

THE PARTICIPATION AND REFLECTION OF STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL COLLABORATION PROJECTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

LA PARTICIPACIÓN Y REFLEXIÓN DEL ALUMNADO EN PROYECTOS DE COLABORACIÓN UNIVERSIDAD-ESCUELA EN EL ÁREA DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA 

A PARTICIPAÇÃO E REFLEXÃO DOS ESTUDANTES EM PROJETOS DE COLABORAÇÃO UNIVERSIDADE-ESCOLA NA ÁREA DA EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA 

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Abstract: Democratic classrooms facilitate placing critically engaged students at the center of the learning process by developing real practices evaluated by different agents during the initial training of Physical Education teachers. The objective is to analyze the perception of students about their participation in early childhood educational proposals considered “good practices” that allow university-school collaboration for the acquisition of competency-based and reflective learning. The methodology is qualitative, involving four Spanish universities, with semi-structured interviews conducted with students selected through extreme case sampling. The results report that the students perceive their reflective and critical participation in a real educational situation, solving problems *in situ*; the importance of mentor support from schools; awareness of the level of skill acquisition through self-assessment and feedback received. In conclusion, students consider that this good practice allows them to feel competent enough to be able to teach Physical Education in early childhood.

Keywords: Reflective practice. Critical thinking. Experience-based learning. Self-assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, a critical perspective was introduced into pedagogical approaches in the specific field of Physical Education (Devís-Devis, 2006; Fernández-Balboa, 1995; Kirk, 1986; Kunz, 1991; Tinning, 1988; Soares *et al.*, 1992). Critical pedagogies ensure that educational systems compensate for inequalities and serve as drivers of social transformation. According to Giroux (1990) and Freire (1998), for educators within these systems to truly achieve emancipation, students must be placed at the center of the educational process through practices based on dialogic learning, democratic values, and egalitarian relationships. Other authors (Burbules, 2016; Kirk, 2019, 2020; Philpot, Ovens and Smith, 2019) question the extent to which physical practices and Physical Education professionals can enhance well-being and quality of life in disadvantaged communities.

According to Philpot, Smith and Ovens (2019), the relationships between teachers and students in Physical Education initial teacher training (PEITT) should be based on trust and care through democratic pedagogies. Democratic and participatory classrooms facilitate student-centered learning (Navarro *et al.*, 2015), encouraging critical, reflective, and responsible thinking while fostering both professional and transversal competencies (Pallisera *et al.*, 2010). Education should empower individuals to achieve freedom, enabling them to become agents of social change (Freire, 1970, 1998; Giroux, 1990).

According to Burbules (2016), the focus should not be solely on developing critical capacity, but on equipping students with the necessary skills to become effective agents of change. Their transformative power must be cultivated within the institutions where they will work, which is why they need to become deeply familiar with them during their PEITT. Bozu (2010) argues that gaining real-world experience in educational settings promotes changes in knowledge, values, and attitudes during initial training, ultimately shaping one's teaching style. Following Philpot, Ovens and Smith (2019), incorporating critical pedagogies into initial teacher training in general, and specifically in PEITT, requires higher education teachers to be connected with PE school environments.

In general, the courses and credits in higher education that connect university training with the professional role of future teachers are insufficient to ensure the acquisition of professional competencies. This is due to factors such as the limited credits assigned to the Practicum in curricula, the teaching methodologies employed, or the assessment methods used during training. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the effects of engaging in real-world practice during PEITT to facilitate the development of professional competencies, closing the gap between academia and professional practice.

If we want critical professionals, we must avoid overvaluing theoretical design tasks over academic practice or prioritizing products over processes. The goal is to develop demonstrable competencies in the real world through meaningful learning, presenting problem-based scenarios and conflicts that must be solved, closely

mirroring the authentic situations they will face in their future professional development (Monereo; Sánchez-Busqués; Suñé, 2012).

The adoption of competency-based models challenges higher education institutions to rethink teaching methodologies, promoting the adoption of active strategies and the redesign of assessment approaches (Garduño Durán, 2023). Cano (2007) advocates for active, participatory, and meaningful methodologies, such as case studies, projects, simulations, and practical experiences, which serve as examples of “good practices”. But which learning activities or techniques qualify as “good practices” for enhancing professional competency development in PEITT?

Various active methodologies have been implemented in higher education, including Service-Learning (Martín *et al.*, 2018) and Tutored Learning Projects (TLP). According to Álvarez (2008), TLP encompass three key characteristics: they enable students to learn autonomously in different settings under faculty supervision; their core learning process is based on “learning by doing,” thereby developing professional skills and competencies; and students take responsibility for their own learning, although professors provide guidance throughout the process.

On the other hand, the implementation of competency-based models also presents challenges related to assessment. It is important to remember that learning activities, competencies, planning, methodology, and assessment methods all convey a specific ideology. Lorente and Kirk (2013) warn about the hierarchies and power relations embedded in assessment and qualification within educational institutions.

Assessment is most effective when both students and professors share responsibility for it. Democratic classrooms provide a space for assessment practices designed to address hierarchical power imbalances through evaluation based on dialogue, mutual respect, and shared decision-making (Philpot, Ovens and Smith, 2019). There is a tendency to reproduce familiar assessment patterns or previous experiences. According to Lorente and Kirk (2013), if we want Physical education teachers to apply assessment practices based on democratic principles in their classes, they must first experience them in their PEITT. This can be achieved by granting students a more active role (Navarro; Arufe; Sancosmed, 2015) and ensuring that faculty members are willing to implement formative, shared, and self-assessment processes (López-Pastor, 2009; López-Pastor and Pérez-Pueyo, 2017; Manrique-Arribas *et al.*, 2010).

Perhaps it is time to truly involve students, not only in developing competencies, but also in assessing their own progress. Teaching students to self-assess should be an instructional goal (Grayson, 2014; Panadero; Alonso-Tapia, 2013). However, self-assessment is not widely used as an evaluation strategy in higher education (Ibarra; Rodríguez, 2014). Fraile, Pardo, and Panadero (2015), after analyzing 1,789 course syllabi from 40 Spanish faculties in the Degree in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences, found that self-assessment was used in only 13.14% of cases. Some studies (Martínez-Mínguez; Flores, 2014) indicate that students do not feel sufficiently prepared to conduct self-assessment, recommending the design of a guided and progressive practice throughout their initial training. Another likely reason

for the limited use of self-assessment may be the lack of validated and effective tools that provide students with confidence and meaningful feedback, not only about their achievements and shortcomings but also about possible solutions to improve (Asún, 2015).

According to Álvarez (2008), assessment aimed at learning should be based on three fundamental aspects: designing assessment activities as learning tasks, involving students in the assessment process, and providing evaluation results as constructive feedback.

On the other hand, TLPs are based on formative assessment, whose primary goal is to enhance the teaching-learning processes in which they are implemented (López-Pastor, 2009). Assessment should be an integral part of the training process, providing continuous feedback that informs students about their current stage in the learning process and competency acquisition (Castejón; Santos-Pastor; Cañadas, 2018; Martínez-Mínguez; Flores, 2014).

Some studies highlight student satisfaction with the feedback received, particularly through peer assessment in TLPs (Martínez-Mínguez *et al.*, 2019) or in a broader sense (Galván; Farías, 2018; Gómez; Quesada, 2017; Fuentes-Diego; Salcines, 2018).

Authors such as San Martín (2012) and Martínez-Mínguez *et al.* (2019) state that students reported that the greatest potential of their learning comes from the value of feedback. This allows them to become more aware of the quality of their learning, reflect and also learn from the mistakes made. Panadero and Lipnevich (2020) emphasize that it is important for the feedback provided to be of high quality, tailored to the characteristics of the students, and usable throughout their learning process.

Building on these premises, this study explores critical pedagogy in teacher education, with the goal of analyzing students' perceptions of their participation in educational proposals in early childhood Physical Education, considered "good practices" that foster collaboration between university and school for the acquisition of competent and reflective learning.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study follows the interpretive paradigm, aiming to understand and explore the reality of a specific context (Hernández; Fernández; Baptista, 2014; Latorre; del Rincón; Arnal, 2003).

It employs a case study approach to analyze the specific characteristics of a phenomenon, aiming for a deeper understanding of a particular event (Simons, 2011); specifically, this study seeks to explore four good practices implemented in four universities in Spain.

2.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION

The following section presents four good practices implemented in a compulsory course. Each was implemented at one of the following Spanish universities: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Universitat de Girona (UdG), Universitat de Vic (UVic), and Universidad de Zaragoza (UniZar).

- **UAB Case.** Course: Corporal and Psychomotor Education II, final year. The “good practice” consists of implementing a Co-Tutored Psychomotor Learning Project (Co-TPLP), structured in the following phases: a) The professor introduces a theoretical framework of psychomotricity. b) In groups of 4 to 6, students design a psychomotor intervention session for children in a real context; each group visits a school of their choice, accompanied by the teacher-psychomotrician. c) A practical session takes place at the university, followed by feedback from peers and the professor. d) Each group carries out the session with children in the selected school, and the teacher-psychomotrician provides feedback on their session. e) Each group gives a final presentation on their Co-TPLP to their peers.
- **UdG Case.** Course: Corporal Expression; Psychomotricity and Learning, second year. This “good practice” involves a project with the following phases: a) The professor presents the theoretical foundations of psychomotor development and psychomotor intervention. b) Each group of students designs and implements a cooperative psychomotor intervention session in a real context, co-assessed by the school teacher. The tasks are jointly supervised by the course instructor and the psychomotorist from the school where the session will take place.
- **UVic-UCC Case.** Course: Psychomotor Development, second year. This “good practice” is participation in a psychomotor intervention project in a regular school through a Service-Learning project aimed at improving the quality of children’s behavior observation and attitudes toward intervention. Students take part in a weekly psychomotor intervention session with the same group of 5-year-old children, alternating between two roles: active participation and observing the psychomotor development of two children. In another weekly session, students learn the basic concepts and professional skills needed to organize the psychomotor intervention.
- **UniZar Case.** Course: Physical Education in Early Childhood Education, third year. This “good practice” involves student groups designing a teaching unit, which is then implemented in a natural setting. This teaching proposal is accompanied and mentored by both the university faculty and the school teacher.

At all four universities, students complete the Psychomotor Professional Competencies Scale in Teacher Education (ECP-P-FIM) at both the beginning and end of the course. Developed and validated by Martínez-Mínguez, Moya Prados and Artau-Sabatés (2022), this instrument enables students to self-assess in five competency areas and 35 sub-competencies, including session design, teacher intervention, observation, reflection on their practice, and engagement with the educational community.

2.2 PARTICIPANTS

Eighteen students from the four universities participated in the study: three from UVic, four from UniZar, six from UdG, and five from UAB. Initially, participants were selected based on eligibility criteria, employing extreme case sampling (Izcarra, 2014). This was determined by the highest and lowest scores on the ECPP-FIM Scale, considering both the initial and final questionnaires, representing two-thirds of the study sample. Subsequently, the selection was adjusted based on accessibility criteria, accounting for the remaining one-third of the sample.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

A semi-structured interview was conducted and validated by nine expert judges with experience in educational research. The validation followed the criteria outlined by Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014), ensuring clarity of information, relevance of questions to the research objective, and their degree of significance.

This instrument consists of four content blocks: 1st “Good practice” activity; 2nd Competencies acquired in the ECPP-FIM Scale; 3rd Feedback; 4th Conclusions - key factors of “good practice”.

Following the guidelines of the ethics committee of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the 18 participants were previously informed about the objectives and characteristics of this research. They gave their consent for the interview, accepted their participation, and were made aware of the confidentiality of the data.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the 18 semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a deductive-inductive categorization process (Gibbs, 2012).

NVivo 14 software was used for data processing. The following table illustrates the study dimension “Key Factors in a Teaching-Learning Process” and its four main categories, along with the number of references identified in the software.

Table 1 - Presentation of the Dimension and the Number of References

Dimension	Categories	Number of references (ref.)
Key Factors in a Teaching-Learning Process	1- Reflective and Critical Participation	93 ref.
	2 - University-School Collaboration	47 ref.
	3 - Self-Assessment	54 ref.
	4 - Feedback	77 ref.

Source: prepared by the author.

3 RESULTS

The results are presented below, organized according to the study's categories. After each participant's response, the following information is provided: interview, number and university (I, num., UAB/ UdG/ UVic, or UniZar).

3.1 REFLECTIVE AND CRITICAL PARTICIPATION

This category received the highest number of references (93). The interviewees highlighted the importance of dialogue and critical reflection with the teaching staff on everyday situations closely related to the professional field. This encourages active participation and greater student engagement throughout the course.

He gave us lots of examples [...] Not all professors put you in a real-life situation. [I1, UdG].

What I really like is when they speak from experience, when they tell you something they've done or something real. But there are some courses, well, yeah... unfortunately, that's not the case. [I16, UniZar].

Moreover, sharing a learning space with schoolchildren encourages reflection on the complexity of educational situations and the need to adapt to specific contexts. This experience helps students develop educational tools that will be useful in their future professional practice.

When you see kids at the park, you just think *they're just playing*. But when you take a closer look, when you really pay attention, you realize it's not just about watching them play, there are so many specific things to consider. [I10, UVic].

Putting things into practice is never easy. You have to take a lot of factors into account, like the specific educational needs within the group [...] time, which is limited, space, which is also limited. For example, at the school we went to, the room or space where psychomotricity sessions took place wasn't very big [...] There were so many things we had to adapt to. [I4, UAB].

According to the interviewees, professors designed reflective and participatory activities that required students to make their own decisions, adopting an active role as future educators—professionals who must be confident in their knowledge and beliefs.

At first, they gave us a lot of freedom [...] but why so much freedom if we don't even know what we're supposed to do? [...] But that freedom helped us wake up and figure things out for ourselves. [I6, UVic].

It puts you in a position where you ask yourself: What are my limits and capabilities? What do I need to improve? What do I not know, and where do I need to dig deeper? [I17, UniZar].

Yes, it was useful because it made me reflect and self-evaluate. [...] We need to be more critical of ourselves to be able to learn and also to understand more about who we really are as teachers. [I9, UAB].

UVic participants, in particular, emphasized the value of sharing this learning process with classmates. Observing how other students interacted with children in

an educational setting boosted their confidence for future teaching roles in real-world contexts.

It helped me a lot [...] I could see what others were thinking, what they were doing [...] and I'd think, 'I hadn't considered that' or 'That's true, I should pay more attention to this.' [I14, UVic].

3.2 UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Students develop a greater awareness of their future teaching roles, reflecting on the complexity of managing classroom diversity and their responsibility as agents of change in early childhood education:

It wasn't until we had to design and implement the session that we truly understood how a practical session works. [I13, UdG].

I think it's very beneficial to have a practical component and implement it, allowing us to experience the dynamics of a children's classroom firsthand and handle unexpected challenges—something breaks, something goes wrong, and you have to improvise. [I5, UdG].

Engaging with real school environments allows students to reflect on their practice, identify areas for improvement in their future careers, and develop greater self-confidence as educators:

I learned more through practice than theory. I really liked it because I could see each child's developmental level, understand how to help them improve, and recognize the skills I need to communicate and support their learning. [I10, UVic].

I felt very, very happy to put it into practice. Even with my classmates, we also had a kind of meeting to discuss what had happened, what worked, and what didn't. And in the last section of the work, I think it was about proposals for improvement, so that helped us complete that part. [I9, UAB].

At the same time, a well-structured university-school partnership is essential, with teachers providing guidance and fostering democratic dialogue throughout the process:

Yes, in school. It must be done, I think. You can't leave it aside, because if you don't test yourself, you really don't know if you can do it or not. And you can't leave aside the teacher's guidance. [I13, UdG].

Students highly appreciate the collaboration between the university and schools, as it enables them to interact with a wider range of education professionals. This strengthens the teacher's role as a social and transformative agent who must engage with other specialists in the educational community:

It involves many professionals, and when so many people collaborate, things tend to work well—if one person misses something, a colleague will catch it. [...] it's a system that forces us to move. And it brings together many professionals with very diverse points of view. Many with various experiences, and even with generational change. Some people bring more experience, others bring more specificity in managing the group [...] And this is quite enriching. [I3, UAB].

3.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT

Interviewees agreed that completing the ECPP-FIM self-assessment tool helped them become more aware and critical of their learning process:

I understood the course's purpose and where I needed to focus more—what I was already good at because I had some prior experience, and what I had no knowledge of and needed to pay more attention to. [I14, UVic].

I think it was useful because it made me more aware of the competencies a psychomotor teacher should have. Because, at least for me, at the beginning, I wasn't at all aware of what the competencies were, or how a psychometrician should behave with the child. These are things I didn't think about before the course. [I4, UAB].

Additionally, they feel confident in identifying the competencies they have improved the most and those they still need to develop.

For example, I struggle with defining objectives, but I feel more confident when designing activities and finding resources. At the beginning of the course, I rated myself with fours and fives, but as the course progressed, I realized I didn't know as much as I thought. This self-assessment was really helpful. [I9, UAB].

It makes you more aware of what you've improved, what skills you still need to develop, and where your weaknesses lie. And then, you also have a clearer picture of what you've worked on and what you haven't. [I17, UniZar].

Overall, students found the tool more valuable when used at both the beginning and end of the course, as it allowed for deeper reflection on the competencies they had acquired:

We completed it before starting the course, and at first, I was surprised—'Wow, so many things?' But after reflecting, it all made sense. [I13, UdG].

I think it's right to do it at the beginning to say how you feel at that moment. And to do it at the end to do some self-criticism, and say, okay, it's not where I was, but now I'm here. Or I've improved and I think I'm here now. [I9, UAB].

Finally, students recognized it as a valuable tool for future teacher training and professional development, which could also be shared with colleagues:

I could use it again in the future because it's easy, I mean, it's super intuitive, and it also puts you in the position of: What limits and capacities do I have? What should I improve? What do I need to explore further? [I17, UniZar].

Yes, because being a teacher doesn't mean you stop learning. It's true that experience comes with time, but there's always room for improvement. Completing this questionnaire helps you identify your strengths, areas for growth, and what you're still missing... [I7, UdG].

3.4 FEEDBACK

Based on experiences across the four university contexts, 77 references were identified from the interviewees' perspectives. Three types of feedback emerged: feedback from university professors, school teachers, and peer feedback within the course.

In relation to that received by the teaching staff, students highlighted that while they felt supported and guided by their professors, they were not provided with direct answers:

We would tell him what we needed, and he wouldn't give us the solution directly. Instead, he would guide us. I remember messages like, 'Do you remember what we did in that class? What we talked about?' And then, you would start figuring it out yourself. He didn't just give us the answer but helped us find it. [I11, UdG].

No, he didn't give us the solution. He guided us, saying, 'Well, maybe you could try it this way,' or 'Perhaps you should look at this page'. [I16, UniZar].

Overall, students valued the support they received throughout the process, as it helped them progress and feel more confident in their decision-making:

I think the most important thing was the follow-up. No matter how many readings you give students, how much you explain in PowerPoint slides, or how many activities you provide... having follow-up and tutoring really makes a difference. Just like we say that children need an individualized learning process, I think it's just as important for us. That follow-up from professors to students is key.[I5, UdG].

Regarding the feedback from the school teachers who accompanied the groups during the practical sessions with children, the interviewees agreed that they played a crucial role in providing stability and reassurance. Interviewees agreed that having a teacher present helped them navigate their responsibilities while also gaining meaningful experiences for their future careers:

I felt reassured knowing that a teacher was there with me. Even though I was conducting the session independently, I knew I could rely on them if the children weren't engaged in the activities. You feel nervous, but also secure. And I think that's what matters most—it's not that I wasn't prepared, but that I had confidence. [I3, UAB].

Additionally, this support encouraged students to reflect on their practice, helping them recognize areas for improvement that may not have been evident before. The experience fostered dialogue with experienced teachers, training students to become social agents within the educational community:

Sometimes you believe your approach is the right one, and you're convinced it's perfect. But then, when you actually implement it, you realize: 'Oh wow, maybe I could've done this differently.' Or, 'Look, what we thought wouldn't work actually turned out well.' You also become more aware of your mistakes and successes. For me, this dialogue with the teacher about how things went is really important. [I18, UAB].

Finally, as per peer feedback, students emphasized the value of group work in facilitating mutual learning, knowledge-sharing, and reflection on aspects they might not have considered individually:

Sometimes, you don't notice certain things because they don't seem important to you, but someone else picks up on them. I think that's really valuable. [I18, UAB].

Every evaluation moment was useful in some way, especially the practice session before visiting the school. It helped us refine our proposal. There are so many things you might overlook, and having your classmates provide feedback from an external perspective is really helpful. Their suggestions

and ideas allow you to make improvements or adapt your approach. [I4, UAB].

4 DISCUSSION

This study highlights that educational experiences based on good practices that connect universities with schools in higher education can be ideal settings for enhancing students' critical reflection and active participation in the learning process. Through these experiences, students not only reinforce their competencies but also gain a deeper understanding of their future professional practice as educators.

There are differences in students' perceptions depending on the university they attend, which underscores the diversity in how good practices are structured and implemented. At the Universitat de Vic (UVic), where good practices focus on improving the observation of children's psychomotor behavior, students perceive greater development in this third professional competency, according to the results of the ECPP-FIM Scale, compared to other competencies. In contrast, students at other universities associate their perception more with competencies in lesson design and guiding children through their intervention process, with a broader focus on what it means to be a teacher in early childhood education.

This finding aligns with the work of Del Pozo (2017) and González-Rivas *et al.* (2021), who argue that students achieve better results when they apply professional competencies in real-life situations. It also supports the studies of Barba-Martín and López-Pastor (2017) and Molina, Pascual-Arias y López-Pastor (2022), which conclude that students gain a greater sense of competency acquisition when they participate in real educational contexts.

In parallel, the results of this study align with what Kirk (2019, 2020) defines as critical pedagogies of affect (Hellison, 1995; Oliver; Hamzeh; McCaughtry, 2009; Hastie; Buchanan, 2000), which emphasize the importance of explicitly addressing the affective domain, including resilience, perseverance, self-confidence, interest, and enjoyment. These perceptions were evident throughout the data collected, influenced by factors such as the feedback received from both university professors and school teachers, as well as the opportunity to observe and engage with a group of children in a real educational setting.

Regarding critical reflection, as pointed out by Philpot, Smith, and Ovens (2019), further research is needed on how introspection facilitates potential transformative action in their future professional field. On the other hand, Fitzpatrick and Enright (2017) consider that incorporating students' voices through discussion and debate is a guarantee to support the social transformation they can achieve during their professional development.

As for self-assessment, the results obtained from the ECPP-FIM scale align with the views of Burbules (2016) and Kirk (2019), who argue that tools like these enable students to think independently, make decisions, set goals, and adapt to changing circumstances. This perspective also aligns with Asun (2015), who suggests that one

possible reason for the non-use of self-assessment could be the lack of effective, validated tools that build students' confidence and provide valuable insights into their strengths, weaknesses, and potential solutions.

Furthermore, the findings of this study support the conclusions of Lorente and Kirk (2013), who argue that although self-assessment can sometimes be uncomfortable and cause anxiety, the time invested in democratic evaluation is valuable because it helps students develop the confidence and knowledge necessary for applying it in their future professional practice.

5 CONCLUSIONS

With respect to the proposed objective, the study concludes that students believe that the good practices they engage in help them feel competent, secure, and confident to teach early childhood Physical Education from the beginning of their careers. In courses that foster close collaboration between university professors and in-service teachers in real-world settings through Co-TPLP during initial training, students report gaining professional competencies, particularly after implementing play- and movement-based interventions.

Four key factors emerge in the process of teaching and learning for future Physical Education teachers:

- **Reflective and Critical Participation:** Students have the opportunity to take an active role, make decisions, and engage in dialogue with professors and peers about real-life situations that closely mirror their future professional practice.
- **University-School Collaboration:** This collaboration enables students to identify areas for improvement, recognize the high level of commitment required for professional practice, and tackle the challenges of addressing diversity and serving as agents of social transformation.
- **Self-Assessment:** The availability of tools like the ECPP-FIM, which can be used throughout the training process, helps students develop awareness and a critical perspective on the competencies they are acquiring.
- **Feedback:** Feedback from university professors, school mentors, and peers is crucial, particularly when it is offered without providing direct solutions, encouraging students to reflect on their practices and discover ways to improve.

This study emphasizes the importance of utilizing self-assessment tools, such as the ECPP-FIM, to foster the recognition of competency acquisition in higher education. Furthermore, assessing students' perceptions of competencies in both regular and practicum courses enhances the potential for a more authentic, natural, and contextually grounded development of professional skills.

As for methodological limitations, it is important to note that, because the interviews were conducted after the students completed the course, the sampling of extreme cases was only possible in two-thirds of the sample.

Finally, the findings highlight the need for further research in other courses across various fields, particularly where the connection between theory and practice plays a critical role in the learning process.

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Resumen: Las aulas democráticas facilitan situar estudiantes críticos en el centro del proceso de aprendizaje desarrollando prácticas reales evaluadas por diferentes agentes durante la formación inicial del profesorado de educación física. El objetivo es analizar la percepción del alumnado sobre su participación en propuestas educativas en el nivel infantil consideradas “buenas prácticas” que permitan la colaboración universidad-escuela para la adquisición de un aprendizaje competencial y reflexivo. La metodología es cualitativa, participando cuatro universidades españolas con la realización de entrevistas semiestructuradas a estudiantes seleccionados con muestreo por casos extremos. Los resultados reportan que el alumnado percibe su participación reflexiva y crítica en una situación educativa real solucionando los problemas *in situ*; la importancia del acompañamiento del mentor de las escuelas; la toma de consciencia del nivel de adquisición de competencias a través de la autoevaluación y el *feedback* recibido. Como conclusión, los estudiantes consideran que esta buena práctica les permite sentirse suficientemente competentes para poder impartir educación física en infantil.

Palabras clave: Práctica reflexiva. Pensamiento crítico. Aprendizaje basado en la experiencia. Autoevaluación

Resumo: As salas de aula democráticas facilitam a colocação dos alunos críticos no centro do processo de aprendizagem, desenvolvendo práticas reais avaliadas por diferentes agentes durante a formação inicial de professores de Educação Física. O objetivo é analisar a percepção dos estudantes sobre a sua participação em propostas educativas para a primeira infância consideradas “boas práticas” que permitem a colaboração universidade-escola para a aquisição de uma aprendizagem por competências e reflexiva. A metodologia é qualitativa, envolvendo quatro universidades espanholas, realizando entrevistas semiestructuradas com estudantes seleccionados com amostragem de casos extremos. Os resultados relatam que os alunos percebem sua participação reflexiva e crítica em uma situação educacional real, resolvendo problemas *in loco*; a importância do apoio dos mentores nas escolas; consciência do nível de aquisição de competências através da autoavaliação e do *feedback* recebido. Concluindo, os alunos consideram que essa boa prática permite que se sintam suficientemente competentes para poderem ensinar Educação Física.

Palavras-chave: Prática reflexiva. Pensamento crítico. Aprendizagem baseada na experiência. Autoavaliação

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that this work involves no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Carolina Nieva Boza: Conceptualization; Research; Writing; Methodology; Results; Conclusions.

Lurdes Martinez Minguez: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Research; Project administration; Writing; Methodology; Results; Conclusions.

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