SPORTIVIZATION OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION: A DEVICE AND ITS ENUNCIATION REGIMES

Abstract: The article examines how enunciation regimes captured in empirical research are organized to produce the sportivization device’s knowledge. Methodological assumptions are based on the qualitative approach, and a case study is developed. Enunciation regimes are expressed by the discourse on the need for Physical Education teachers to meet students’ interests on certain sports, the discourse that Physical Education’s curriculum organization depends on physical resources and materials available at school, and the curricular discourse of the Education Department including curriculum orientations on sport.

Keywords: Lectures. Curriculum. Teaching. Sports.

Resumo: O artigo analisa como os regímenes de enunciação capturados na pesquisa empírica se organizam para a produção do saber do dispositivo da esportivização. Os pressupostos metodológicos alicerçaram-se na abordagem qualitativa, com o desenvolvimento de um estudo de caso. Os regimes de enunciabilidade foram expressos pelo discurso da necessidade dos professores de Educação Física atenderem aos interesses dos alunos por certas modalidades esportivas; discurso de que a organização curricular da Educação Física depende dos recursos físicos e materiais disponíveis na escola; discurso curricular da Secretaria Municipal de Educação, com orientações curriculares ligadas ao esporte.


Resumen: El artículo analiza cómo se organizan los regímenes de enunciación capturados en la investigación empírica para la producción del saber del dispositivo de la deportivización. Los supuestos metodológicos se basaron en el enfoque cualitativo, con el desarrollo de un estudio de caso. Los regímenes de enunciabilidad se expresaron por el discurso de la necesidad que tienen los profesores de Educación Física de atender a los intereses de los estudiantes por ciertos deportes; discurso de que la organización curricular de la Educación Física depende de los recursos físicos y materiales disponibles en la escuela; discurso curricular de la Secretaría Municipal de Educación, con orientaciones curriculares ligadas al deporte.


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“Sport may be the human activity that most reveals a set of knowledges, techniques and discourses legitimated and desired to control bodies; perhaps it is the activity most impregnated of achievement, more incantatory “.

(SOARES, 2006, p. 80-81)

1 ENGENDERING THE DEVICE

The sportivization device of School Physical Education emerged after the intention to investigate curricular regulation of PE and its effects on the work of beginner teachers. It started from the assumption that this regulation is established through negotiation, the result of an ever-unfinished and in-process interplay of forces between discourses and/or devices vying for hegemony in the curricular component.

Our investigative interest was precisely to analyze that process by identifying and discussing the device(s) that regulate(s) PE curriculum practices and how negotiation practices are engendered. The theoretical and methodological bases were the studies of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.

Therefore, the device was the key concept of this research as well as its dimensions. When asked about the meaning and the methodological function of the device – in this case, sexuality – Foucault explains it as:

A decidedly heterogeneous group that includes discourses, institutions, architectural organizations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical propositions, moral, philanthropic. In short, the said and the unsaid are the elements of the device. The device is the network that can be established between these elements (FOUCAULT, 1992, p. 138).

From the author’s perspective, a device is not a type of discourse, a statement, an institution, neither does it represent one strategy or specific power technique; it involves different and moving elements. It plays a dominant strategic role insofar as it emerges in response to historical urgency. If necessary, the device reorganizes to control or redirect unwanted effects. This is because there is interplay between discursive and/or non-discursive elements that allows the exchange of positions and functions (FOUCAULT, 1992).

By analyzing power relations in modern society, Foucault (2011) finds power devices, as seen in disciplinary institutions (school, hospital, prisons). He considered school as an institution to discipline bodies that worked through techniques and mechanisms – that is, power devices. The organization of the school environment, its architecture and its classes are all examples of such devices intended to tame bodies.

Deleuze (1990) explains that Foucault initially identifies visibility curves and enunciation curves as dimensions of the device. The former are composed by lines of light that constitute variable figures (practices) and the latter are made of enunciations (discourses) that distribute differential positions of their elements. In addition, the device also comprises lines of force that refer to the dimension of power and cross the entire device in all possible points. They mixed with other lines of the device so as to become indistinguishable from the others. There are also lines of objectification, which provide the subjectivation process as production of oneself by oneself. The lines of objectification and subjectivation predispose lines of flight, which escape the forces and knowledges of a device, moving towards another device and entering the regime.
of its powers and knowledges. In allowing the passage from one device to the other, they enable the emergence of lines of rupture, since they are at the limit of the device.

Those lines or curves of the device can be characterized as lines of stratification, sedimentation and lines of updating, creativity. They refer to the large instances approached by Foucault (knowledge, power, subjectivity) (DELEUZE, 1990).

Therefore, untangling the lines of the device in instances of power, knowledge and subjectivity is the task posed to studies involving this concept. However, within the limits of this article, the intention is to show how enunciation regimes/discourses captured in the research organize to produce the dimension of knowledge of the sportivization device.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PATHS

This study has its methodological assumptions grounded on the qualitative approach, including a case study. Field research was carried out in the municipal school system of Pelotas, RS, in two steps. First, interviews were conducted with six PE teachers who were beginning to work in the school context and then a case study was conducted in a local school. Respondents work with students from preschool to 9th grade of elementary school.

In the first step, we needed to seek curriculum guidelines of the Municipal Department of Education, since all teachers mentioned them in interviews and because they were directly related to the subject of the investigation. In the second step, observations were carried out in Physical Education classes of one of the beginner teachers interviewed in a school selected for the case study. We had informal conversations with that teacher and his students and we took notes on a field diary. In addition, we interviewed the coordinator of the school's areas.

The interviews’ analytical process looked for the emergency of practices and discourses that referred to Physical Education’s curriculum regulation. By identifying a set of discursivities and visibilities recurring in the research corpus regarding that regulation, our effort was to think about the ways in which those practices and discourses interconnected and one or more networks, here understood under Foucault’s concept of device. As practices and discourses became recurrent in the seven interviews, mostly on sport, it was elected as the core analytical axis for building a device.

Therefore, that intertwined network of discursivities and evidence related to sport was named sportivization device of Physical Education because of the emergence of sport as a way to carry out curricular regulation of that component at school.

Thus, our interest was to further debate the device that was more potent in curricular regulation of Physical Education. Such a device has sport as the foundation of its conditions of possibility and therefore we discussed it within the arrangement of the sportivization device of Physical Education. As signaled above, this debate is restricted to the discourses that make up the device in question.

3 THE DISCOURSES/ENUNCIATION REGIMES IN THE MAKEUP OF THE SPORTIVIZATION DEVICE

The dimension of knowledge, which involves visibility curves and enunciation regimes, corresponds to curves and regimes to show and speak of sport as a curricular regulating line of school Physical Education. That sport points to a sportivization process explained by González.
As Vago (1996) warns us, there is also a tension between performance sport and school sport. Finally, he says that school and Physical Education classes produce their own sport through the tension between distinct ways of practicing sports.

Importantly, sports are contents provided for in the PE curriculum and their importance cannot be denied, but some of them have occupied too much space given the range of Physical Education knowledges that could be addressed at school, as well as the ways of addressing them. It is precisely those dimensions that take a special place in PE curriculum practices that we call sportivization, thus naming the device in question.

We ask: what can be seen and said about sport in the Physical Education curriculum based on the research corpus? “Which social bases of the set of knowledges pertaining to the PE curriculum are legitimated by the institution?” (NEIRA; NUNES, 2009, p. 124).

Knowledge production within Physical Education’s sportivization device is built through sportivization practices and discourses, which stood out in the research corpus because of two aspects related to the curriculum regulation of the discipline. Aspects recurring in the discourses of the six teachers interviewed about what has to be considered in the curricular organization of the course included students’ interest/acceptance/preference for activities and content and physical space and materials available in the school for PE classes. These aspects were addressed under a discursive perspective and it is important to show how they engender the sportivization device of Physical Education, with its ways of saying and causing to say Physical Education in school. Besides, the curriculum discourse of the municipal Department of Education (SME) proved to be strong in the action of that device, and it is addressed next.

- The first aspect refers to the discourse on the need for Physical Education teachers to meet students’ interests, which translate as sports matches, especially football.

This discourse is based on the idea that students’ interests have to be considered so that they participate in classes, get involved in activities, and are committed to the PE curricular component.

The discourse that students’ interests must be met by teachers in curricular organization is accepted in the educational field and considered essential in addressing educational realities and local cultures. In the Physical Education discourse there is also a consensus according to which teachers must meet students’ interests in terms of content and activities so that they are motivated to be active in classes, engage in tasks, and commit to the discipline.
Students’ interest/acceptance/preference for certain activities and contents (especially football) emerged in the enunciations of the six beginner teachers as one of the guiding lines of the organization and systematization of curriculum practices in Physical Education. The following statements clearly show the direction of students’ interests through the discourse of teachers:

“There’s got to be time for practicing the game, otherwise they get frustrated. [...] Older ones (students of final years) just want football or volleyball; they always complain when there’s something else” (Teacher Fabrício).

“If it’s not football there is quarrelling. [...] I enter any classroom and they go: ‘let’s play football’. I’m already becoming an enemy of the ball” (Teacher Fabiana).

“If you allow it, they just want to play football, even the girls” (Teacher Graziela).

“Usually football, and volleyball for the girls” (Teacher Patrícia).

“In the first months of work, negotiation was the only strategy I found to be effective to get to teach my content [...] After that, students got used to my methodology, that is, no football when the content was different” (Teacher Lucíola).

When students request and insist that Physical Education classes be space-times only to practice sports games with an emphasis on football, they speak and are spoken to – those are the lines of enunciation acting on the sportivization device of Physical Education. As explained by Soares (2006, p. 80) “sport, as hygienic pedagogy of the body’s performance and spectacle, exerts unique fascination in everyday life and is even part of regulation of life”.

When teachers accept to focus on team sports and especially football from a perspective based on some principles of performance sport, to the detriment of other contents and other ways to address them, they are captured by the knowledges of that device through its lines of force. Such principles of performance sports that cross curricular practices of Physical Education gain visibility mainly in the practice of games that are competitive and exclude the less skilled, whether through interference of colleagues, teachers or students themselves who feel bad for not having a good sport performance before the others. When students want football or other team sports in PE classes, they do not want to know the history of football, to improve their knowledge of rules or even techniques and tactics; they want to play!

However, that capture does not occur uniformly. Teachers work with such sports and some principles of performance sport are present in class – through the action of teachers or students, and are identified in discursive and non-discursive practices – but they result from negotiated procedures so that the teacher can work in other ways and with other contents. Beginner teachers negotiate curriculum practices of Physical Education with their students.

Veiga-Neto (2002) approaches the discourse about tailoring Physical Education classes to students’ interests by highlighting the choice of courses in the curriculum that students are offered, the so-called optional/elective courses in which students are seen as customers that choose a product – the curriculum package. This line of thought is based on neoliberalism and its principles of freedom of choice for individuals. However, we believe that considering students’ interests in curricular practices in the case of Physical Education is based on the constructivist, New School and/or Freirean teaching approach.

Such an approach, which permeates the pedagogical discourse of Physical Education, was designed by Freire (1997) when he pointed out that it was important that school Physical Education considered the knowledge that children already have, regardless of the formal teaching situation, because they are the best playing experts.
The approach entitled Open Conceptions in Teaching Physical Education (HILDEBRANDT; LAGING, 1986) deserves to be mentioned here for being a reference in teacher training courses since the 1990s and because it values students' interests in the daily life of PE. This valuation does not prevent the pedagogical approach of distinct knowledges that students already have and the expansion of knowledge known to them.

Note that the space opened by Physical Education teachers for students’ to participate in the discipline’s curriculum organization is not at all questionable; what is questionable is limiting curricular organization to a minimum of contents and activities selected by students. We wonder if that also happens in other school disciplines. Possibly not, at least in disciplines valued as fields of knowledge. Therefore, we believe that this opening has been based on the low value ascribed to PE knowledge.

Contrary to such low value of Physical Education as a field of knowledge, PE is one of the disciplines that students like the most, to the point of complaining when teachers do not come to work and school management suggests replacing it with another discipline. Teachers (when asked about the facilities to work with PE) and the coordinator (in an interview) illustrate the idea:

“[..] I arrive at school every day and I’m the first teacher they greet, they wave to me from afar; the little ones come running from where they are to hold you, you know? At the meetings, the best discipline is always PE in class councils [...]” (Teacher Lucíola).

“[..] It’s easier to work, they like it” (Teacher Patrícia).

“[..] It becomes a little easier, because it’s something they like” (Teacher Armando).

“The Physical Education teacher has not come, another teacher comes to teach Portuguese, and they go crazy, you know?” (Coordinator of areas).

Note, however, that the high status of Physical Education when it comes to students’ interests does not follow the same logic of values of other disciplines. Their preference for Physical Education seems to be close to something that Elias (1992) points out about sport: the pleasure and pleasant excitement that sports practices trigger on their practitioners. Furthermore, in the author’s perspective, practitioners are not only players themselves but include spectators and those involved with the games.

In this direction, sport is the most common content in Physical Education, and as Elias (1992) warns us, it is powerful in promoting excitement. This preference of students for Physical Education classes can be an effect of the sportivization device of Physical Education itself.

Barbosa (2001) points out some resources that lead to working only with sports in Physical Education classes when he investigates the social representations of Physical Education, interviewing high school teachers and students of a school of Rio de Janeiro. Most teachers studied believe that sport should be the main content taught in PE class during the school period. They justify their choice with the argument that elementary school students already experience all sports that can possibly be taught at the institution. In high school, they should choose which one they want to play, either for pleasure or in order to improve their skills. The opinions of students interviewed follow the same line regarding the work restricted to sport in schools. A student even said that there is nothing for him in Physical Education because he practices sports in a “sport school” outside his regular school.

About that, Betti (1999) warns that the practice of addressing only or mainly sports in Physical Education classes at school is linked to the idea that PE teachers are super-athletes,
which makes it hard for them to work with body practices, since they do not know how to perform their basic movements so that sports are best known to them: from school to university. In other words, this question refers to the discourse according to which Physical Education teachers need to master the techniques of body practices they use with their students.

Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that practices based on sports performance are connected to views on Physical Education and the body. Body and movement are understood here as the object of study and intervention in the field of Physical Education, better defined as body culture of movement. In this case, that view is the biological discourse on the body that sees it as a “bundle of nerves, muscles and bones that has to move using maximum potential in a predetermined space” (BARBOSA, 2010, p. 83).

Thus, the discourse about serving students by working with certain contents and teaching approaches is expressed as an enunciation curve for the sportivization device of Physical Education and it translates as the formal categories of knowledge: educate, treat, punish (DELEUZE, 2005).

- The second aspect shows the discourse that curricular organization of Physical Education depends on physical and material resources available at the school.

Numerous justifications for the lack of content diversification in Physical Education classes are linked to this discourse. They are based on poor and/or insufficient physical conditions and school materials for Physical Education classes. This problem is one of the main issues when it comes to curriculum systematization of PE, being the target of complaints by teachers in many studies, such as Ilha and Krug,1 Ferreira (2005) and Gori (2000). But not only teachers complain about it; that discourse and such justification are used by students, administrators, parents and whoever is allowed to enter this discursive order, which in this case proves to be easy to enter.

The importance given to those resources is seen in the following statements, when teachers are asked about how they select contents and organize curriculum practices in Physical Education:

“There’s the material, the area (court, field)” (Teacher Fabrícia).

“I organize classes based on the material we have” (Teacher Armando).

“There are things that limit me, the school structure. [...] Last year there was material shortage, and then I worked on athletics with them” (Teacher Graziela).

“ [...] We went a long time without material, so I had to plan the content again. Now I was working on physical assessments on 5th and 6th grades because there was no material. [...] there’s little material and there’s nothing for us to work with” (Teacher Patricia).

“I’ve thought about working with other stuff, but then there is the problem of not having material” (Fabiana teacher).

“Now the only space I have to teach is outside (in the little school yard and in a little field back there). I’d rather use the schoolyard because the grass in the school field sometimes is very tall and snakes have been found there”. (Teacher Lucíola).

What those Physical Education teachers say, explain and argue is part of a discourse that is commonly used by PE teachers as well as by students, administrators, parents. It is

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highly validated in the educational and school field of Physical Education. It is hardly questioned and often recognized as true when it comes to Physical Education classes. That somewhat indiscriminate use makes us think about one of the procedures for discourse control, which Foucault (2010) points out as the principle of rarefaction. It determines the operating conditions of discourse as it imposes a set of rules on enunciators that guide their statements.

For the discourse in question, that discursive region is easily penetrable. Distinct individuals are allowed to take the position of subjects of that discourse.

Betti (1999) says that thinking of Physical Education leads us to the idea of sport, and when the topic is the physical and material resources to teach that discipline at school, what comes to mind is the space of a sports court and official sports balls. Those are discursive and visibilities typical of the sportivization device in which “natural spaces and unconventional materials are forgotten” (BETTI, 1999, p. 29).

Sanches Neto et al. (2013) point precisely to this issue when they discuss the environmental demands in School Physical Education in order to expand the view on these demands, which are as diverse as the environment itself. In order to systematize those demands so as to flexibilize systematization in class planning, the authors present six possibilities: administrative and economic demands; aesthetic and philosophical demands; virtual demands; historical and geographical demands; sociological and political demands; physical and natural demands. From the authors’ point of view, those demands can become indications for teaching topics related to them in a broader perspective in Physical Education.

It is important to clarify that the issue debated here is not linked to the importance of physical and material resources for Physical Education or the very need for such resources. It is clear that the physical structure and materials are important and necessary for Physical Education classes. And the more they are varied and well-conserved, the easier it will be for teachers to plan creative classes, which may result in students more interested and motivated for activities. However, the issue that arises is not the importance of physical spaces and materials for PE classes, but the dependence on certain standards of physical spaces and certain materials for those lessons.

Speed running, for example, can be easily worked in any space with no material, as well as relay race, in which any object can be used as a baton. Learning basketball with a volley ball or a rubber ball and using a bucket as the basket, or even reconstructing the way of scoring are alternatives to escape sportivization as well as discussing sports’ appearance, rules and possibilities for change or debating sport as exposed by the media and its spectacle. Other possibilities include pedagogical work with capoeira and certain types of exercise, since they do not require material and also help in diversifying Physical Education contents.

The discourse that validates certain types of physical spaces and materials as appropriate for teaching Physical Education at school has been historically accepted and reinforced by the attempt to work the contents in accordance with the manner in which certain cultural practices of movement are developed in institutions specialized in sports performance, for example.

It is justifiable that Physical Education teachers and whoever is in the position of the subject of this discourse say that proper materials and spaces are necessary for working with certain PE contents.
Research in the area of School Physical Education that cover discussions on professional practice in schools (POZZOBON, 1992; SILVEIRA et al., 2008) often mentions the problem of physical space and materials (un) available in the schools they study. The complaint about the absence and/or poor quality of such resources is rarely absent from the accounts of Physical Education teachers.

Concerned about that, Trapp (1993) says it that this dependence on material and physical space in Physical Education is unfortunate and that such concern is related to the work focused only on sports. In other words, the need for standard physical space and pedagogical materials reveals the pedagogical view and the meaning of PE that is practiced. It shows approximations to a technical/sporting approach focused on sports education and guided by certain principles typical of the sports institution. According to Kunz (1998), sportivized Physical Education needs standard physical spaces since it aims to teach standard sports movements and thus uniform materials and places are needed.

That dependence also demonstrates the difficulty of thinking about Physical Education as a discipline that has knowledges to be developed in classroom, in addition to motor and physical aspects, which can also be worked in class just as teachers from other disciplines teach their content.

The justification that each context enables the development of certain contents (ways of saying and causing to say) has been establishing a relationship of extreme dependence of PE curriculum practices on physical spaces and materials available at school.

- The curriculum discourse of the Municipal Department of Education reinforces the sportivization device in its curriculum guidelines.

Both in the MDE curriculum document and in physical and material resources available for PE classes in the school investigated or in those schools where beginning teachers were investigated, team sports and some principles of performance sport are enunciated and visible.

The following table shows the MDE’s curriculum discourse guidelines that can be analyzed as an enunciation regime of the sportivization device.

**Table 1** – Curriculum guidelines established by the MDE that are linked to sportivization device’s knowledges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical and practical contents</th>
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<tr>
<td>3rd and 4th grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Introduction to handball, futsal, soccer, volleyball and basketball;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Internal competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Handball;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Football and Futsal;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Competitions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Psychomotor aspect: performing the basic fundamentals of sports;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cognitive aspect: stimulating the preference for learning the rules;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cognitive aspect: recognizing the different educational sports and applying the basic rules of sports during the games.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on the MDE curriculum guidelines.
Those guidelines include contents and goals aimed at teaching sports in a peculiar way, as sports fundamentals, correct practice of movements and gestures, recognition of educational elements of sports, applying its rules, and competitions. Barbanti (2006) helps us recognize those aspects of sportivization when he mentions the characteristics that an activity must have to be considered a sport. One of them is related to the dependence on the conditions in which competitive and institutionalized physical activity takes place, since standardization of rules is needed as well as learning sports skills.

Furthermore, those guidelines stress psychomotor and constructivist educational perspectives, i.e., motor, cognitive and affective aspects are mentioned while cultural and historical dimensions are silenced.

Therefore, the guidelines advocated by the MDE’s curricular discourse reinforce the action of the sportivization device.

4 FINAL REMARKS

The investigation of curricular regulation of Physical Education and the ways in which it is regulated in situations of this research was made possible by Foucault’s concept of device. This path was chosen because of device’s productive for a discussion that intended to complexify the process of curricular definition in Physical Education. That process is often seen as extremely flexible, characterized as free choice by Physical Education teachers.

However, the theoretical and methodological assumptions made here drive thinking in another direction. School Physical Education’s curriculum practices are not regulated in the same ways in different places and times, but they show that some ways of speaking and saying Physical Education are present in many Brazilian schools. However, this study was not interested in discussing curricular regulation of that component at national, state or municipal level. The idea was to discuss it mainly from scattered discourses and evidence pointed out by Physical Education teachers in the beginning of their careers in the municipal school system of Pelotas, RS.

Therefore, the enunciability regimes that make up the dimension of knowledge of the sportivization device, along with visibility curves, were expressed in this research by: a) the discourse on the need for Physical Education teachers to meet students’ interests in certain sports (team sports and especially football) worked with some principles of performance sport, so that they participate in class, get involved in activities, and commit to the curricular component; b) the discourse that the curricular organization of Physical Education depends on physical and material resources available at schools, since that dependence posits certain ways to produce the discipline’s curriculum practices, demands a teaching approach focused on standardization of resources; c) the curriculum discourse of the MDE, with curriculum guidelines related to sports.

In short, the multi-linear feature of the sportivization device that translates as its regimes, curves and lines make up the three historical and irreducible but constantly implicated dimension: knowledge, power and itself (DELEUZE, 2005), so that the panorama composed by the latter and the other characteristics of Foucault’s concept of device supported the engendering of the sportivization device of Physical Education as its curricular regulator.
The study of the device was not intended to say whether it is good or bad for the field of Physical Education and for the teaching work highlighted here: beginners. It also did not bother to classify curriculum practices of Physical Education at school, and good and quality practices or bad and disqualified practices. Engendering the sportivization device is directly associated with the empirical corpus of this research, leaving its comparisons with other contexts to readers.

REFERENCES


