

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHING: STRATEGIES, TECHNOLOGIES, AND NEW LEARNING

DISTANCIAMENTO SOCIAL E O ENSINO DE EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA: ESTRATÉGIAS, TECNOLOGIAS E NOVOS APRENDIZADOS 

DISTANCIAMIENTO SOCIAL Y ENSEÑANZA DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA: ESTRATEGIAS, TECNOLOGÍAS Y NUEVOS APRENDIZAJES 

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Abstract: This “Focus Section” brings together a collection of papers that consider the pedagogical implications of teaching Physical Education (PE) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has challenged teachers around the globe to adapt to social distancing and teaching online requirements. Our goal in this special edition is to share and reflect together on these challenges and see that the issue is not just about the use of technology, but also about how teachers navigate the implications for teaching a subject like PE. The shared stories provide valuable insights into how teachers adapt and learn new strategies and technologies for teaching PE in times of social distancing.

Keywords: Physical Education. COVID 19. Physical distancing. Education, distancy.

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The rapid development of information technologies at the end of the last century foreshadowed that our culture would become increasingly digitised. Digital technologies have not only become integrated into all aspects of our modern lives, but they have also transformed the way people work, think, interact, and conduct their daily lives (MÜHLEISEN, 2018). For example, digital technologies are core to how we communicate, host meetings, source news and information, listen to music, watch movies, and monitor our own health and physical activity. The key point of interest here is not with the range and capability of the technologies themselves, which are impressive, but with the disruptive and transformative effect they have on society, including the economies, social relationships, and political structures that are core to daily life (LEE, 2020). Education is not exempt from this. Education has always been a field that has readily adopted new technologies and has enjoyed a broad range of new and emerging pedagogical tools (RAJA; NAGASUBRAMANI, 2018). The uptake and use of new technologies has not just been about their availability, but on how such technologies can augment, modify, and redefine teaching (HAMILTON; ROSENBERG; AKCAOGLU, 2016). Even in a subject like Physical Education (PE), where the focus is on the experiential and corporeal aspects of learning, there is an active interest in how new and emerging technologies will reconfigure teaching and learning of the subject area, particularly given the impact such technologies are also having on human movement and health cultures (GARD, 2014; ROBINSON; RANDALL, 2017; WYANT; BAEK, 2019).

To the best of our knowledge, the first systematic review of technology in the PE literature was a special edition on digital technology published in the *Quest* kinesiology journal in 1997 (see MARTENS, 1997), which highlighted instructional technology, information access on the Internet, and technology uses in biomechanics and motor behaviour, among other themes. However, it was not till after the turn of the century that the idea that technology could change the way PE was taught was raised. For example, in contemplating what PE may look like in the digital era, Fernández-Balboa (2003) suggested:

[...] physical education could be deliverable at home. Imagine that physical education teachers design individualized programs and distribute to students via the Internet, including illustrative text, sound, and image. Imagine that adults of all ages and both genders download exercise programs to do at home or at the office. (FERNÁNDEZ-BALBOA, 2003, p.110).

It was almost two decades later that the idea of PE being delivered at home via the Internet suddenly became a reality as the coronavirus pandemic brought extraordinary disruption to education systems around the world. As infections rates grew at an alarming rate, lockdown and social distancing measures were introduced, leading to closures of schools and higher education facilities in many countries around the globe (VAN-LANCKER; PAROLIN, 2020; POKHREL; CHHETRI, 2021). Education systems and teachers were forced to quickly transition from face-to-face teaching to forms of remote, online, and virtual teaching. Such a rapid and reactive response led to a variety of issues such as accessibility, competence, equity, and the affordability of devices and connectivity (MURGATROTD, 2020). Included in this was the impact on subjects like PE, which learn through practical contexts in

an interdependent, collaborative, and kinaesthetically meaningful way. Suddenly, teachers were confronted by the reality that PE was now going to be taught via the Internet.

This is not meant to suggest that there was not an active debate around the role and use of digital technologies in PE prior to the pandemic. For example, there was a growing interest in how technology was being used by PE teachers and teacher educators (e.g., JUNIU, 2006; KONUKMAN, 2015; THOMAS; STRATTON, 2006), what barriers and facilitators impacted on the use of digital technologies in PE (e.g., BODSWORTH; GOODYEAR, 2017; BURNE; OVENS; PHILPOT, 2018), and how it could be used to enhance student engagement (e.g., CASEY; JONES, 2012; KOEKOEK; VAN HILVOORDE, 2018). There was also critique of how it constrained the possibility for critical pedagogy (e.g., LUGUETTI *et al.*, 2022), as well constructively critiquing messages about health-related behaviours in social media (GOODYEAR; ARMOUR; WOOD, 2019). In addition, concerns were expressed that curricula in PE were not keeping abreast of the impact of media and technologies and this was limiting the potential of PE to enable students to make critical and informed decisions about their health and physical activity needs (ARAÚJO; KNIJNIK; OVENS, 2021).

What is interesting about this pre-pandemic research is that while the value and need for a level of proficiency in the use of digital technologies had been discussed by several studies (see, e.g., BAERT, 2011; JUNIU; SHONFELD; GANOT, 2013; GIBBONE; MERCIER, 2014; JONES; BAIK; WYANT, 2017; BAEK *et al.*, 2018) there was very little attention paid to it in the curricula guidelines for Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE). This was particularly so in respect to the competencies and knowledge about digital technologies that new teachers to the profession would need to utilise in their teaching (ARAÚJO; CARVALHO; OVENS; KNIJNIK, 2021). The result was that the move to a remote online environment fundamentally challenged teachers to rethink their content and teaching in ways they were not prepared or educated for (CRUICKSHANK; PILL; MAINSBRIDGE, 2021; STIRRUP, *et al.*, 2020; GODBER; ATKINS, 2021; CENTEIO *et al.*, 2021; VAREA; GONZÁLEZ-CALVO; GARCÍA-MONGE, 2022).

Our goal in compiling this special edition was to return to the discussion of the role and use of digital technologies in PE by reflecting on the pedagogical implications of remote PE teaching. We believe it is important to ask what needs to be learnt from the teachers and students' experience of PE in forced social distancing situations. Our approach has been to invite colleagues from different countries to share their experiences of teaching PE during the coronavirus pandemic and probe the idea that the act of moving PE to an online mode of teaching represents a paradigm shift in both the nature of the subject and how it is taught. As we said at the start of this introduction, the key point of any discussion about social transformation is not about the range or number of digital technologies in use, but on the transformative effect they have on an educational practice like PE.

It is worth emphasizing the relevance of differences in cultural and language environments in this special edition. Each paper represents a different national and educational context. The papers also represent authors working in English and

Portuguese language environments. Our experience has taught us how difficult it is to represent complex ideas, concepts, and world views in different languages. For this reason, we have allowed authors to write in their preferred language and then asked colleagues to translate each paper. In such a process it is difficult to preserve the scholarly fluency and perspective of the authors and we apologise in advance for editing or methodological errors that may appear in a translated paper. Given this caveat, we are proud of the way the collection of papers provides valuable insights into how teachers adapt and learn new strategies and technologies for teaching PE in times of social distancing.

In their paper, Tim Fletcher from Canada and Mats Hordvik from Norway discuss the findings from a collaborative self-study (S-STEP) in which Mats experiments with different learning approaches and platforms in his PETE programme in the years prior to the pandemic. To help provide a way to illustrate ways blended approaches can be thought about and enacted they use the metaphor of miscibility. Their analysis showed that the blended PETE course was not conceptualized or enacted in a way that effectively made use of the on-campus and online components. This meant there were missed opportunities to offer educative experiences from one format to shape experiences in the other.

From New Zealand, Carlos Kucera, Alan Ovens, and Blake Bennett, with a Brazilian collaborator, Ana Lisa Gomes, also use a self-study methodology to reflect on Carlos' experiences of having to adapt, plan, and teach PE lessons as he navigated the social distancing requirements and ongoing school closures. Touching themes such as the nature of PE, pedagogical strategies, and the content taught, the authors reflect on the coherence among teaching beliefs, assumptions, theoretical approaches, and practices as a teacher.

In a third collaborative self-study project, the teacher education practices of two Brazilian university professors, Luciana Venâncio and Luiz Sanches, engage with Bernard Charlot, from France, and Cheryl Craig, from the USA, as their critical friends to examine how their pedagogical relationships became mediated synchronously and asynchronously via online platforms during the pandemic. Their reflections have focused on how this reconfiguration of the teaching situation restricted movement-related experiences in PE, which affected students' embodiment of knowledge as "subject-bodies".

The fourth self-study, written by Rod Philpot, Alan Ovens, and Blake Bennet, reports on their project to interrogate, problematize, and expand their assumptions of teaching and explore ways to adapt and evolve their pedagogies in relation to the proliferation of digital technologies and social media. They describe and problematize their experiences of emergency remote teaching in an undergraduate degree course and identify some of key assumptions underpinning their practices as teachers in the digital world, including the feeling of becoming neophyte lecturers once more.

Using a narrative approach, Leilane Shamara, Márcio Oliveira, Alan Queiroz, and Allyson Carvalho describe, debate, and think about a teacher's experience in the public education system in Northeastern Brazil under remote teaching. Inspired by pedagogical cases, they use a narrative provided by a teacher to serve as a starting

point to initiate a conversation among peers who seek to understand the nuances of the remote teaching in order to think about what PE could learn from the pandemic period.

Writing from the Spanish context, Victor Amar examines the narrative of a young woman student-teacher whose daily life, sporting participation and learning was significantly changed with the onset of the social distancing requirements introduced by her government. Through semi-structured interviews that encouraged an open and fluid dialogue, Victor presents Pao's opinion about her teacher education, values, and lifestyle in a pandemic time. The findings show us technology as an incentive for change and teacher improvement, for her self-training.

Writing from the United Kingdom, Zac Parris, Lorraine Cale, Jo Harris, and Ashley Casey focus on teachers' use of social media to teach physical activity for health knowledge in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on appreciative inquiry and utilising a grounded theory methodology, they describe the initial use of homemade fitness challenges and competitions before refocussing on pedagogies more focussed on maintaining/enhancing health and well-being. Their research highlights three key challenges inherent in using digital spaces to teach PE.

Overall, we believe the collection of papers provides a series of useful "snapshots" of how moving online had short- and long-term consequences for a subject so dependent on interaction and movement like PE. Collectively, the shared stories provide valuable insights into the passion and dedication of PE teachers around the globe and their resilience, innovation, and adaptability when forced to teach differently. We applaud the work of teachers over the past two years working in the face of such difficulties. At the same time, we hope the methodologies used by our contributing authors shows the value of working closely with teachers to engage in reflective and critical inquiry processes so that the focus is not on the uptake and use of digital technologies, but on how these technologies mediate and transform what PE becomes in online, socially distanced, and virtual environments. The aim should always be on supporting teachers to be creative, innovative, and inclusive as they search for solutions to ensure high quality physical education stays as their goal.

To conclude, we need to thank our reviewers and translators who have volunteered their time and shared their expertise to guide the writing of each paper. In particular, we would like to acknowledge and thank Carlos Kucera, Luiz Sanchez-Neto, and Everton Cavalcante for taking on the difficult and tricky task of translating the papers on top of their already busy workloads. We also want to thank Dawn Garbett for her critical editing eye in helping with the reviewing process and providing valuable feedback to authors. Finally, we thank the editors of the *Movimento* journal for their willingness to support this special edition and for their patience in setting realistic submission dates. This special edition is truly a collective effort from many people.

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Resumo: Este dossiê temático reúne uma coletânea de artigos acerca das implicações pedagógicas do ensino de Educação Física (EF) durante a pandemia de COVID-19. A pandemia desafiou professores em todo o mundo a se adaptarem ao distanciamento social e aos requisitos do ensino remoto. Nosso objetivo nesta edição especial é compartilhar e refletir sobre esses desafios e ver que a questão não se trata apenas do uso de tecnologia, mas também de como professores lidam com as implicações para o ensino de uma disciplina como a EF. As histórias compartilhadas fornecem valiosos insights sobre como os professores se adaptam e aprendem novas estratégias e tecnologias para ensinar EF em tempos de distanciamento social.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física. COVID 19. Distanciamento físico. Educação à distância.

Resumen: Este dossier temático reúne una colección de artículos sobre las implicaciones pedagógicas de la enseñanza de la Educación Física (EF) durante la pandemia de COVID-19. La pandemia ha desafiado a los profesores de todo el mundo a adaptarse al distanciamiento social y a los requisitos de enseñanza en línea. Nuestro objetivo en esta edición especial es compartir y reflexionar sobre estos desafíos y ver que el problema no se trata solo del uso de la tecnología, sino también de cómo los profesores enfrentan con las implicaciones para enseñar una materia como la EF. Las historias compartidas brindan insights valiosos sobre como los profesores se adaptan y aprenden nuevas estrategias y tecnologías para enseñar EF en tiempos de distanciamiento social.

Palabras clave: Educación Física. COVID 19. Distanciamiento físico. Educação à distância.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have declared that this work involves no conflict of interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Allyson Carvalho de Araújo: Conceptualization, project administration, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing.

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