low wages, high levels of stress, the Burnout syndrome, among other factors, have justified the urgent need to change the community’s vision regarding teaching in order to change this unpleasant situation.

Therefore, the objective of this test was to discuss the main problems faced by Physical Education teachers, also addressing pathologies commonly acquired in the teaching career. Although the search for textual basis for consultation in the area has been exhaustive, the issues were only satisfactorily addressed, not indenting to be conclusive in the discussion nor making attempts to propose innovative solutions.

2 PROBLEMS FACED IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The teaching profession is among the oldest ones of human kind and, over time, teachers were forced to acquire different skills from those required at the beginning of the profession. But the teaching profession has not changed at one point: the sense of revealing affection and nurture towards the act of teaching students (LEMOS and CRUZ, 2005).

The teaching work is characterized by interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, in which teachers have the task to guide, teach, prepare and deliver lessons, as well as assess students. Besides the fact teaching activities often involve criticism, self-criticism, the teacher’s responsibility, in many cases, the teacher conducts educational activities in schools and administrative tasks at home, taking a double (or sometimes triple) day of work (LEMOS and CRUZ , 2005).

Despite numerous educational responsibilities assumed by the teacher, Andrews (1993), generalizing the reality of teaching in Europe and Latin America, argues that the level of job satisfaction of Physical Education teachers may increase in different ways. Among the opportunities available in the school environment, the author highlights nice professional contacts with students, colleagues, and parents; the liking for the contents taught in the discipline; the pleasure of working in pleasant environments; positive results obtained in school athletic teams; recognition of their importance in the work environment;

the development of different tasks during their performance, and the ability to assume important positions of visibility at the school. .

On the other hand, the level of job satisfaction is affected by the frequent lack of teaching materials, which is one of the main factors of uneasiness among teachers (ANDREWS, 1993). Indeed, the lack of materials limits the opportunities for change in activities, damaging the quality of exercises, especially regarding attempts to make them more attractive to students. Another factor that has caused professional dissatisfaction is the considerable increase of responsibilities to be assumed by teachers in school. Over the years, both the family and society have transferred some of their duties regarding teaching children and youngsters to the school.

Teachers' dissatisfaction, according to Nevis, Rodrigues and Sobral (1993), follows the conditions of places of education, the problems psychological caused by the profession and the feeling of guilt due to the failure in the teaching process. One aspect highlighted by the authors is that good working conditions tend to generate greater security, better education and greater job satisfaction.

As for Physical Education facilities, Monteiro (1993) states that teachers' work conditions and locations require an investment policy that allows for the development under adverse conditions. Therefore, in order to facilitate practical work in Physical Education classes, the author presents three factors that should be considered: climate data, rainfall, and prevailing winds. The climatic data is justified by the need of enjoyable class spaces. Rainfall limits the type of facility that should be used during classes. Prevailing winds should be considered so that school buildings can help in the optimization of Physical Education class spaces.

Considering the fact that school facilities are often inadequate for the practice of physical activities, especially due to the lack of security, personal hygiene and unsanitary conditions after the physical exercises, it is important that teachers have suggestions regarding the working environment of Physical Education in school (MONTEIRO, 1996a; MONTEIRO, 1996b).

Among the problems faced in the teaching profession, several investigators (ANDREWS, 1993; GATTI, 1997; DORMAN, 2003; LAPO; BUENO, 2003; NILAN, 2003; DELCOR *et al.*, 2004; LÜDKE; BOING, 2004; SOUSA, 2004; BRAGGER *et al.*, 2005; CRUZ; LEMOS, 2005; LACAZ, 2005; LEMOS; CRUZ, 2005; CHIU *et al.*, 2006; PORTO *et al.*, 2006; REIS *et al.*, 2006; CHIU; LAM, 2007; LEMOS, 2007) have observed a growing number of stressed-out teachers, due to the low remuneration, lack of better

working conditions and friendly relationships with students and the overload of work. Climatic factors, material conditions, socialization between teachers and the working environment have also been the object of study to better understand the teachers' uneasiness.

The problems involved in teaching are not just the lack of better working conditions and the inadequate remuneration. When investigating the factors involved in the teaching career, Garcia (1995) also emphasizes the bureaucratization of the teacher's work, proletarianization and intensification of the teacher's work, the increasing feminization of the teaching profession, the isolation of teachers, a flat teaching profession, and psychological risks.

The bureaucratization of the teacher's work is justified by the author due to the fact the schools have a hierarchical organization, in which administrative processes go through several instances to have solutions. Therefore, the decision-making process is transformed into technical problems.

While the proletarianization of the teacher's work is characterized by the fact the teaching class belongs to the mass of workers who do not have control over the institution governing the education system, the intensification of the teaching work includes the pressure over teachers in the search for educational innovations. However, at the same time, educational institutions do not have working conditions for this search to occur nor its proper operation in the school environment.

The considerable increase of teachers working in schools is one of the issues raised by Garcia (1995) and Carvalho (1996b) to identify the progressive feminization of the teaching profession. Moreover, even if there are no differences between males and females in the professional intervention, the teacher's performance at school has been accompanied by a depreciation of women by society.

The isolation of teachers is due to the fact that teachers devote many hours of work in schools where there is little exchange of experience among teachers of the same discipline. The teacher's profession encompasses only the exchange of information between teachers and students, unlike other professions who may have professional relationships for the provision of services.

The teaching profession is considered "flat" by Garcia (1995) as the teachers do not have frequent incentives to move up the career or motivation to improve their work conditions. One way to motivate the teachers would be the payment of better wages.

Besides these factors, the teaching profession presents psychological risks, especially for the possibility of causing stress, anxiety, malaise, and professional exhaustion. The teachers' malaise is characterized by their poor social and psychological conditions. These conditions are triggered by characteristics of the school, the teacher, the load of work that involves bureaucratic tasks, working conditions, personal relationships with students, teachers and other employees, as well as stress.

As for Physical Education teacher's malaise, Sousa (2004) carried out a survey with Portuguese teachers, in which the main difficulties faced in the area were related to the institution's organizational structure conditions, working conditions, the school's culture, and contents of education. On the other hand, the teacher's satisfaction after the class is linked to the understanding of the objectives of the subject and the students' satisfaction, as well as positive features of the students' participation.

One aspect highlighted by the investigated Portuguese teachers is that job satisfaction is based on the following factors: commitment to the established class plan, achievement of goals, personal experience in the classroom, success in the educational process, satisfaction of students who have greater difficulties, recognition that the class was educational, and the pleasure of being in the classroom (SOUSA, 2004).

3 PATHOLOGIES ACQUIRED BY THE TEACHING CLASS

Teachers have occupied a place of prominence in society's social and production process, as they undertake activities of interpersonal assistance, i.e., they serve a large number of people by transferring new information. The fact the teacher is responsible for a large number of classes, which have in many cases over 30 students per class, can provide a greater predisposition to psycho-social disorders of work. Physical factors have also been seen to justify the distance from the teaching environment, such as chalk dust, which can cause irritation and allergies in the respiratory tract, the excessive use of the voice, which can generate callosity in the vocal cords, and longer periods standing, which can result in discomfort and pain (NEVES; RODRIGUES; SOBRAL, 1993; DELCOR *et al.*, 2004; CRUZ; LEMOS, 2005; GRILLO; PENTEADO, 2005; LEMOS; CRUZ, 2005; PENTEADO; PEREIRA, 2007).

Overwork, according to Lemos and Cruz (2005), Nevis, Rodrigues and Sobral (1993) and Gasparini, Barreto and Assunção (2005), adversely affects the daily life of

teachers, causing some diseases such as asthma, ear infections, bronchitis, headaches, conjunctivitis, hearing loss, depression, stress and, Burnout syndrome.

In fact, working conditions may be the triggering factors of the diseases reported in teachers, especially because they determine and intensify workloads. On this subject, Lemos and Cruz (2005) emphasize that teachers are influenced by all categories that make up the working conditions, especially physical (related to temperature, ventilation, humidity, noise and lighting), chemical (chalk dust and solar radiation), biological or organic (hygiene conditions of the workplace), mechanical (work facilities, which in many cases, are poor), physiological (physical effort demanded by the work) and psychological factors (psychological tensions of work organization).

From the analysis of the teaching condition categories, Lemos and Cruz (2005, p.27) conclude that, in general, teachers "[...] have produced and intensified the teaching workload, helping to increase the risk of diseases and illness".

With respect to stress and the Burnout syndrome, the triggering factors of these diseases can be: overwork, dissatisfaction with personal relationships in the work environment, the difficulties encountered in developing a career, the search and/or maintenance of the professional status (which is tied to the wage), innovation or variety of tasks during the work, and the ambiguity of the teaching work (SOUSA, 1993; JIMENEZ, HERNANDEZ; GUTIERREZ, 2000; DORMAN, 2003; Delcor et al., 2004; CRUZ, LEMOS, 2005; LEMOS; CRUZ, 2005, BAUER et al., 2006; CHIU et al., 2006; CHIU, LAM, 2007).

As for stress, Rodrigues (1992) further stressed that stressed-out individuals can set the disease in two ways. The first, the active adjustment, occurs when the individual expresses the change of your lifestyle and voluntarily asks the removal or reshuffling of its functions. The second, the passive adjustment, occurs when the person depreciates the work and therefore no longer considers it as engaging, being absent and easily getting other diseases.

Among the indicators often used to detect if the person is stressed, Rodrigues (1992) highlights the need to observe if there is drug use, drop in efficiency, repeated absences, insecurity, overwork, excessive consumption of medications, and onset or worsening of diseases.

Several epidemiological studies with teachers have highlighted the existence of an association between psycho-social aspects of the teaching work and the prevalence of mental disorders. Teachers with high job demands usually have a prevalence that is 1.5

times higher than their colleagues with low job demands (PORTO et al., 2006), working conditions affect teachers' mental health causing psychological damage (DELCOR et al., 2004); psychological factors (high levels of stress at work) contribute to the development of headaches (CHIU et al., 2006; CHIU, LAM, 2007); high prevalence of complaints of mental fatigue and nervousness among teachers (REIS et al., 2006).

In a research on stress among Physical Education teachers, Andrews (1993) considers stress as a human pressure, which arises from a number of external factors. Moreover, certain levels of stress are believed to be important for everyone, so there is a minimum level of stimulation. However, reaction to this disease is only negative when the factors promoting it are excessive for the individual's condition.

Stress factors can be grouped into three categories, including environmental pressures, the sources of social tension, and personal pain. Environmental pressures are related to urban life (air pollution, noise, traffic, etc.), housing (cost, location, etc.), communication (bad news quickly reported on radio or TV stations) and overpopulation (this issue is quite sensitive in some cities in the world). Social tensions are connected to bureaucracy, authority, responsibility, discrimination, and cultural differences, such as religion and gender. Personal pains are associated with age, personality, diseases, and the desire for status (ANDREWS, 1993).

In the case of teachers of Physical Education, Andrews (1993) that are subject to four types of stress: the personal pressures which may occur at any time of life, the generalized pressure, that the company may suffer, problems related to education and the specific problems of teachers of physical education. The economic pressures have increased the stress on teachers, because the financial problems will certainly interfere with the adjustment of public accounts and personal. These problems are related to frequent cuts to expenses in the maintenance of schools and the acquisition of appropriate teaching material for classes, as well as lower wages for teachers.

In the case of Physical Education teachers, Andrews (1993) argues that they are subject to four types of stress: personal pressures which may occur at any time of life; general pressures, which society may suffer; problems related to education; and specific problems of Physical Education teachers. Economic pressures have increased the stress on teachers, as financial problems certainly interfere in the adjustment of public and personal accounts. These problems are related to frequent reductions of costs for the maintenance of schools and the acquisition of appropriate teaching material for classes, as well as lower wages for teachers.

Among the specific problems of Physical Education teachers, the author highlights physical and verbal attacks against teachers caused by parents whose children do not have success in the discipline or in sports teams linked to schools; lack of politeness by the students, due to the fact parents do not motivate or control the children, not letting school control the students; lack of feeling and commitment to the teaching profession, the low status of teachers in the society; the need to work in more than one place to have a decent wage that meets the minimum family needs; low satisfaction with work, and a feeling of unease with the profession.

Another disease related to the problems faced by teachers in schools is the Burnout syndrome, simply known as Burnout. This pathology is the confrontation between the reality of working conditions and environment designed for the teaching profession. Santini and Molina Neto (2005), Bauer et al. (2006) and Pelazzo and Carlotto (2006) state that the employee experiences a feeling of exhaustion and failure, often resulting in irritability, fatigue, work overload, bad humor, and rigidity in attitudes.

Burnout reactions, according to Santini and Molina Neto (2005), can be divided into four categories: physical (fatigue, insomnia, muscle pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, respiratory and heart problems, sexual dysfunction); behavioral (irritability, aggression, tension, intransigence, lack of initiative, increased consumption of substances harmful to health, risk behavior, suicide), psychological (lack of concentration, changes in memory, loneliness, depression, discouragement), and defensive (isolation, sense of omnipotence, disinterest for the work, absenteeism, and irony).

Despite the diversity of Burnout reactions, the person who has the disease does not necessarily present all symptoms, due to the fact the disease has several stages (SANTINI, 2004a; SANTINI, 2004b).

In a research carried out with Physical Education teachers who moved away from their work obligations due the Burnout syndrome, Santini and Molina Neto (2005, p.219) identified the following problems, which led to the disease:

[...] a) insufficient academic formation to cope with the shock of the school reality; b) implementation of innovations and educational political projects that minimize the involvement of teachers; c) multiple social and professional roles required and exercised by Physical Education teachers in schools; d) environment of urban violence and personal insecurity faced by teachers; e) conflicts in interpersonal relationships with co-workers; f) objective material conditions that are contrary to the quality of work desired by the individual; and g) the difficulty to deal, politically and epistemologically, with criticism by different sectors of the

community school regarding the character and the contribution to the discipline in the development of school curriculum.

In general, investigations on the Burnout syndrome and associated factors in teachers highlight the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in personal fulfillment at work. In addition, they emphasize the aggressive behavior of students, the inability to achieve high expectations of parents, and low representation of teachers in the school's decisions as triggering factors for the teacher's discomfort, which can result in the temporary or permanent departure of the teaching work (CARLOTTI; PALAZZO, 2006). Other triggering factors of this disease are high demands regarding teaching, which cause mental disorders (GASPARINI; BARRETO; ASSUNÇÃO, 2005, PORTO et al., 2006), interfere in vocal, posture and mental health (DELCOR et al., 2004) and decrease the level of job satisfaction (REIS et al., 2006).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The teaching work in basic education has undergone depreciation. Low wages, discouraged teachers, poor working conditions, and fragile personal relationships in the work environment are some factors that contribute to the emergence of pathological problems in teachers and further aggravate the impairment of this function.

Physical Education teachers, especially due to the fact they work in open environments, suffer other pathological problems that are not investigated more effectively such as, for example, skin cancer. The study of relations between actual teaching conditions and the possible physical and mental illness of teachers is a challenge and a need to understand the teacher's health-disease process and to find possible associations with absences from work for health reasons.

Although the researches that address the quality of life at work and the lifestyle of teachers are promising initiatives to better understand the conditions of life in the teaching profession, we need to continue these studies so that the identified problems are considered by managers and the school community, aiming at ensuring a healthy working environment at school, favoring pleasant relationships and the minimum necessary autonomy for the development of the teacher's work.

The concern to increase the level of understanding about the teacher's living conditions, based on theoretical assumptions of the paradigm of occupational socialization,

may be a viable way to minimize the effects of problems faced in the teaching profession. In fact, occupational socialization is based on the work organization and the factors that influence the employee's living conditions. Although working conditions shape teachers' actions, both individual and collective actions of teachers may influence the working conditions. In this sense, teacher socialization is influenced by their life history, especially regarding school, from basic education, through initial and continual education.

An important aspect to highlight is the complexity of such studies, since occupational socialization encompasses six dimensions that have clusters of variability (CARVALHO, 1996a). In particular, socialization can be affected by scale (collective or individual), structure (formal or informal), progression (sequential or random), temporality (fixed or variable), support (modeling or inexistent), and attitude (acceptance or rejection). Moreover, there are specific moments of construction, consolidation, and recognition of professional identities (DUBAR, 1997), which involve both personal and professional life aspects along the teaching career.

Another initiative would be to research the level of control of teachers on their work and the psychological demands from the school environment, as well as the impact on teachers' psychological and organic structure. Besides deepening the demands in situations of work (concentration, pressure of time, pace, and volume of tasks), there is a concern to identify the necessary skills and strategies for coping with problems such as the Burnout syndrome.

Considering that work organization is an instance that determines the level of psychological demand and control of teachers, it is recommended that actions to promote health at work should be directed at changes in work organization, not only changes in the individual behavior of teachers.

Professional Intervention at School's Physical Education: Considerations about the Teaching Work

Abstract: This essay touch on the main problems faced in the teaching work. Most precisely, it deals with the professional practices of Physical Education teachers of basic education. The work's environment of such a subject has been favorable for the appearance of working diseases, such as the burnout syndrome, stress, chemical addiction, phonetic system infirmities, and so on. Thus, it is noticeable the necessity of new investigations about quality of life in the work, and life style of those teachers. In addition, this essay warms managers and the schooling community about the necessity of awareness on the detected problems in order to facilitate the improvement of the teacher's professional environment.

Key words: Faculty. Physical Education. Working Conditions. Job satisfaction. Disease.

Intervención Profesional En La Educación Física Escolar: Consideraciones Acerca Del Trabajo Docente

Resumen: El presente ensayo plantea los principales problemas enfrentados en el trabajo docente, tratándose especialmente de los profesores de Educación Física Básica. El ambiente de trabajo en esta área ha contribuido para el surgimiento de enfermedades laborales, tales como el síndrome del agotamiento profesional, estrés, dependencias químicas, enfermedades en el aparato fonador, entre otras. La necesidad de la realización de nuevas investigaciones que traten de la calidad de vida en el trabajo y el estilo de vida de los docentes es sobresaliente. Además, se alerta para la necesidad de especial atención por parte de los gestores y comunidad escolar con los problemas detectados, pues esto puede contribuir para la mejoría del ambiente de la profesión docente.

Palabras-claves: Docentes. Educación Física. Condiciones de trabajo. Satisfacción en el trabajo. Enfermedad.

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