

JUMPING WALLS, ENCHANTING SCHOOLS: PARKOUR AS A BODILY PRACTICE OF RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-HEGEMONIC PEDAGOGICAL METAPHOR IN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

*SALTAR MUROS, ENCANTAR ESCOLAS: O PARKOUR COMO
PRÁTICA CORPORAL DE RESISTÊNCIA E METÁFORA
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Abstract: This essay proposes a reflection on Parkour as a bodily practice of resistance and a counter-hegemonic pedagogical metaphor in School Physical Education (SPE). In dialogue with the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), we discuss the political and pedagogical meanings that emerge from thematizing Parkour as an urban practice of overcoming obstacles. We argue that Parkour, more than a bodily technique, functions as an educational provocation, challenging normative curricular logics, bodily hierarchies, and traditional conceptions of teaching. By reclaiming the potential of the moving body as both language and critique, we contend that practices such as Parkour can enchant School Physical Education by expanding horizons of invention, calculated risk, and teacher–student autonomy. In times of exhaustion of traditional models, reflecting on Parkour as a political-pedagogical gesture also means opening pathways toward a more creative, inclusive, and contemporary school.

Keywords: Physical Education and Training. Parkour. Adventure Body Practices. Curriculum.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a time when the very meaning of school is being hollowed out, alongside the instrumentalization of the curriculum and the domestication of bodies, thinking about the teaching of School Physical Education (SPE) demands more than new content: it demands ruptures. Contemporary schools, often captured by targets, assessments, and bureaucratic mandates, tend to function as spaces of control and reproduction, distancing themselves from their vocation as territories of experience. In this process, the curriculum becomes a technical script and the teacher an executor, within a logic that silences plural forms of knowledge and restricts pedagogical invention.

To grasp the extent of this capture, it is essential to reveal the standpoint from which one looks and speaks. When discussing curriculum, we begin with the understanding that it is not a neutral script or a technical selection of content, but a field of dispute and a mechanism of power. In dialogue with Lopes and Macedo (2011) and Silva (2016), the curriculum is understood as a discursive construction traversed by relations of force that define what may be said, taught, and learned. Contesting the curriculum, therefore, means contesting the right to name knowledge, to legitimize forms of life, and to inscribe bodies and voices within school spaces (Gabriel, 2019). By unsettling this hegemonic field, where certain discourses stabilize while others are excluded (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015), Parkour asserts itself as a practice of dissensus, bringing forth the school's political, creative, and plural dimensions.

The body suffers the effects of this rationality: it is disciplined, standardized, and adapted to temporalities and spatialities that deny its inventive potential. The formal inclusion of practices such as Parkour in the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), through the thematic unit Adventure Body Practices (ABP), is, in itself, a gesture marked by tension, between the recognition of diversity and the limits imposed by a curriculum still shaped by normalizing rationalities (Brasil, 2018; Sehn; Neuenfeldt, 2022).

Parkour, as an urban practice born in the interstices of asphalt and precarity, emerges as a language that rewrites space, inscribes the body, and challenges predictability. It is a practice that, drawing on Santos and Meneses (2013), embodies a “sociology of absences”, that which the curriculum sought to conceal, marginalize, or delegitimize as school knowledge. In this context, jumping walls also means jumping dominant epistemologies, reinventing narratives, and contesting meanings.

This essay approaches Parkour not merely as a bodily practice but as a pedagogical metaphor of resistance. In line with Larrosa Bondía (2002), the body that jumps produces an aesthetic and political experience: it expresses, through gesture, what school discourse does not dare to voice. Parkour rejects the neutrality of movement, the boundedness of space, and the regulation of time. It does not wait for authorization, it creates passageways.

By thematizing Parkour in SPE, we interrogate not only the legitimacy of its content but the very structure of the school which, throughout its history, has institutionalized selective, normative, and exclusionary practices (Soares, 2012;

Sena; Lemos, 2020), including the hegemony of conventional sports, which continues to hinder curricular diversification and the appreciation of non-hegemonic body practices. The metaphor of the jump, here, is also the metaphor of risk. And, as Sehn and Neuenfeldt (2022) argue, thematizing Parkour entails recognizing risk not as a threat but as an educational force, thus, to educate is to risk oneself with others, to undo familiar ground in order to find new ways of walking.

This reflection, therefore, proposes to conceive Parkour as body-as-theory: a way of enchanting SPE through openness to the unexpected, creative transgression, and pedagogical insubmission. By treating the curriculum as a site of contestation and the body as a source of inventive potency, we argue that Parkour can be more than an alternative piece of content: it can serve as an ethical-political gesture of resistance against the homogenization of teaching and the domestication of sensibility.

2 BETWEEN OBSTACLES AND POSSIBILITIES: PARKOUR AS AN URBAN AND INSURGENT BODY PRACTICE

Parkour is more than an urban bodily expression; it is an insurgent gesture against the normativity of spaces, gestures, and school curricula. Originating in the suburbs of Lisses, France, and propelled by young people who re-signified urban furniture as a territory for creation, the practice carries in its very genesis a refusal of immobility and predictability. By using walls, railings, and stairways as opportunities for reinventing movement, Parkour inaugurates an aesthetic of displacement that tensions the boundaries between body and city, between what is instituted and what is possible. As Marques (2011) argues, it is an urban art that challenges and reinterprets the traditional use of public space, reinscribing the body into the territory and subverting its utilitarian logic.

In the context of SPE, this gesture finds fertile ground for provoking not only physical but also pedagogical and epistemological displacements. Its inclusion in the BNCC as one of the expressions of the ABPs represents an ambivalent milestone: on the one hand, it legitimizes the presence of non-hegemonic practices in the curriculum; on the other, its implementation remains surrounded by fears, restrictions, and significant knowledge gaps (Brasil, 2018; Sehn; Neuenfeldt, 2022). As França and Domingues (2023) point out, although ABPs are officially recognized, their presence in school classes remains timid, with few empirical studies and numerous challenges reported by teachers, ranging from insecurity to a lack of knowledge about how to implement them.

Yet it cannot be ignored that the recognition of Parkour as curricular knowledge within the BNCC brings with it a new kind of risk: that of pedagogical capture. Once inserted into the official curriculum, Parkour comes to inhabit a field of contestation in which different educational rationalities attempt to frame it. It is sometimes understood as an expression of ABPs, sometimes as a sport, especially in its competitive versions such as Speed Run or Freestyle, and at other times as a gymnastic form when appropriated by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). This multiplicity

of readings produces what we may call a pedagogical overlap: the same gesture becomes signified in different ways depending on the field that claims it.

However, this overlap need not be interpreted solely as a threat or a mischaracterization. On the contrary, it can be an opportunity to explore the polysemies and polymorphies of Parkour within the school setting. By moving between the spheres of adventure, sport, and gymnastics, Parkour invites teachers and students to problematize the boundaries between these practices, tensioning what is understood as technique, risk, discipline, and creation. In school, such ambiguity can be fertile if the focus remains on experience, expression, and authorship, rather than on gesture standardization or performance measurement. The challenge, then, is not to eliminate the contestation of meanings but to inhabit it pedagogically. This tension extends beyond the school context. In contemporary culture, Parkour also shifts between counterculture and spectacle, between free creation and institutionalized sportification. Recognizing this ambiguity is essential so that the school does not reproduce the capture already operating outside its walls, but rather transforms it into an opportunity for critical reading and pedagogical reinvention.

To thematize Parkour as school content is to bring forth a practice that calls the body to improvisation. This improvisation is not to be confused with the improvisation of absence, the one that historically marked Physical Education (PE) through a lack of pedagogical intentionality and teacher abandonment, the infamous “roll the ball”. Parkour’s improvisation is of another kind: it is the improvisation of attention, of listening, of situated invention. It emerges from the encounter with the unexpected, from the body that responds creatively to the contingencies of space and time. It is an ethical improvisation, not due to a lack of planning, but because it recognizes that to plan is also to leave room for what is lived.

It also calls for calculated risk and creative occupation of space: qualities often lost in traditional PE classes, still shaped by technical-sport models that are predictable and selective. As Sena and Lemos (2020) show, many teachers still understand Parkour as dangerous, marginal, or unfeasible, which reinforces the urgency of critical teacher education and the production of resources that sustain its pedagogical viability. Such resistances should not be read as disinterest but as the result of formative processes that render counter-hegemonic body practices invisible and reinforce the centrality of conventional sports as the synonym of a “proper class”.

However, it is precisely this quality of risk, not as threat but as potentiality, that makes Parkour fertile for the school environment. Risk in Parkour does not lie in recklessness but in the refusal of passivity. As Sehn and Neuenfeldt (2022) argue, thematizing Parkour in SPE means recognizing that learning is possible in uncertainty, in adaptation, and in the creation of strategies in the face of the unexpected. It means understanding that the body learns when it challenges itself, and that the school space can (and should) be more than a place of containment: it can be a place of invention. For Jesus (2020), Parkour installs gesture as critical potency and affirms that the body not only moves but denounces, proposes, and reconstructs meanings.

Thus, Parkour approaches what Santos and Meneses (2013) name an Epistemology of the South: knowledges born from experience, everyday life, and marginality, which challenge the logic of the monoculture of valid knowledge. By jumping over walls, the body also jumps over the boundaries of what is deemed “legitimate teaching.” In this gesture, Parkour announces that there is knowledge in alleyways, on benches, on stairways, and that there is education in improvisation and in the insubmission of bodies that occupy the school with presence.

While many bodily practices have been historically domesticated to fit into school courts, cleansed of risk, desire, and invention, Parkour escapes. It does not fit into the line. It does not wait for the whistle. It does not respect the “authorized” space. And it is precisely for this reason that its presence in school can be potent: because it challenges. Because it proposes other ways of existing, moving, teaching, and learning.

The insurgency of Parkour, therefore, lies not only in how it moves but in what it calls forth: a living curriculum, a form of teaching traversed by the world, a school willing to be unsettled. When Parkour jumps walls, it does not seek merely to overcome physical obstacles but to unsettle certainties about what a body can do, what a gesture can do, what a PE class can do.

3 PEDAGOGICAL METAPHOR AND ENCHANTMENT: WHEN THE BODY JUMPS AND THE SCHOOL SHIFTS

Thinking of Parkour as a pedagogical metaphor means understanding that the school itself needs to learn how to move. The image of the body that jumps, that risks itself, that occupies urban spaces creatively and in defiance of their functional design, allows us to unsettle crystallized conceptions of curriculum, teaching, and learning. The metaphor of the jump, in this sense, redirects the gaze: from technique to experience, from control to encounter, from instruction to invention. The escape from predictability here refers to the refusal of rigid and inflexible planning, of the uncritical repetition of school routines, and of the centrality of evaluation tools that merely classify. The jump proposes the opening of cracks within the instituted so that shared creation may emerge.

For Larrosa Bondía (2002), experience arises when something happens to us, when we are pierced by what we do not control, when there is a discontinuity in the flow of life. Parkour, as a practice, creates space for this kind of experience by introducing risk not as a danger to be avoided but as a fissure that destabilizes the habitual and allows the new to emerge. By thematizing it within the school, we also propose a displacement in the very conception of the class: knowledge no longer as transmission, but as traversal; the body no longer as an object of control, but as a subject of creation.

Its pedagogical force lies precisely in what it disorganizes. When teachers recognize that they do not know the exact path, that they do not hold absolute mastery over the content, the practice becomes more potent. In that moment, teaching ceases

to be repetition and becomes shared invention. As Sehn and Neuenfeldt (2022) and França and Domingues (2023) argue, Parkour is not merely alternative content; it is an invitation to epistemic displacement: it demands relearning how to see space, how to listen to the body, and how to reorganize the school's temporality, subverting the chronological and productivist logic that fragments the day into schedules and outcomes, in order to install a lived time: the time of experience, where learning does not obey the clock but the event.

The metaphor of the jump, therefore, is not only representative of bodily movement but also of pedagogical movement. It breaks with the linearity of traditional teaching and suggests a gesture of escape from predictability, standardization, and utilitarian performance as an end in itself. And it is in this escape that the school's enchantment resides. For a school that jumps with its students is a school that allows itself to become otherwise, to invent itself, to continually remake itself.

It concerns enchanting what has historically been stripped of meaning. SPE, often associated with experiences of failure, disinterest, exclusion, and disenchantment, finds in Parkour an opportunity to inaugurate other ways of relating to the body and to learning. To enchant, in this context, is to make pulse what seemed dormant: curiosity, invention, and desire within a space that has so often operated through containment and repetition.

Enchantment here is neither naïve nor romantic. It consists in producing the political potency of the school, not as a return to an idealized past but as the ever-unfinished task of instituting the common, of opening times of attention and modes of being-together. As Larrosa Bondía (2017) proposes in *Elogio da Escola*, it is to affirm the school as a space of event, where something may still occur, even among ruins. In dialogue with Santos and Meneses (2013), it means bringing into existence, in practice, a school capable of welcoming other knowledges, of listening to historically silenced voices, and of creating conditions for knowledge to be lived rather than merely transmitted. Parkour, as gesture, proposes precisely this: to move is also to insurg, to step outside oneself and, at the same time, arrive at oneself by other paths.

In this scenario, the teacher is not the one who determines the way but the one who jumps alongside. And the jump, in this case, is also epistemological. It is the relinquishing of the place of control in order to inhabit the terrain of creation, risk, and uncertainty, where, paradoxically, there is more teaching than in the safe ground of repetition. As Jesus (2020) affirms, when the body jumps, it not only traverses space: it redraws time, reorders gesture, and repositions knowledge.

It is important to highlight that jumping is also ambiguous. There are jumps that liberate and jumps that wound; jumps that expand horizons and jumps that obscure them. There is the student's jump over a wall to flee the school, and the jump the school takes when promoting a student to the next grade without ensuring learning, both reveal distinct ways of dealing with limits. There are jumps that break routine and open cracks for creation, and jumps that merely accelerate outcomes to meet targets. The gesture of jumping, therefore, is not linear: it holds transgressions, omissions, and resistances.

It is within this tangle of meanings that Parkour offers an ethical metaphor for teaching. To jump here is not to evade but to expose oneself to the risk of creating; not to deny the ground, but to reinvent the way of stepping onto it. By thematizing the jump as a pedagogical principle, we affirm that education must not fear disequilibrium, for it is in disequilibrium that experience becomes movement and learning gains body.

To enchant PE, therefore, is to allow it to find its vocation for movement, not measured, evaluated, or normalized movement, but movement that interpellates, that moves us, that communicates. Parkour, within this horizon, is not a passing trend or merely a technique to be taught; it is an invitation to a school that listens to its walls, recognizes its limits, and is willing to jump over them alongside its students.

4 AGAINST CURRICULAR NORMATIVITY: PARKOUR AS EDUCATIONAL RESISTANCE

Curricular normativity operates as a silent force that naturalizes hierarchies, erases knowledges, and standardizes bodies. In its most subtle expression, it manifests in the repetition of what has already been legitimized: conventional sports, trainable gestures, measurable targets. Within SPE, this logic produces a pedagogy of the same, marked by regularity, predictability, and low risk. In this scenario, the body is domesticated to fit within what is acceptable and efficient, as Soares (2012) denounces when analyzing the historical roots of an SPE forged under the rationalities of performance and discipline.

Still, it is important to recognize that Parkour does not move entirely away from the idea of performance; rather, it displaces it from its disciplinary axis. If in modern rationality performance is measured by efficiency, technical repetition, and control of gesture, in Parkour it takes on another form: that of aesthetic expression, creative risk, and authorship. There is performance in the jump, but a performance that does not seek applause or medals: one that seeks the encounter between body and space. It is a performance built in the singularity of the gesture and in the poetics of traversal, not in the standardization of movement. In this sense, Parkour reinscribes performance as a language of freedom rather than a dispositif of control.

It is precisely because it proposes this reconfiguration of performance that Parkour operates as a counter-pedagogy. Its logic is one of improvisation, adaptation, and insurgent occupation of space. It is the body that refuses to walk only where a sidewalk exists; the body that jumps where one “should not” jump; the body that moves outside the straight line. It is, therefore, a practice that not only diverges from the prescriptive curriculum, it confronts it. As Sehn and Neuenfeldt (2022) argue, thematizing Parkour in school means opening cracks within a model that, for so long, sought to organize SPE around technical obedience and the linearity of content.

This confrontation is not merely symbolic. Once inside the school space, Parkour mobilizes new teaching practices, tensions the function of physical space, and re-signifies school temporalities. The insertion of Parkour into SPE classes provokes important displacements: from technique-centered teaching to experience-

centered teaching; from fearing risk to appropriating it pedagogically; from command to listening. This is because Parkour demands what the normative curriculum fears most: uncertainty, authorship, the unforeseen.

And it is precisely this refusal of neutrality that aligns Parkour with educational resistance. According to Santos and Meneses (2013), resisting is more than denying the oppressor: it is constructing other epistemologies, other pedagogies, other possible worlds. Parkour resonates with this proposal by advancing a form of teaching shaped by the edges of the city, by the walls of the school, by bodies that do not fit. In the gesture of jumping, it inscribes a claim: the school does not need only to teach adaptation to the world, it can, and should, teach the world to be transformed.

França and Domingues (2023) argue that ABPs still face numerous barriers in their implementation in schools, not only due to structural issues but also due to a symbolic resistance that associates such practices with risk, disorder, and lack of content. Yet it is necessary to ask: risk for whom? Disorder according to which order? Lack of content according to which epistemology? By thematizing Parkour, these validation criteria are interrogated, destabilized, and often subverted.

This subversion does not imply abandoning planning, intentionality, or pedagogical responsibility. On the contrary, it implies reconfiguring these elements in light of the body's inventive potency. As Jesus (2020) notes, when gesture becomes creation, the teacher occupies another position. The teacher no longer merely teaches content but provokes encounters. Encounters between body and space, between gesture and city, between knowledge and reality.

By opposing curricular normativity, Parkour does not deny the curriculum; it contests it. It contests its meaning, its pathways, its margins. It proposes that the curriculum itself may become a body in movement: not a closed script, but a cartography drawn with students. And along this path, resistance makes itself a class — a class that listens, that provokes, that accompanies, and that jumps alongside.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: TOWARD A SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION THAT JUMPS WALLS

Jumping walls is not merely an athletic gesture. It is a political one. It is the body that refuses the predetermined route that claims new pathways, that draws the contour of its freedom across space. Throughout this essay, we have argued that Parkour, more than a possible content for SPE, is a pedagogical metaphor of resistance. It interrogates the school at its foundations: its organization of time, its use of space, its conceptions of teaching, and its curricular structure.

By thematizing it as an insurgent, urban, and creative practice, we recognize in Parkour a pedagogical potency of enchantment in SPE, a discipline historically marked by the domestication of bodies, the normativity of gestures, and the hierarchy of knowledges. Parkour displaces this logic by proposing risk as learning, improvisation as methodology, and the body as a producer of knowledge. It affirms that there is teaching in uncertainty, formation in instability, and politics in movement.

This essay does not overlook the material and symbolic limits that shape the implementation of this practice in everyday school life. On the contrary, it acknowledges that there are walls to be jumped: lack of training, lack of institutional support, dismantling perceptions of insecurity, among others. But it argues that it is precisely within these obstacles that the principle of a pedagogy-to-come resides, because only those who recognize the wall, those who perceive the limit and choose to confront it with their whole body, are able to jump.

It is in this gesture that we outline the initial contours of what I call here a *Pedagogy of the Leap*. This pedagogy is neither method nor technique, but horizon. It arises from the refusal of neutrality, the openness to the unexpected, and the wager on the body as a creator of meaning. To jump, in this context, is more than overcoming obstacles: it is to affirm traversal as a form of knowledge, to produce understanding through risk, to redraw the curriculum as movement and invention. The *Pedagogy of the Leap* proposes that the teacher guide with care, but never out of fear. That safety not be a point of anchoring, but of departure. That teaching not paralyze before risk, but learn to inhabit it responsibly. That the school cease to be a territory of containment and become a territory of passage, of affection, and of reinvention.

If the jump of Parkour disrupts the expected trajectory to open new routes, then the *Pedagogy of the Leap* must also disrupt the certainties of teaching. And, in doing so, allow SPE to rediscover its vocation: to move *with* the world, not merely *within* it.

We therefore call for an SPE that authorizes gesture, that welcomes traversal, that celebrates displacement. An SPE that does not settle for teaching only how to obey rules, but forms subjects capable of creating new games, new trails, new meanings. An SPE that jumps alongside its students, not for acrobatics, but out of ethical and political conviction.

Finally, we contend that Parkour should not merely be included in official documents, but listened to in its radicality: as a counter-hegemonic practice, as a metaphor of confrontation, as a tool for building a school that is more alive, more just, and more in movement. A school that, when faced with a wall, does not step back, but jumps.

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Resumo: Este ensaio propõe uma reflexão sobre o Parkour como prática corporal de resistência e metáfora pedagógica contra-hegemônica na Educação Física Escolar (EFE). Em diálogo com a Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC), discutimos os sentidos políticos e pedagógicos que emergem da tematização do Parkour como prática urbana de superação de obstáculos. Argumentamos que o Parkour, mais do que uma técnica corporal, atua como provocação educativa, desafiando lógicas curriculares normativas, hierarquias corporais e concepções tradicionais de ensino. Ao resgatar o potencial do corpo em movimento como linguagem e crítica, defendemos que práticas como o Parkour podem encantar a EFE ao ampliar horizontes de invenção, risco calculado e autonomia docente e discente. Em tempos de esgotamento de modelos tradicionais, refletir sobre o Parkour como gesto político-pedagógico é também abrir passagem para uma escola mais criativa, inclusiva e conectada às dinâmicas contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física Escolar. Parkour. Práticas Corporais de Aventura. Currículo.

Resumen: Este ensayo propone una reflexión sobre el Parkour como práctica corporal de resistencia y metáfora pedagógica contrahegemónica en Educación Física Escolar (EFE). En diálogo con la Base Nacional Común Curricular (BNCC), discutimos los sentidos políticos y pedagógicos que emergen de la tematización del Parkour como práctica urbana de superación de obstáculos. Argumentamos que el Parkour, más que una técnica corporal, actúa como una provocación educativa, desafiando las lógicas curriculares normativas, las jerarquías corporales y las concepciones tradicionales de enseñanza. Al rescatar el potencial del cuerpo en movimiento como lenguaje y crítica, defendemos que prácticas como el Parkour pueden encantar la EFE al ampliar horizontes de invención, riesgo calculado y autonomía docente y discente. En tiempos de agotamiento de los modelos tradicionales, reflexionar sobre el Parkour como gesto político-pedagógico también abrir paso a una escuela más creativa, inclusiva y conectada con las dinámicas contemporáneas.

Palabras clave: Educación y Entrenamiento Físico. Parkour. Prácticas Corporales de Aventura. Curriculum.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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

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Joanna Las Casas: Conceptualization, Data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, writing—original draft, and writing—revision and editing.

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