

THE AGES OF PRACTICE AND THE “IDEA ABOUT THE IDEA” OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

*AS IDADES DA PRÁTICA E A “IDEIA SOBRE A IDEIA” DE
EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA NO BRASIL* 

*LAS EDADES DE LA PRÁCTICA Y LA “IDEA SOBRE LA IDEA” DE LA
EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA EN BRASIL* 

 <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8918.142001>

 **Luiz Gustavo Bonatto Rufino*** <gustavo_rufino_6@hotmail.com>

* Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP). Campinas, SP, Brazil.

Abstract: The study aimed to analyze the Ages of Practice in Brazilian Physical Education as well as to reflect on the “idea about the idea” that structured the representations of this curricular component in schools, based on a historical perspective in dialogue with the analyses of David Kirk. The essay is organized into three sections: 1) an analysis of the “idea about the idea of PE”; 2) an understanding of the mosaic of ideas in Brazilian PE, with a description of each of the three Ages of Practice; and 3) an examination of the tensions and future possibilities surrounding these Ages. The conclusion highlights that paradigm shifts in Brazilian Physical Education have not occurred linearly but rather through intense struggles and disputes that are still unfolding. The agents within this field are configured as social actors in this process, occupying different positions and either contributing to or hindering the construction of its legitimacy.

Keywords: Physical Education and Training. Knowledge. History, 20th Century. Teaching. Curriculum.

Received on: Aug. 18, 2024
Approved on: April 20, 2025
Published in: Oct. 14, 2025



This is an article published
in open access under
the Creative Commons
Attribution 4.0 (CC BY 4.0)

1 INTRODUCTION: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE “AGES OF PRACTICE” IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION¹

The representations that permeate historical analyses of Physical Education (PE) are based on ideas and practices grounded in what is said and done in its name at a given moment, that is, they are socially constructed. In this sense, the understanding of what is called the PE project has changed and solidified based on social constructions that have been paradigmatically consolidated over time.

According to Kirk (2010), the PE project has remained relatively stable since the end of the 19th century. For the author, such representations transcended the borders of most Western countries, presenting solidified structures and, because they had crystallized, became hegemonic ideas and practices, resistant to change (Kirk, 2010).

This analysis presents theoretical arguments based on historical perspectives. However, Kirk (2010) investigated the European continent. Based on this framework, we can question how such a project has been taking shape in Brazil. Specifically, we intend to analyze the extent to which Kirk's (2010) understandings can be applied to the Brazilian context and how its specificities have been transformed into new representations, such as what has been consolidated as critical pedagogy in the field of PE (Kirk, Almeida, Bracht, 2019; Kirk, 2019).

To this end, we sought to analyze how the pedagogical practice developed by teachers in the school context has been understood by the field of PE in Brazil. In this sense, the reflective inquiry covered authors whose research focus converges on the issue of epistemological analyses, focusing on part of the discussions presented by David Kirk in a small part of his vast work.

In each of the Ages of Practice analyzed, we sought to identify how the *ethos* of PE was constituted. According to Bourdieu (2007), the perspective of *ethos* refers to the system of implicit and deeply internalized values, such as moral dispositions and practical principles, among others. Thus, in the case of PE, its *ethos* was shaped based on how its practice was understood at different times.

Therefore, paradigm shifts in PE practice in Brazil are rooted in social structures, as well as in the historical perspectives in which they are situated, and are full of nuances and ruptures that cannot be understood linearly. In addition, they vary to a certain extent due to the diversity of contexts, a fact that still needs to be investigated in Brazil.

Thus, this essay aims to analyze the Ages of Practice of PE in Brazil, as well as to reflect on the “idea about the idea” that structured the representations that constituted this curricular component in schools, understanding the implications for the

¹ This study, in the form of a theoretical essay, was initially conceived in a very early version for a doctoral thesis entitled: *Entre a escola e a universidade: análise do processo de fundamentação e sistematização da epistemologia da prática profissional de professores de Educação Física* (Between school and university: analysis of the process of grounding and systematizing the epistemology of the professional practice of Physical Education teachers), authored by the author of this study. It should be noted that the study as presented has undergone substantial changes until it was structured as an article for this journal.

PE project in contemporary times. To this end, rather than developing a broad historical reconstruction, we analyzed how some implications based on representations of the *ethos* of PE practice at various times influenced its *modus operandi*.

2 THE “IDEA ABOUT THE IDEA” OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: DIALOGUE WITH DAVID KIRK AND ID²

The analysis focused on the practice of PE seeks to conceive the historical perspective without disregarding the ways in which knowledge has been analyzed by the field. Thus, we seek to develop a perspective on the “epistemological landscape” and how the historical configuration of the PE project was established amid the setbacks and legitimations that constituted it.

A first note concerns the concept of “the idea about the idea of Physical Education” (abbreviated as id²). Kirk (2010) understands that the concept of PE is socially constructed through processes involving struggles and disputes. For the author, thinking about “the idea about the idea of PE” leads us to understand that it “has remained relatively intact since about the middle of the last century, transcending the national borders of economically advanced countries and other nations that have had some formal association with those countries, and that it has been highly resistant to change” (Kirk, 2010, p. 1.).

Considering the conceptual depth of this author, it is important to provide a brief contextualization of his career, although this essay does not seek to analyze a perspective linked to his biographical trajectory. David Kirk is one of the leading researchers in the field of Physical Education internationally, with an extensive academic career, holding prominent positions in institutions in Australia, Ireland, Belgium, and England. The author considers that his areas of interest cover topics involving educational innovation, curriculum history, Physical Education, and sports pedagogy, as well as critical theories and practices based on models in light of critical and post-critical references. He was the founder and is the editor-in-chief of important international journals, as well as collections from major book publishers in the field. He has trained several researchers at the postgraduate level, including in Brazil. His works have found fertile ground for the production of new knowledge, as we analyze in the present study.

Kirk (2010) bases his analysis on the British context, although he also covers other countries such as the United States and Australia. The author’s thesis is that, despite much discussion about PE, in general, some perspectives have remained largely unchanged. It is these structures that constitute its identity. In fact, despite criticism from the academic field, the practice of PE remains rooted in certain principles that have undergone few changes. The author acknowledges several innovative initiatives and cites several examples of successful practices, but overall, they do not correspond to the structural changes required for the id² of PE.

From this perspective, Kirk (2010) undertakes a conceptual review seeking to present definitions of what PE is and what its possible future scenarios are. According

to the author, concepts and definitions are only meaningful if analyzed in relation to the practices that are developed. From this approach, the author argues that, at least in historical analysis, the “idea about the idea of PE” (its id^2) is composed of two major concepts that sustained it: the first, called “Physical Education as gymnastics,” and the second, entitled “Physical Education as teaching sports techniques.” Each of these structures, within its respective historical context, operated as the hegemonic logic that defined and legitimized this field, and any criticism was not sufficient to transform them.

Taking into account the necessary historical context, this structural logic can be analyzed in Brazil. This is due to a series of issues related, among others, to the strong European influence on the origins of Brazilian PE, whose perspectives, for a long time, defined its project and constitution. Thus, we aim to analyze “the idea about the idea of Brazilian PE” based on Kirk’s (2010) analytical outlines, to establish what we call “Ages of Practice of PE in Brazil.”

3 ANALYZING THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT: THE MOSAIC OF IDEAS ABOUT THE IDEA OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

For Bracht (2014), both in the context of the systematization of gymnastic methods and in the projection and valorization of sport as the structuring core of PE in Brazil, scientific discourse was the element used as a form of social legitimization. The valorization of scientific knowledge functioned as a “driving force” for the field of PE to seek to establish itself in the school context. This situation came about through the support of the biological sciences in the paradigm of technical rationality, taking root in the field of PE.

Although this structure has become consolidated, it has also been the subject of criticism. This debate began in Brazil, mainly in the 1980s, through an intense movement referred to by numerous authors as the “renewal” movement. Through strong criticism of the sports system in which PE was intertwined and seeking theoretical foundations that could structure new paradigms, these initiatives proposed, among other things, the expansion of bodily manifestations and the separation from the “sports-oriented” character that had been predominant up until then.

Thus, specifically, we will analyze the Ages of Practice of PE in Brazil. The first involves understanding “PE as gymnastics.” The second is called “PE as teaching sports techniques.” Finally, due to the ongoing paradigm shift, we will understand the foundations of the third Age, still under construction, called “PE as pedagogical practice and the bodily culture of movement.”

3.1 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS GYMNASTICS

The understanding of “PE as gymnastics,” according to Kirk (2011, 2010), has its origins in the systematization of different gymnastic methods in European countries. This projection of gymnastics was strengthened by the concepts that underpinned it, based on the hygienic and eugenic training of the population, the rigor of the methods

and movements reproduced through observation by the teacher (a specialist and the most competent figure for teaching it), and the scientific basis that it sought to add, especially from positivist ideals. In short, from the mid-19th century to approximately the mid-20th century, gymnastics could be understood as a model of teaching and physical training. Thus: “until the end of World War II, gymnastics formed the basis of Physical Education programs in schools, so much so that gymnastics and Physical Education were virtually synonymous” (Kirk, 2011, p. 54).

The Age of PE as gymnastics is marked by a set of attributes centered on the systematization of certain European methods, such as French, Danish, German, Swedish, Swiss, etc. Despite a number of differences between them, in general, they can be characterized by the perspective of “educating through the physical,” as Kirk points out (2010, p. 68), through practice with a therapeutic focus or in the form of training. To this end, the presence of predetermined movement sequences, the existence of methods for progression, constant repetition as a form of learning, and the figure of the teacher as the holder of theoretical and practical knowledge were determining factors in their structuring. These characteristics ended up entering both the military field, becoming the basis of physical training, and medicine, as a form of therapy and prophylaxis. In short, they were strengthened between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century (Vigarelo, 2003), seeking moral education in a context used for the hygienism of the population.

The term “gymnastic methods” carries strong connotations with the scientific field. Its organization and systematization took place in a context of strengthening science and technical rationality, so that the different methods sought to align themselves with scientific assumptions as a form of theoretical foundation and social legitimacy.

According to Kirk (2010), the main characteristic of PE as gymnastics refers to the absolute precision of movement, that is, its entire structure was geared toward the reproduction of certain techniques (or gymnastic sequences). Teaching was the means of repetitively seeking this adaptation to pre-established models. Not only was it necessary to reproduce the movements as they appeared in the manuals, but the timing of their execution was also fundamental. A good gymnastics class was one in which everyone performed exactly the same movements at the same time.

In Brazil, this dynamic was largely present and contributed to the structuring of PE in schools. Soares (1994) points out that gymnastic practices appeared in the country throughout the 19th century, established through methods originating in Europe, especially within military institutions and the medical field. Later, these practices entered schools through educational reforms, thus creating an intrinsic relationship between PE and gymnastics (terms used in official documents and pedagogical practice).

Rooted in Brazil through gymnastics, PE in schools was understood within school reforms as the moment of implementation of European methods to prepare students for adult life. Gymnastic methods were transformed into consolidated practices

both in and outside of school, reflecting ways of doing and thinking, constituting the identity of PE at that time.

The legislation, opinions, and documents published in Brazil during this period show that PE and gymnastics were so intertwined that they could be considered synonymous (as in the Couto Ferraz Reform, the Leôncio de Carvalho Reform, and the famous opinion written by Rui Barbosa). The documents reinforce the importance of performing gymnastic exercises as a means of developing both moral education and physical fitness. PE entered the school environment as a physical activity, and even though this required a certain implementation process, it ultimately highlighted the importance given to it.

The documents also reveal that over time, especially from the 1930s onwards, a process began to include other terminology beyond gymnastics. At that point, sport began to take on a more established form, although it was not yet predominant. This process intensified mainly from the 1950s onwards (post-war period).

Many social conditions led to this paradigm shift. In the 20th century, sport became one of the greatest cultural phenomena, mobilizing not only a large number of practitioners but also spectators and fans. Gymnastics, on the other hand, began to be questioned. Kirk (2010) draws on Michel Foucault's perspective to emphasize that the shift from a disciplinary society to an industrial society was decisive, as it instituted new forms of power over the body based on less meticulous practices.

Thus, gradually, gymnastic practices lost momentum and gave way to the understanding of sports techniques. Gymnastics itself, in order to remain part of the schooling process, often resorted to its sport-oriented forms, adhering to the framework of the sports system.

3.2 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS THE TEACHING OF SPORTS TECHNIQUES

With regard to the Age of "PE as teaching sports techniques," according to Kirk (2011, 2010), although sports were already being practiced by an increasing number of people, its power and representativeness became stronger from the mid-20th century onwards. Since then, this has been the structure in which PE has been understood in schools. This perspective is reinforced by certain characteristics, such as specialization in certain sports, reproduction of specific technical movements, emphasis on motor skills and their linear progression (from the simplest to the most complex), as well as their application to games, compartmentalization of teaching and "molecularization" of tasks, emphasis on the most skilled individuals who can represent institutions in competitive dynamics, etc.

The shift from a gymnastics-oriented structure to a sports-oriented one did not occur linearly and was the result of numerous disputes. According to Kirk (2010), the inclusion of sports techniques at the center of PE classes was a true revolution at the time (starting in the 1950s) and can be considered the emergence of a new paradigm. This transformation took place in a historical context in which sports began to gain increasing prominence and recognition, concomitant with the loss of prestige and

interest in gymnastics. Kirk (2010) points out that this paradigmatic structure, despite its criticisms and other proposals, presents a legitimizing core that still prevails in school teaching practice in many contexts.

Kirk (2010) points out that criticism of the strict and meticulous disciplinary model of gymnastics has grown since the 1930s, but, as in Brazil, it was after World War II that the sports paradigm became predominant. The author emphasizes that student-centered pedagogies, particularly the work of John Dewey, contributed to the development of other ways of structuring PE classes. With the intensification of criticism of gymnastics and the social context pointing to the relevance of the sports movement, this practice became hegemonic.

Kirk (2010) explains that the *id²* of PE refers to: “teaching sports techniques,” that is, focusing on physical activities and emphasizing the teaching of techniques through separate motor learning, breaking down the skills to be learned so that they can later be “applied” in the context of the game as a whole. Thus, the teaching of sports techniques has some similarities with the gymnastic logic of movement sequences, linear progression from the simplest to the most complex, specialization in movements characteristic of certain practices, etc. What clearly differentiates it is the phase of applying techniques in sports game contexts, whose interactions and dynamics are quite different from those recommended by gymnastics originating at the early Age.

Thus, a paradigm shift occurred regarding “*id²*,” reconfiguring its identity through what Kirk (2010) calls naturalization, that is, sport became so ingrained in PE that the teaching of sports techniques came to be understood as its founding structure. The hegemony of this perspective operates in the identity of the area in such a way that it began to seem so natural and for so long that it became its *modus operandi*.

In Brazil, the obvious consequences of the process of sportification culminated in the centralization of practice in certain team sports, especially those linked to soccer/futsal, due to their cultural intertwining. To some extent, individual practices such as gymnastics and athletics still had some space in certain contexts, albeit less evident.

Concerning teaching structure, according to Kirk (2010), this perspective refers mainly to the decontextualization of motor skills from real game situations, preventing understanding of the dynamics of the game as a whole, as well as the complex and dynamic decision-making process required during sports practice. First, one should learn the set of techniques necessary to master a particular game (its “fundamentals”) before it is possible to play. A typical lesson structure referred to: “the lesson begins with a warm-up related to skills, the central moment and most of the lesson focuses on teaching the skill and its practice (and in the case of greater teacher mastery, assessment and feedback), followed by a game in which the skills learned must be applied” (Kirk, 2010, p. 46).

According to Bracht (1999), the knowledge that served as the basis for incorporating PE into the relationship with sport remained linked to the natural sciences, more specifically to biological aspects and their various developments into

specialized fields. In a non-democratic context established by a military regime, the social power of sport became more and more widespread.

In Brazil, sport has become so strongly linked to PE, corresponding to its legitimizing core, that other bodily practices have been unable to assume the same prominence. This relationship has been widely criticized, especially since the 1970s, and can be summarized in the classic statement by Castellani Filho (1993, p. 123): “The influence of sport on the school system is so great that we have the configuration, not of School Sport, but of Sport in School, indicating the subordination of Physical Education to the codes of the sporting institution.”

Starting in the 1980s, with all the intense debate promoted by the PE renewal movement in Brazil, sport became the main target of criticism as a structural and hegemonic practice. The process of naturalizing PE as a sport became obsolete. On the other hand, PE classes, in general, remained rooted in sports logic. It is within this conflictual framework between renewal proposals on the one hand and everyday pedagogical practice centered on the sports perspective on the other that a third Age related to the “idea about the idea of PE” in Brazil originates.

3.3 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE AND THE BODILY CULTURE OF MOVEMENT

The idea of PE as a pedagogical practice linked to manifestations of bodily culture of movement has, broadly speaking, two supporting pillars. The first refers to the need to understand PE not as a science, but as a pedagogical practice, whose focus is on its role as an educational mediator of bodily practices. According to Bracht (2014):

[...] I understand PE as a **pedagogical practice that addresses/focuses on manifestations of our bodily culture** and that this practice seeks to be based on scientific knowledge, offered by approaches from different disciplines [...]. **PE is an intervention practice** and what characterizes it is the **pedagogical intention with which it addresses content** that is configured/taken from the universe of bodily culture of movement. In other words, we in PE question human movement from a pedagogical perspective (Bracht, 2014, pp. 40-42, emphasis added).

The second element supporting this approach refers to the importance of understanding the bodily culture of movement, as it is this that allows for the expansion of bodily practices and the reconfiguration of the sports paradigm. The concept of physical culture has been used internationally since the mid-1970s. Kirk (2010) points out that physical culture is a specialized form of bodily discourse concerned with institutionalized and codified forms of human movement that are more closely related to school PE, sport, exercise, and active leisure, as well as dance, martial arts, and meditative practices.

In Brazil, understandings related to bodily culture of movement gain theoretical support from works produced in the early 1990s (Betti, 1992; Soares *et al.*, 1992). Understanding bodily practices as socially constructed and legitimized elements of culture that should be addressed in schools enables an important paradigm shift, as it

questions the naturalization with which certain hegemonic practices and certain didactic and pedagogical perspectives had been developed on a daily basis. In general, it is the social and historical construction and cultural legacy of different bodily practices, such as sports, martial arts, games and play, gymnastics, adventure activities, circus practices, dances, alternative/integrative bodily practices, physical exercises, among others, that make up the fundamental set of manifestations that should be taught to new generations through the mandatory PE curriculum component, by means of educational processes consistent with this perspective.

Therefore, the scientific biological contribution that, for a certain period, was sufficient to explain and substantiate PE is no longer capable of understanding this historical development of bodily practices and their educational implications. The appreciation of the pedagogical and sociocultural subareas has enriched the analyses and broadened the scope of new perspectives. Of course, this has also intensified the conflicts and tensions between the subareas, which shows that the field of PE is a space of struggles and disputes between its agents in search of a monopoly of power.

More incisively, understanding PE as a pedagogical practice rooted in manifestations linked to the bodily culture of movement stimulates reflection on new paradigms of thought and rationality. According to Bracht (2014, p. 48), “the call for the scientification of PE is problematic because (traditional) scientific rationality is limited in relation to the needs of its practice — which indicates the overcoming of the traditional model of scientific rationality.”

The strengthening of the understanding of PE and the teaching of manifestations of bodily culture has grown to such an extent that, through the productions recommended by the field, it has ended up influencing the enactment of laws, regulations, guidelines, curricula, and recommendations for the field. There has been an intensification of curricular approaches centered on the perspective of valuing bodily practices and their multiple forms of manifestation and thematization in schools.

The id² related to PE as a pedagogical practice linked to the bodily culture of movement is perhaps one of the main contributions of the renewal movement in the field in terms of proposals for the reconfiguration of pedagogical practice. The reframing of the elements of culture as the identity of PE, particularly in schools, has reinvigorated, at least in part, the numerous criticisms that arose in previous decades. However, it has also brought to light some issues that lie at the heart of its development difficulties, such as the wide range of practices and the need for robust initial and ongoing training processes to enable its thematization, taking into account the reality and diversity present in Brazilian schools.

Despite all the debate over the last thirty years, PE as a pedagogical practice linked to manifestations of bodily culture of movement cannot be understood as hegemonic in terms of actual practice in school intervention contexts. Notwithstanding the intense debate promoted by the renewal movement, part of the pedagogical practices developed on a daily basis still has roots deeply linked to the “Age of PE as a sports technique.”

4 THE “AGES OF PRACTICE” IN BRAZILIAN PE IN DIALOGUE WITH PIERRE BOURDIEU: TWO STEPS FORWARD, THREE STEPS BACK?

The development of PE in the Brazilian context has undergone some changes aimed at rebuilding its identity. These transformations, among other things, reflect the shift from understanding PE as an “activity” to a “mandatory curricular component,” as analyzed by Fensterseifer (2001). However, despite some advances (the “steps forward”), there are still several constraints that ultimately limit its development and legitimacy (the “steps back”). In this regard, one of the problems refers to the difficulty of overcoming the paradigm that understands PE as the teaching of sports techniques. Kirk (2011) reinforces this view, stating that despite criticism and intensified academic debate, there has been little effective change in its practice in schools. The author even raises the question of whether proposals such as “physical culture” and Teaching Games for Understanding (Tgfu), among others, could be characterized as a “new Age,” or whether they have not yet been able to transform the id² of PE.

This reality is paradoxical in that it refers to a structure strongly linked to the Age of Physical Education as the teaching of sports techniques. Bracht (2010), when analyzing the Brazilian field, presents the following hypothesis:

Sports culture acted as such a powerful generator of meaning in teaching practice that it also became the core of the ‘teaching identity’ of physical education teachers. Thus, radical criticism of the sportification of physical education strongly affected and impacted a significant portion of teachers in the field who worked in school systems [...], disrupting and shaking this core generator of meaning, thereby also affecting, at its core, the teaching identity of these teachers. This process of deconstruction, which took many years, produced a gap [...]. The criticism produced a void of meaning, to the point that the theory came to be perceived by teachers as a threat (Bracht, 2010, p. 102).

Thus, the renewal movement was crucial in fostering important critiques of the perspective of “PE as the teaching of sports techniques.” However, proposals for transforming practices did not follow the same trajectory, producing a “gap,” as Bracht (2010) points out.

Historically, PE had clear specificities, whether based on the reproduction of gymnastic movements or focused on teaching sports techniques. With the advent of movements that renewed its foundations, new work perspectives began to play important roles in its didactic structuring. However, Bracht (2010) points out that many proposals remained restricted to the level of discourse. In various contexts, practices remained grounded in traditional sports-oriented perspectives. According to the author, this is due, among other things, to the way in which criticisms were implemented without clear and coherent proposals that understood the practice of teachers in their various contexts of action.

This dilemma is one of the factors that perpetuates the perception that PE in Brazil is still in an “identity crisis,” contributing to its lack of legitimacy in schools, where it is often still viewed as merely an “activity” by those involved in the field. This lack of legitimacy poses significant challenges to its recognition.

In dialogue with Bourdieu (2009), we understand that it is necessary to break with the logic of objective regularities as structuring practices, so that it tends to be subordinated to scientific canons that seek ways to analyze it according to scholarly assumptions and not from the *lived experience* in the *social game*. From this perspective, the concept of *doxa* can be of great value. According to Bourdieu (1984), *doxa* is understood as the set of rules, beliefs, and representations that characterize a given field, that is, the “universe of possible discourses” that defines what can be thought and said within the field, its “unquestionable,” “socially guaranteed,” and “naturalized” aspects. In this way, *doxa* represents what agents agree on, not necessarily an external imposition, although it can also manifest in that way, and it gives rise to the beliefs to which agents adhere, even unconsciously.

For Bourdieu (2003), within fields, *doxa* operates as the “taken-for-granted” of a given context, together with *nomos*, the general laws that institutionalize, legitimize, and govern fields. They are composed of elements represented by what is “unthinkable *de jure*” (in the political sense), “unnameable,” “taboo” (problems that cannot be addressed), and “unthinkable *de facto*” (what the cognitive apparatus itself is unable to process and reflect on). In this sense, the relationship to the *doxa* of a given field is made through what Bourdieu (2000) called *illusio*, that is, the unconscious product of the agents’ adherence to the *doxa*. In the social game, the crystallization of values provokes voluntary and often unreflective adherence to the *doxa* of the field, producing *illusio*.

Thus, we can consider that in the Age of PE as gymnastics, this practice structure operated as *doxa*, that which was accepted as the only possible and appropriate way to act within the field. Similarly, the Age of PE as a sports teaching technique represents the structuring *doxa* of practice based on its historical consolidation. In this sense, the field of PE is, to a certain extent, governed by the *doxa* representative of the teaching of sports techniques. This is the *doxa* that outlines the actions of agents within this field, at least in most contexts.

Despite being a relatively stable structure, the field undergoes changes according to social dynamics and capital relations between agents. There was a transition process in the field from teaching gymnastics (first Age) to teaching sports techniques (second Age). According to Bourdieu (2003), this transformation can be understood with the concept of “heterodoxy,” that is, the questioning of the field’s *doxa* and its consequent process of denaturalization, causing the emergence of an alternative *doxa*. However, the field itself can produce an “orthodoxy,” that is, a reaction to this transformation of the *doxa*, seeking to maintain the forces that dominate the field, avoiding questions about its naturalization.

Following this outline, we can understand that the renewal movement proposed to restructure the *doxa* of the field without, however, bringing perspectives that would allow for changing the *habitus* of its agents. Thus, the aim was to understand and transform the *doxa* based on PE as a pedagogical practice grounded in bodily culture, but the *habitus* of the agents in the field remained largely rooted in the structure of PE as the teaching of sports techniques.

When proposing an alternative *doxa* to the field without, however, transforming the *habitus* of the agents, a set of dilemmas arises, generating numerous difficulties of legitimation, corresponding to “crises.” Bourdieu (1984) calls this misalignment between *habitus* and field “hysteresis.” For the author, there are periods of crisis or transition in which *habitus* no longer corresponds to the structure of the field, yet the field has not yet adapted to the new *doxa*, which generates a counter-adaptive dissonance effect and delays adaptation to changes in the social context, causing what he calls “the presence of the past in the present” (Bourdieu, 2009).

From this perspective, it is important to consider rethinking the relationship between the *habitus* of agents and the *doxa* of the field of PE. These changes involve the development of various forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic, etc.) that enable the transformation of *habitus*, so that this transition from the Age of teaching sports techniques to the Age of PE as a pedagogical practice related to manifestations of bodily culture of movement can be achieved. The consideration of *hysteresis* emerges as a turning point for PE in Brazil, which has not yet been overcome.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHING IN BRAZILIAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

This essay aimed to analyze the Ages of practice of PE in Brazil, as well as to reflect on the “idea about the idea” that structured the representations that constituted this curricular component in schools, understanding the implications for the PE project in contemporary times. It is concluded that such perspectives should not be understood linearly, since paradigmatic transformations are rooted in intense processes of struggle for legitimacy. Thus, the Age of Practice of PE as a pedagogical practice and the bodily culture of movement has been constituted, not in a linear fashion, not without intense struggles and disputes arising from the field, but through the confluence of various academic, political, practical, and other actions. There are still setbacks, since it is necessary to rethink certain outlines in order to analyze practices by means that also seek to value them as producers of knowledge.

The PE renewal movement originated mainly in the university context, rather than among teachers actually involved in PE teaching in schools. It is clear that many teachers were strongly influenced by readings, lectures, training courses, dialogues, and even, in some cases, immersed themselves in the academic context in search of more specialized training. However, the starting point came from a series of previous initiatives, such as researchers going abroad, the creation of postgraduate courses in the field in Brazil, democratic socio-political openness, etc. All of this proactive context, as a way of introducing new trends to the practice of PE, has its ideal *locus* in the academic field.

This finding leads us to believe, following Bracht’s analysis (2010), that there was a certain “optimism” on the part of the authors in considering that it would be possible, through a more solid theoretical foundation based on philosophy, sociology, and anthropology, to train teachers to work within this new paradigm. This perspective

may have two underlying hypotheses. The first refers to a possible application-based approach: the university would have proposed a set of ideas for professionals in the field, who would then strive to understand them and “apply” them in schools.

The second hypothesis is that the renewal movement may have represented a certain distancing from the practical effectiveness of the proposals defended in the academic sphere. Thus, it is possible to question the extent to which the renewal movement, whose importance has been fundamental, did not neglect an analysis that could understand, among other things, the basis of practical rationality and professional action in its proposals.

These remain open questions, especially considering that, from the initial critiques collectively referred to as the “renewers” to the present day, the field of PE has undergone over thirty years of intense struggles and disputes. Perhaps this perspective, linked to an understanding based on practice and professional action that seeks to value the knowledge of agents working within the field, could represent a possibility worth exploring, one that does not necessarily “deny” the contributions of the renewal proposals presented, but rather grounds them in assumptions shaped in and through professional practice.

REFERENCES

BETTI, Mauro. Ensino de primeiro e segundo graus: Educação Física para quê? **Revista Brasileira de Ciências do Esporte**, v. 13, n. 2, p. 282-287, 1992.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **A distinção: crítica social do julgamento**. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2007.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **O senso prático**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Pascalian Meditations**. Cambridge: Polity; Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2000.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Questions de Sociologie**. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1984.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Questões de Sociologia**. Lisboa: Fim de Século, 2003.

BRACHT, Valter. A constituição das teorias pedagógicas da educação física. **Cadernos Cedes**, v.19, n.48, p. 69-88, ago. 1999. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-32621999000100005>

BRACHT, Valter. A Educação Física brasileira e a crise da década de 1980: entre a solidez e a liquidez. In: MEDINA, João Paulo Subirá. **A Educação Física cuida do corpo... e “mente”**. Campinas: Papirus, 2010. p. 99-116.

BRACHT, Valter. **Educação Física & ciência: cenas de um casamento (in)feliz**. 4. ed. Ijuí: Unijuí, 2014.

CASTELLANI FILHO, Lino. Pelos meandros da Educação Física. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências do Esporte**, v. 14, n. 3, p. 119-125, maio 1993.

FENSTERSEIFER, Paulo Evaldo. **A Educação Física na crise da modernidade**. Ijuí: Unijuí, 2001.

KIRK, David. **Defining Physical Education: the social construction of a school subject in postwar Britain**. London: The Falmer Press, 2011.

KIRK, David. **Physical Education futures**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.

KIRK, David. Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?: sobre ser crítico na pedagogia crítica da Educação Física. **Movimento**, v. 25, p. e25062, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8918.96244>

KIRK, David; ALMEIDA, Felipe Quintão de; BRACHT, Valter. Pedagogia crítica da Educação Física: desafios e perspectivas contemporâneas. **Movimento**, v. 25, p. e25061, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8918.97341>

SOARES, Carmen Lúcia. **Educação Física: raízes europeias e Brasil**. Campinas: Autores Associados, 1994.

SOARES, Carmen Lúcia *et al.* **Metodologia do ensino da Educação Física**. São Paulo: Cortez, 1992.

VIGARELLO, Georges. A invenção da ginástica no século XIX: movimentos novos, corpos novos. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências do Esporte**, v. 25, n. 1, p. 9-20, set. 2003. Available at: <http://revista.cbce.org.br/index.php/RBCE/article/view/170>. Accessed on: 30 jul. 2024.

Resumo: Objetivou-se analisar as Idades da Prática da Educação Física (EF) no Brasil, bem como refletir acerca da “ideia sobre a ideia” que estruturou as representações que constituíram esse componente curricular na escola, a partir de uma visão histórica em diálogo com as análises de David Kirk. O ensaio se deu por meio das seções: 1) análise acerca da “ideia sobre a ideia de EF”; 2) compreensão sobre o mosaico de ideias da EF no Brasil e a descrição de cada uma das três Idades da Prática; 3) tensionamentos sobre as problemáticas que revestem as Idades e suas possibilidades futuras. Conclui-se que as mudanças paradigmáticas vêm acontecendo no campo da EF brasileira não de forma linear, mas apresentando intensas lutas e disputas que ainda estão se consolidando, no qual os agentes inseridos nesse campo configuram-se como atores sociais desse processo em diferentes posições, contribuindo ou não com a constituição de sua legitimidade.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física e Treinamento. Conhecimento. História do Século XX. Ensino. Currículo

Resumen: El objetivo fue analizar las edades de la práctica de la Educación Física en Brasil y reflexionar sobre la “idea sobre la idea” que estructuró las representaciones de este componente en la escuela, desde una perspectiva histórica y en diálogo con los análisis de David Kirk. El ensayo se divide en tres secciones: 1) análisis de la “idea sobre la idea de la Educación Física”; 2) comprensión del mosaico de ideas de la Educación Física en Brasil con la descripción de cada una de las tres Edades de la Práctica; y 3) tensiones y posibilidades futuras de estas edades. Se concluye que los cambios paradigmáticos en la Educación Física brasileña no han sido lineales, sino que han implicado intensas luchas y disputas que aún siguen en proceso de consolidación. Los agentes en este campo se configuran como actores sociales en este proceso, ocupando diferentes posiciones y contribuyendo o no a la construcción de su legitimidad.

Palabras clave: Educación Física y Entrenamiento. Conocimiento. Historia del Siglo XX. Enseñanza. Currículo

USE LICENSE

This article is published as Open Access under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license, which allows its use, distribution and reproduction in any medium as long as the original work is properly cited. More information at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that this work involves no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Luiz Gustavo Bonatto Rufino: Sole author of the work, responsible for all stages from conception to revision and final writing.

FUNDING

This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brazil (CAPES) – Finance Code 001.

AVAILABILITY OF RESEARCH DATA

No information provided on data use.

HOW TO CITE

RUFINO, Luiz Gustavo Bonatto. The Ages of Practice and the “Idea about the Idea” of Physical Education in Brazil. **Movimento**, v. 31, p. e31027, Jan./Dec. 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8918.142001>

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

 Alex Branco Fraga*

 Elisandro Schultz Wittizorecki*

 Mauro Myskiw*

 Raquel da Silveira*

* Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Escola de Educação Física, Fisioterapia e Dança, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil.