

The Physical Education School Evaluation: a comparison between traditional school and “cycling” school

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Abstract:

In the present work, a comparative analysis between the traditional and “cycling” schools was become fulfilled, thinking about as if it would give to the evaluation in the Physical Education from these two perspectives. To develop the study it was essential to analyze the pertaining to school structures: theoretical base, methodology of education, politician-pedagogical project; as well as, the social functions exerted by these schools and the relations constructed for them in the daily pertaining to school. As result of this study was verified that the evaluation in Physical Education, carried through for these schools, uses similar evaluative instruments, such as: the presence in lesson, the auto-evaluation and the performance of the pupils, and also theoretical lessons and written tests, however, the evaluation carried through for the traditional school are guided for the election and classification of the learning, differently of the “cycling” school, whose evaluation is guided for the development of the learning and the formation of active and socially independent individuals, capable to reflect on proper the practical one and the social reality which belong.

Keywords: Physical education. Evaluation. Curriculum. Education, primary and secondary.

1 INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a complex element and has social, historical and personal characteristics that give it the ability to influence the lives of people and the situations they live in. It reflects the way in which the teacher thinks his conception of the world, his ethics, his way of seeing the student and his knowledge about the teaching-learning process, about the school and about his function.

In the school scenario, different models or conceptions of learning and evaluation are highlighted, being that in most of them formal evaluation conducted by the teacher is present, made up of evaluative procedures and activities applicable to the students. This manner of evaluation is the one most used in the traditional school, being considered artificial due to not having a relationship with the reality experienced by the students, who only study to obtain good grades. Freitas (2003b, p. 28) states that in this type of conception of learning “[...] the student is more and more conformed to view learning as something that only has value from the grade (or social approval), which is external to him and the exchange for the grade

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assumes the place of importance of knowledge itself as personal construction and power of interference in the world”.

Formal evaluation is also present in the cycling school, however, one seeks to associate with it complementary actions (reinforcement, parallel recovery) that help in the student’s learning process, emphasizing the actual knowledge obtained and its relationship with the life of the student.

In view of the important discussions and information existing with regard to school evaluation, the aim of this work is to make a comparison between evaluation in the traditional school and in the cycling school, giving emphasis to the similarities and differences in the manners in which these schools are organized, think and schedule evaluation and how this could/should be in Physical Education.

On outlining this study, we opted to conduct a review research and bibliographical analysis using magazines, books and articles, from 1986 to 2005. This period was determined because it has the greatest number of discussions and publications on school evaluation, the cycling school and its results in the Brazilian reality.

2 A TRADITIONAL SCHOOL

The public traditional school was born in the 19th century, after the industrial revolution, with the intention of preparing the population for the new job perspectives that were emerging.

Taking off from the capitalist logic, one perceives that man is viewed by the traditional school as part of a world that is external to him and from which he must absorb information (dominion of the world) in the course of his school trajectory and his life.

For the traditional school, the understanding and dominion of the world mean the assimilation of knowledge that interest the capitalist society, and has the function of serving as instruments, so that individuals who have them can use them to instruct others or become efficient professionals.

One must understand that, for the capitalist logic that boosted the surfacing of a school that “operates” under its principles, giving it the utilitarian function of preparing individuals for the job market, the one who is efficient is the one who is able to perform tasks with the maximum utilization of materials and time, that is, the one who is the most productive.

The traditional school, being inserted in a society that frenetically seeks profit and productivity. Impregnated by such principles, it has become an effective instrument for

selecting and maintaining social hierarchies. To understand how these processes operate, one must have a clear view of how the school is structured and how it thinks and schedules school knowledge and the teaching-learning process.

The school structure cannot be regarded as being purposeless. The organization and pre-determining of contents and models to be transmitted to the students and absorbed by them are done based on the capitalist order and in the function established by this school.

On providing a standardized learning to different individuals, who make up a same classroom, coming from various social classes, with different life stories, without considering the individuality and cultural singularity of each one, and on selecting contents external to the students and that meet the needs of the market, having the aim of and consequence of selection and social exclusion and reproduction of the hierarchies, the school does not constitute a space to correct social inequalities (social equity) and cannot be considered neutral and ingenuous.

3 EVALUATION IN THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL

Evaluation appears in the context of the traditional school, being established in the classroom, for two reasons: need to measure, quantify and assimilate the contents, and need to motivate learning. The first reason caused the elaboration of tests and oral and written exercises, as well as the construction and application of seminars, that would enable the student to show his knowledge about a certain subject, and enable the teacher to know them. The second reason, extremely relevant to the subject, was due to the separation/distancing of school life from the student's practical and social life that, not recognizing the contents as information relevant to the student's reality, ended up losing the internal motivators and needing external (artificial) motivators to assimilate them.

The need to introduce artificial mechanisms of evaluation (tests, etc.) was motivated by the fact that life has remained outside the walls of the school. With this, the 'natural motivators' of learning also remained there, obliging the school to use 'artificial motivators' – a system of evaluation was developed with grades as a way of encouraging learning and controlling the behavior of increasingly greater contingents of children who went to the school and had to remain inside it, immobilized, hearing to the teacher. The isolation and artificialness of the school led to an equally artificial evaluation. (FREITAS, 2003b, p. 27-28).

[...]

This placed the teacher as the center of learning and approval, and not the ability to intervene in social practice. Learning to 'show knowledge to the

teacher' took the place of 'learning to intervene in reality'. This is the root of the artificial evaluative process of the school [...]. (FREITAS, 2003b, p. 40).

Imbued with these functional characteristics (quantifying instrument of learning and external motivator), evaluation took on roles of highlight in the traditional school, becoming a fundamental element for selection and social exclusion and, therefore, a time of great expectation and concern to parents, students and teachers, since its final results definitively influence the personal and professional life of the student.

Evaluation acts as an instrument of selection and social exclusion to the extent in which it is structured and considered from the contents, external to the students, and its results are translated in numbers that determine the individual's approval or failure. There is no concern with checking the student's evolution during the teaching-learning process, but rather to check if there was assimilation of a determined content.

According to Freitas, evaluation has at least three components:

The first is the 'instructional' aspect – the most known side of evaluation, through which one evaluates the mastery of skills and contents in tests, roll calls, works, etc. [...] The second component, made up of 'behavioral' evaluation of the student in the classroom, is a powerful control instrument in the school environment, since it allows the teacher to demand from the student obedience to the rules. The power of this requirement is linked to the fact that the teacher has the possibility of approving or failing the student from the previous element, that is, from instructional evaluation. [...] Finally, there is the third aspect: the evaluation of 'values and attitudes', which occurs daily in the classroom and consists of subjecting the student to verbal and physical reprimands, critical remarks and even humiliation before the class, criticizing his or her values and attitudes. (FREITAS, 2003b, p. 41-42).

Regarding the relationship of these components of evaluation with the functions of the school, Freitas (2003b, p. 42-43) emphasizes that

[...] it is in the field of evaluation of values and attitudes, as well as in the evaluation of the student's behavior that the logic of submission is preferentially installed. The use of instructional evaluation in articulation with these two other dimensions creates the field required to exercise social relationships of dominion and submission to the teacher and to order.

An interesting aspect pointed out by Freitas is that school evaluation occurs in two perspectives: in the formal and informal. The formal perspective includes the concrete methodologies and elements of evaluation, such as tests and exercises; the informal

perspective includes the ‘judgments of value’, which emerge from the daily relationships between teacher and students. These judgments generally interfere daily in the way in which the individuals of these relationships see themselves and, consequently, in the stances and decisions made by them. If the teacher has not been prepared to solve/block the ‘judgments of value’ he has of his students, he can suffer interferences from them in the elaboration of his classes, in his motivation to work and in the evaluation of his students.

In the traditional school, the emphasis is on formal evaluation. Majority of teachers either do not know the informal side of evaluation or do not give it much importance. In view of faults and/or school failure, the teacher, the student is criticized, and not the way in which the teaching-learning process occurs, the way in which the school is organized and even how the system governs society.

4 CYCLING SCHOOL

The 80s and 90s were marked by countless discussions regarding the school, the high levels of repetition and evasion, the curriculum, evaluation, etc. with the increase in repercussion of these discussions and discontentment of the individuals linked to the educational processes – educators, parents, researchers, new forms of teaching surfaced, among them the school organized in cycles of formation. This form of teaching was strengthened with approval of the Law of Directives and Bases (LDB) No. 9394/96, which foresaw the implementation of cycles of formation in basic education. However, this law did not specify how these cycles should be organized, leaving gaps for the surfacing of various ways of applying and conceiving them.

Freitas (2003 a) informs us that there were, in Brazil, several initiatives to implement cycles in various states:

[...] the initiatives of the municipalities of São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre, which were guided by the commitment to construct a new school organization, committed to the democratization of learning. Despite its specificities, some traces were common in these initiatives, such as: curricular structuring on thematic and not exclusively disciplinary axes; valuing of the experiences and knowledge of the students; consideration of the differences between the learners in the interaction with school work; emphasis on group work, by both teacher and student; formative evaluation, without classificatory ends; organization by grouping of students, based on learning objectives and age groups (FREITAS 2003 a, p.88).

For purposes of organization and clarity of this work, we will use the concept that the school organized in cycles is that with its times and spaces divided in cycles

of formation, “[...] that are based on experiences that are socially significant for the student’s age” (FREITAS, 2003b, p. 09), which can be called citizen school, plural school and/or cycling school.

The cycling school is based on constructive ideas and from them the concept that learning and knowledge occur by a gradual process, from simple elements significant to the subject and that depend on the subject’s internal structure, for this reason being an individual process, that is, the subjects need different times to complete each phase of the process. “Thus the justification, of the non-seriation in elementary education, but rather cycles, respecting the child’s current stage of development, [...]” (ALVARENGA, 1999, p. 161).

The cycling school organized its school times in cycles of formation, being that in general, the first cycle comprises students aged 6 to 9 years, the second cycle students aged 9 to 12 years and the third 12 to 14 years. According to Dalben (2000, p. 53) “[...], the cycle for the Plural School, is a continuous time that identifies with the time of formation of human development itself: infancy, puberty and adolescence.”

This form of school organization aims at breaking the selection and exclusion that occurs in the traditional school as it believes that by creating different times of learning, flexible ways of constructing knowledge, bringing the school and its contents closer to the student’s reality, it is possible to promote real inclusion of the student in the school and society.

The cycling school seeks to promote a teaching of quality that attains the objectives of: constructing a democratic teaching, that is, to all individuals equally and without restrictions and of forming critical, autonomous individuals and citizens able to reflect and interfere in the society and who understand and respect their duties and rights.

In addition to the cycles of formation based on the phases of human development and on the objectives of learning, other innovative structures in this school are: the valuing of knowledge prior to the school, the differences in learning times among the students and the organization of groups of teachers who share the responsibility for learning in each cycle.

All these structures corroborate toward a real learning once they contribute to the significance and approach of the contents to the reality of the students and horizontalization of power, on removing from the hands of teachers the total dominion over knowledge and emphasizing and promoting the experiences of actions and group works.

Defenders of the cycling school say that this occurs through a democratic school that provides the students with concrete experiences of life and of the social situation, attaining the objectives of constructing a quality education and formation of individuals able to produce new knowledge and who seek better conditions of life for the whole society.

5 EVALUATION IN THE CYCLING SCHOOL

As one of the important structures of the cycling school, evaluation in this school breaks the traditions of the seriate (traditional) school and proposes to contribute toward the learning and development process of the student.

Seeking this objective, the cycling school schedules an evaluation that seeks to know, through analyses of errors, the dimension and depth of the knowledge presented by the student, to thus lead him through new paths toward learning of the contents and encourage him to evolve and produce knowledge. In this wise, the results of the evaluations (which constitute evaluation itself in the traditional school) are part of the process of knowledge construction and opportunity to verify and reflect on the school practice and other practices of the student.

For us to understand even more evaluation in the cycling school, we have the example brought by Freitas (1999, p.52) when he analyzes the case of Escola Cidadã de Porto Alegre. “In the citizen school, there are three modalities of evaluation: formative [...], summative and specialized evaluation”. The author explains that the first intends to inform the situation in which the student is found in relation to the progress of his learning in a quarter. The second is that which gives a general picture of the student at the end of each school year or learning cycle. The third and last is done by the “Pedagogical Orientation Service with support of the Learning Laboratory and Resource Integration Room (SIR), in addition to other specialized services” (FERREIRA, 2003, p.94), which is aimed at evaluating those students who peradventure need individualized educational support.

In the context of the formal and informal perspectives of evaluation, one notes that both are maintained in the cycling school, however, with new forms of conduct and functions. These new characteristics are the consequences of the direction and utilization of the results of formal evaluation and of the change in relationships between teachers and students (horizontalization of power over knowledge) that directly influences informal evaluation. With the relativity of power – established for the teacher by the traditional school based on his greater dominion of knowledge and the possibility of failing the student, the

cycling school provides a natural relationship, between teachers and students, of exchange of information, thus contributing toward learning and production of knowledge.

6 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND EVALUATION UNDER THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS PATTERNS

As elements of the traditional school, Physical Education also emerges with an assistance nature, with the functions: prepare the 'future workers' of the capitalist industries physically and develop and inculcate in the people the fundamental characteristics of survival that this social system required and that the growth of the urban agglomerations determined, such as: organization of cities, basic sanitation and personal hygiene.

Thus, since its emergence, Physical Education was developed according to the needs of each historical period and its political, social and economic aspects that interested the dominant classes.

From the various trends that emerged, the paradigm of physical aptitude and 'sportivization' of Physical Education were considered and used as contents inherent to PE in traditional schools up to the 80s, and also, nowadays, they are frequent contents in the classrooms. In the 80s, discourses and criticisms regarding PE and the paradigm of physical education emerged, encouraging the elaboration of new and several theories aimed at orienting PE in the school and in the academic area. According to Betti (1991, p. 116):

The period was characterized by a questioning of the situation established in the previous periods, by the perception of a crisis situation in the educational sector, and by a radical change in discourses and conceptual references in Physical Education, characterizing a real identity crisis.

The diversity of theories that emerged led to the appearance of a plurality of practices and methodologies, currently found in schools and universities.

However, despite this plurality, in the current PE, conducted by the traditional school, it is possible to note the predominance of methodologies of biological and technical nature, which value and emphasize, respectively, the anatomic, physiological, biomechanical factors and sports techniques and tactics. To evidence such situation, just note that in PE classes, whose more frequent contents are group sports, the concern of teachers is learning of the rules, technical and tactical performance of the students, in the selected spots, physical conditioning and the verification/discovery and selection of new athletes.

Within this context, one can note that the sport, as it is treated and developed by the traditional school (removed from the context of historical and social reality it represents, and being emphasized in its technical, tactical and competitive aspects), constitutes a form of social alienation. This occurs because this content is treated in non-critical and restricted fashion. School PE linked to sports fails to develop the other contents of corporal culture, relevant to the formation of students.

This form of organization of PE that transforms it into a discipline with non-critical, non-historical characteristics, and leads to doing for the sake of doing, is based on the stance and function assumed by this discipline, of non-responsibility toward intellectual and social formation of the students and the commitment to the development of motor skills only.

Many are the reasons of the relative importance of PE in the school reality. At least three reasons are presented more decisively. First, on dealing with the body, PE seems to have constructed for itself, in the traditional school, a dichotomic view of the human being. This is perpetuated not only by common sense, but also by the area itself in which PE, as academic debate, is inserted, that is, the Health Sciences. A second reason, imbricated with the first, is that the traditional school values intellectual knowledge and devalues “corporeal” knowledge. The traditional school forgets that

The body is the synthesis of culture, because it expresses specific elements of the society of which it is a part. Man, through the body, assimilates and appropriates values, rules and social customs, in a process of inCORPORATion (the word is significant). More than an intellectual learning, the individual acquires the cultural content, which is installed in his body, in the set of his expressions (DAOLIO, 2003, p.67).

A third and serious reason for the devaluing of PE in the traditional school is the restricted and restrictive space occupied by PE, whether in not dealing with socio-political issues in its contents or, oftentimes, not being called to be part of the school’s pedagogic meetings, whether due to developing activities related exclusively to motor skills or due to performing tasks auxiliary to the other disciplines, without any group work with the other teachers.

The relative importance given to Physical Education by the traditional school and by teachers, who do not attribute to its relevance for the formation of students, is reflected in the evaluation conducted by it. Once these stances are not ingenuous and act to contribute toward the functions of this school, of classifying and selecting individuals for the job market and perpetuating the social hierarchies, the choice and application of PE, in this school, will be guided to do the same. Which explains the constant conduction of evaluations

that do not present any planning related to the complex objectives of content development and student formation. In the majority of cases, the evaluations made are predominantly aimed at, according to Soares et al. (1992, p. 98), “[...] (a) meeting bureaucratic requirements expressed in norms of the school; b) meeting the legislation in effect; and c) selecting students for competitions and presentations in the school as well as in other schools.”

In practice and generally, evaluation in Physical Education is conducted by this traditional school in three ways: through valuing of presence in the classroom, this being the only item evaluated; through self-evaluation, conducted by the students, and oftentimes without guidance from the teacher on the evaluation criteria, on the importance of its corresponding to the reality, etc.; and through evaluation of student performance, which values physical aptitude and considers as evaluative items technique, dominion of rules, development of motor skills, among others.

It is, therefore, by conducting evaluations that emphasize the differences among students, that devalue Physical Education through the minimum requirement of presence in the classroom, and on selecting contents that value the most able and socially exclude individuals, on denying them the possibility of learning information and knowledge about citizenship, history, the social order in effect in the country, and about their limits and potentials, that Physical Education, as element of the traditional school, is organized so that the function destined to it by capitalism becomes fully effective.

7 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND EVALUATION UNDER THE CYCLING SCHOOLS PATTERNS

In the cycling school, Physical Education has been presented in diversified, subjective fashion and with problems identified in the traditional school model. This situation is accredited to the fact that this form of teaching, due to contradicting capitalist logic, which configures the seriate (traditional) school, comes across obstacles to its implementation and faces the personal difficulties and problems of formation of teachers. However, it also has some common points and important evolutions for school Physical Education, which we will discuss in this part of the text.

With participation of the student in the construction of teaching, the cycling school highlights and values the knowledge and culture of the student, giving him the possibility of learning and developing, practically: autonomy, social responsibility,

citizenship, cooperation, etc., thus working toward complete formation of the individual. However, for this to occur, it is essential that the hierarchies of power (cited previously) are dissolved and that a horizontal relationship be established between teacher and student, since the relationships of power are the ones that generate, in the school, the ‘judgments of value’ that greatly influence the stances of teachers and students, and the evaluation conducted by the former.

With regard to evaluation in Physical Education, in experiences described by Ferreira (2003), it was noticed that despite the common use of evaluative elements like presence, punctuality, participation, uniform, etc., and the conduction of formal evaluations, such as: written tests, seminar presentations, among others; emphasis is given to the obtainment of new knowledge, that is, the teacher evaluates the knowledge previous to the content shown by the student and later evaluates the knowledge the student acquired, emphasizing the quality of development and learning that occurred, being “[...] that the evaluation, in a curriculum by cycles, becomes a daily practice, in which the teacher seeks to know his or her student in a continuous, unfinished process.” (FERREIRA, 2003, p. 143).

The results of these evaluations are used to verify the learning and possible difficulties shown by the student, with the aim of serving as guidance for future works, activities, programs, etc.

Physical Education, in this school, takes on new perspectives of conducting its contents, with the possibility of interaction between students and teachers, who seek to diversify the use of spaces and technologies, breaking the paradigm of the court as a place of excellence of Physical Education, as well as selection of contents that cause reflection and that differ from soccer, volleyball and insertion of theoretical classes, of reading and writing.

Thus, from this structure, and despite recognizing its successes and failures, we believe that:

[...] a fundamental possibility is created here for the teaching of PE: contribute toward discovery, usufruct and reinvention by new generations of corporal culture of movement that was left to them as legacy. And more: that they do this demystifying their socio-historical meanings. [...] In other words, more than the transmission of didactic contents, it involves encouraging a critical education that promotes the cultural formation and political education of our students [...]. (FERREIRA, 2003, p. 67).

8 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the current social context, it is important to highlight the needs to seek differentiated forms of teaching, that surpass the traditional school model – that, as we pointed out, has problematic roles and functions for the democratic education we desire; the needs to expand the space and knowledge of school Physical Education, of improving the work and formations of teachers from the area, in other words, more than recognizing the problems presented by the school, there is the need to work on behalf of the construction of practices and theories that enable changes in the school's traditional structure.

It is in this wise that the cycling school gains space, on seeking to break the school's traditional structure and implement innovative and democratic forms of constructing knowledge and the elements that make up the school. Working, despite having as many successes as failures, “[...] not a mere pedagogic solution [...] but rather a long and necessary process of resistance of teachers, students and parents to the excluding and selective logic of the school.” (FREITAS, 2003b, p. 36).

With regard to the evaluation in general and the one specific for the area of Physical Education, the cycling school obtained important victories, which show the real possibilities and relevance of the work, of all these structures, for development and formation of students, such as: legitimization of school Physical Education, socio-historical contents as pertinent to the discipline, evaluation as an element essential to the development of knowledge, the importance of evaluation in PE being coherent and committed to the student's formation.

Therefore, the cycling school represents and proves that it is possible to create and develop educational processes, different from those produced by the traditional school and capitalist system, and that the social, historical and economic reality that we live in is liable to change, since it does not represent the only and true reality and that is maintained and reproduced by traditional education. By sharing this view of education and recognizing evaluation as a fundamental aspect for any form of teaching, it is important and essential to seek the theoretical perfecting of evaluation and its operation so that the changes aimed at can be made.

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