

Time and venues for physical education activities in the daily life of a public school

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to assess the possibilities of physical education activities in Physical Education classes, activities, recess and free time in a public school in Rio de Janeiro. To this end we interviewed the students and observed them during classes, free time and recess. Study findings showed that a large number of some students did not perceived the positive value of these classes. Justification for this perception lies in the complex network of tension between the members of the school, the school community, diversity of values about the citizen's formation and the purpose of Physical Education.

Keywords: Observation. Motivation. Physical education

1 INTRODUCTION

This study assesses the daily life of Physical Education classes and other physical activities practiced during recess, sports training and in free time in a public school in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. The purpose of this study is to observe the possibilities of how students' carry out exercising

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in the venues and time set aside for Physical Education classes, for sports and for recess e free time in the Euzébio Bragança Municipal School¹; to describe and assess the conflicts and tensions related to the goals of the Physical Education subject in that school; to describe and assess students' motivation to join Physical Education classes and recreational physical activities in the daily routine of the school under study.

Studying how the school organizes time and venues² for the students' physical activities via sports, games and recreational activities can shed light on a portion of physical education offered, intentionally or not, in the school syllabus. This education dimension present in the school's time and venue da school is not restricted to the subject of Physical Education. It takes place at different times and venues in that learning institution via coercive and/or encouraging apparatus, whereby students are mobilized to learn and control their gestures, body expressions and linguistics. This learning process is carried out systematically and intentionally via activities, subjects and workshops that address the systematic teaching of artistic, sports, civic, religious etc. physical techniques (in the Maussian sense) etc. On the other hand, it is a known fact that physical education takes place in other venues and times, the purpose of which is not primarily to teach physical techniques explicitly and intentionally. However, in these venues the education of the body takes place in a subtle manner, by the manner how students are

1 The names of schools and actors are fictitious.

2 The venue-time organization of Brazilian schools was fundamentally based to address teaching the formal syllabus through subjects. Therefore, spatial dimensions for teaching venues were not planned as venues and times for different school children and adolescents. Under our study, we are concerned with the management of time and venues allocated to Physical Education classes, recess and free time for school subjects. We are based on the assumption that time and venue management influence in establishing subjects for students. In Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (1971) he presents, Kant venue and time as pure institutions a priori, i.e. they are the subject matters of possible experiences, attainable at the level of senses already available in the institutions of venue e tempo. To this end, the organization and management of different school times e venues form and conform the subjectivities of students and teachers.

placed in the classroom, by the possibilities of movement and expression in the school and by the constraints posed directly on the bodies in the different types of interaction that occur in the daily life of schools. In other words, students learn via the body the norms and values, without using any words, by the apparatus organized in this time and venue (BOURDIEU, 1990). In fact, the time and venue in school life are not neutral dimensions in school teaching; they indicate that these dimensions institute the discourse on values and on a set of sensorial and motor teachings (FARIA FILHO, VIDAL, 2000; PETITAT, 1989).

In methodological terms, this study observed Physical Education classes, recess and free time in the school, totaling 800 minutes. These observations were recorded in a field logbook. Interviews were also carried out with students and the Physical Education teacher responsible for the class under observation.

2 SCHOOL CULTURE, SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In the academic field of education it has become a common practice for cultural studies to advocate that the learning institution has its own unique culture. It seems logical that the strength of this justification lies in not purporting a radical relativism about the uniqueness of the learning institution. Despite having “its own culture”, the school is not located in a social void nor is alienated within the environment to which it belongs. It is important to note this factor as the concept of culture is not construed as a rhetoric justification. By all means, if each and every learning institution were construed as a unique and singular culture it would not be possible to carry out the comparing and generalization that are the core principles of the study. Therefore, the term culture³ under this study is construed as a set of non-homogeneous

3 Cucho (2002) and Kupper (2002) describe different appropriation of the term culture.

provisions and values, internalized by the actors of a given social unit where they perform interacting with a venue of fight for affirming the meanings of permanence and change in an ongoing dialogue with a broader spectrum of the social game. To this end, school life time and venue are not neutral dimensions in that they institute the discourse on values and on a set of sensorial and motor learning (FARIA FILHO; VIDAL, 2000).

To this end, the Euzébio Bragança Municipal School located at *Complexo do Alemão*, which is an area controlled by different factions of drug lords constantly fighting over drug trafficking and that has one of the lowest (0,587) Human Development Index (HDI) should be taken into account under this scenario. We observed that Brazil wide the HDI stands at 0,792.⁴ A large part of the poor evaluation of this region is due to high crime rate, mainly among youngsters. This scenario of violence affects daily school life, where classes are suspended when there is intense street fighting between the police and the drug dealers. This climate generates ongoing tension throughout the school community that is forced to adapt its daily routine to the external context and to deal with those issues. These notes corroborate Macedo's (2006) view that identifies the main goal of syllabus assessment,⁵ i.e. trying to understand the relationship between restrictions and possibilities of actions within the school environment as paradoxes.

It can be said that poor school management was also an influencing factor due to the adverse civil servant mindset that meddles in teaching activities and school operations. One example is the concept of 'free time' due to the number of absences and leaves of absence of teachers working in the public school system,⁶ which led to determining that this time

4 Available at: www.wsws.org/pt/2007/jul2007/fave-j04.shtml. Accessed on: 14 Nov 2007.

5 Macedo (2006) considers the syllabus as the body of records, memories, documents and experiences of learning institutions.

6 We are not affirming that civil servants in general are not committed to the school. However, we know that school administration engineering does not reward good employees and also does not punish the lack of commitment to their professional duties.

would be used for games, sports and other activities related to student socializing unsupervised by a teacher. We do not propose that every 'time' be controlled using a pedagogical perspective; however, it should be noted that the time earmarked for classroom subjects in the end of the day is used for other non-scheduled school activities.

Further to the aforementioned factors that influence the use of school time and venue there are specific factors that have direct impact on the content and activities of Physical Education classes, as well as school team training period, recess and free time. Sports are certainly one of these social systems that exert flexibility on the actions of students and teachers of the times and activities at hand. The school is the venue where not only values of knowledge of instrumental and introductory nature are furthered, but also a venue for the new generations to express and appropriate socialization experiences.⁷ Furthermore, despite the fact that sports generate inside the school different demands by the students, it is a means of educating the body⁸ for recreational activities.

The problem lies in the different approaches of the sports phenomenon in Physical Education, which reveals the lack of consensus or minimal agreement on the teaching objectives and syllabus within the school environment (LOVISOLO, 2000).

3 KNOWING THE FIELD AT HAND

The Euzébio Bragança Municipal School is situated on the outskirts of the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, between the Nova Brasília and Fazendinha *favelas*, which are communities

7 We use hereunder the concept according to Simmel.

8 We deem that the education of the body for recreation as all physical activities offered within the school environment or in other institutions addressing the education of the gesture or movement seeking excellence and/or productivity, or to create a recreation venue.

that belong to the favelas of the *Complexo do Alemão*.⁹ The school where the study was carried out belong to the 3rd Regional Teaching Coordination (CRE), located in the Inhaúma neighborhood. However, there are other schools in the huge community that comprises the neighborhoods of Bonsucesso, Ramos and Olaria near the *Complexo do Alemão* and that are not under the jurisdiction of this CRE.

The school has 799 students in the 1st and 2nd grade classes of the Primary School. This unit has an administrative staff that includes a General Principal, one Assistant Principal, two Secretaries and one Pedagogical Coordinator. There are forty six teachers, where two teach Physical Education. The Euzébio Bragança Municipal School has morning and afternoon classes. Recess takes place between the third and fourth classes of both periods and lasts twenty minutes.

The school's facilities is two-storey high – classrooms, offices, refectory and teachers' room. Outside are the venues dedicated to games and sports, in Physical Education classes, during recess and free time, namely: a covered sports court measuring some 30 meters long and 20 meters wide surrounded by a mesh fence. There are two marking posts and two basketball hoops in the sports court. The surface is rough but regular, and we noticed that the lines for basketball, handball and futsal are faded. The venues between the sports court and the school's walls are also used to play games and sports.

There are two Physical Education teachers: teacher Marta and teacher Jorge Wagner. However, observation was carried out only on the days when Teacher Marta had classes, who authorized class observation and was always very helpful in answering the questions. She has been teaching since 1975 holding a PII¹⁰ classification and in 1994 she took on the PI¹¹

9 The German Complex is situated in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, between the districts of Ramos, Olaria, Inhaúma and Bonsucesso. The Complex is comprised of 12 underprivileged communities and has a population of approximately 300,000 inhabitants.

10 PII is the designation adopted by the Department of Education of the Municipality Rio de Janeiro to classify teachers of the 1st segment of Primary Education.

function. In 1972, encouraged by her husband who is also a Physical Education teacher, she started her Physical Education course and graduated in 1976. In 1994, after she passed the exam held by the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Schools to become a teacher of Physical education, teacher Marta left the PII positions and started teaching Physical Education.

4 FIELD WORK DATA AND ANALYSES

During the observation period we identified that the main syllabus for the classes, regardless of grade, are sports court games, i.e. soccer, handball, volleyball and basketball.

Sport games, which follow to a certain extent the official rules of collective sports (soccer, handball, volleyball and basketball), is the teaching strategy used by the teacher in the process of presenting the subject.¹² Under this study, three classes were observed of each grade, namely: one 4th grade/year 5 (402) class, two 5th grade/year 6 (502 e 504) classes and one 6th grade/year 7 (603) class. Class 402 has 24 students. Class 502 has 36 students. Class 504 has 37 students and class 603 has 43 students.

In each class, the number of attending and participating students, attending and non-participating students and absent students was. Figures are presented in the table below:

11 PI is the designation adopted by the Department of Education of the Municipality Rio de Janeiro to classify teachers of the 2nd segment of Primary Education and of the education program for youngsters and adults.

12 This teaching method is described by Dietrich, Dürrwächter & Schaller (1984) as a confrontation method. According to the aforementioned authors, this methodological concept renounces the breaking up of the game into stand-alone elements and the didactic alignment of these elements. Under this method, two teams are formed and quickly start playing with little instruction, under the motto: play and play. This method used by the teacher is quite similar to the activities observed during free-standing activities carried out by students during recess and free time.

Classes observed	Total of attending and participating students (%)	Total of attending and non-participating students (%)	Total of absent students (%)
402	44.4	41.7	13.9
502	44.4	38.9	16.7
504	57.6	27.9	14.4
603	49.5	33.5	17.0
Total	48.9	35.5	15.5

Table 1 – Figures referring to mean participation and absences when observation was concluded

In relation of the significant rate of absent students during classes (15,5%), it should be noted that the school is located in an environment strongly impacted and controlled by drug lords. Hence, when the police need to go into the *favelas* near the school students cannot attend classes because of the shooting between the drug dealers and the police. Statements given by teacher Marta also address the issue:

“Today attendance is poor, there’s some trouble up there.” (Field Logbook, 31 Oct 2006).

“Last week we missed three school days because of the war outside; they had the school shut down and they (referring to the students) hand out in the streets... everything is so wrong.” (Field Logbook, 25 Oct 2007).

This is an example of how school time in the case of this particular institution is directly affected by the structural violence that impacts more forcefully some of the neighborhoods and regions of the city of Rio de Janeiro. It should be noted that 15% of absent students is a significant rate in terms of the role of the school in the lives of these youngsters. The lesson learned on the importance of school in Brazilian society as a whole in this case shows that there it is yet to be adequately valued.

Prior data in the participation of students, both in time and venue, in relation to Physical Education classes could be

point to the problems faced by this subject in the school at hand. However, one wonders if these issues are specific to this school. We note that 35.5% of students present in Physical Education classes of the four classes observed in the field work were spectators of the proposed activities. This figure gives cause to pause given the educational mission of schools to universalize experiences and knowledge. However, issues related to the attendance of students in PE classes are far from being specific to this school. Other researches¹³ addressing Physical Education in schools, in learning classes are outstanding for the nature of the activities that require the physical fruition of students compared with most low-attendance subjects could reach the same rates and not be noticed. In Physical Education, the teacher's "proof" that students are actually joining in or enjoying the activity is associated to the exposure and expression of the body in movement, whereas in relation to most school subjects students can be apart from the school activity and that will not affect the disposition of bodies in the classroom. In general, in Brazilian schools – regardless of the generalizing nature of this argumentation – most subjects and the culture of teaching culture relegate to the students the role of a passive listener in this venue and tempo that is not conducive to experimentation and learning.

Even understanding that the participation issue is not restricted to the disciplinary scope, we asked the non-

13 Calado (2003) compared the rate of absenteeism in Physical Education, History and Math classes from the annual class logbooks. He found Physical Education had a high rate of absenteeism, proving there is a need to carry out further studies about what causes it. In 1st grade, Physical Education scored 9.1%, History 12.2% and Math 4.8%. In 2nd grade, Physical Education scored 19.4%, History 20.1% and Math 10.4%. Compared to the rates for 1st grade, we observed that they were twice as high for Physical Education and Math, increasing considerably for History. In relation to the 3rd grade, rates showed Physical Education at 21.2%; History at 16.0% and Math at 8.8%. We noted that in Physical Education, compared to a 2nd grade, there was a small rate increase; in History and Math. We believe that the decrease in the case of Math and History was because the syllabus met the student's needs to take the University Entry Exam. In terms to the higher rates for Physical Education since 1st grade, we believe this occurs primarily because students sedimented the process of institutional learning and then because class contents were not relevant for their school objectives. Works that are directly or indirectly related to our research group, Costa (2004) and Trotte (2005).

participating students why they did not join the Physical Education classes. We analyzed the answers and classified non-participating students under four different groups, namely: Group I consists of students that justified their non-participation due to poor rapport with the teacher; Group II justified their non-participation due to the fact that they did not have gym uniform; Group III claimed they did not join classes because they did not care for PE, and Group IV justified their absence because they did not agree with the syllabus. Each justification given by the different Groups for their non-participation in Physical Education classes was assessed individually.

Group I students claimed poor rapport with the teacher as the main factor for absenteeism in Physical Education classes.

“There’s no getting along with her (referring to the teacher), she’s really rude.” (Interviewee # 5 – girl)

“The teacher for the other grade was much nicer and didn’t yell at us.” (Interviewee # 9 – girl)

“Any little thing we do she goes all mad and pulls us out of class.” (Interviewee # 15 – girl)

It seems that norms based on punitive measures¹⁴ determined by the teacher in order to maintain order and discipline during the classes could be generating negative effects to the pedagogical relationship. Based on students’ answers, we observed that they took on a passive role during classes due to the rules imposed by the teacher during classes. On the other hand, despite the criticism voiced by students, non-participation only occurs because there are provisions conducive to tolerate this faulty pedagogical relationship.

¹⁴ Punishment given by the teacher during classes include verbal warning and being pulled out of class.

This scenario that shows a relationship between absenteeism and criticism to the teacher's pedagogical mindset points to the ongoing need to rethink the strategies to build rules for the different teams of teachers and students in learning. To this end, Lovisolo call attention to the fact that:

Educators should review the norms for interaction with children and take into account the positive and negative effects. Pondering about the norms is, or should be, a significant dimension of contemporary education, both in terms of justice and usefulness, as one of the basic goals of the norm is to organize school life. (LOVISOLO, p. 74. 1997).

Group II is comprised by students that justify their non-participation in PE classes because they do not have their gym uniform:¹⁵

"I even like to join, but the teacher won't let me if I'm not in my uniform." (Interviewee # 6 – boy)

"Sometimes I join, but today I'm not wearing the uniform." (Interviewee # 7 – girl)

"I forgot my shorts on my bed and she won't let me join." (Interviewee # 12 – boy)

It should be noted that the importance of wearing the gym uniform does not apply only to Physical Education classes, but can be observed throughout the twentieth century – it was a fundamental characteristic of school culture for municipal and state schools in Rio de Janeiro, as well as for many private schools.¹⁶ The uniform could take on different meanings depending on the school. In general terms, it was the symbol of the school's identity, of an age hierarchy and of the level of education of students (depending on the details

¹⁵ According to the teacher, the Physical Education uniform is a back or navy-blue pair of shorts and white shirt.

¹⁶ One of the authors of this study studies in the Municipal School of the former State of Guanabara situated in a popular neighborhood and in the 80s started teaching in public and private schools.

displayed on the garments); furthermore, it was a means of public ‘controlling’ where students where and how long it took them to get to the school and back home etc. Regardless of the many factors arising in contemporary society that caused schools to outsource the control on what students should wear, what is in play is the fact that schools lost this control. Nowadays, in a world that claims more and more for the right to expressing individual identity, wearing a uniform in certain circumstances is regarded as a misplaced imposition or as a limiting mechanism of expressing the Self. Every attempt to reintroduce into the school culture the strict control of wearing a uniform is based on the justification of parents saving in clothes for their children, standardizing the students’ appearance in terms of diminishing the flaunting of trendy labels in the school environment, to revitalizing school habits or even making it safer for students, which could be identified outside the school as students.

In Physical Education classes, wearing the uniform or adequate clothing for exercising provides a specific added value as it is also associated to body hygiene. However, it is a known fact that most public schools lack locker rooms and allotted time for students to take a shower after they finish doing PE activities. On the other hand, not wearing the uniform of repeatedly forgetting to do so (except in the case of not being able to afford it, hectic home organization etc.) could be regarded as the expression of a subjective mindset of these youngsters or simply reveal their criticism to how PE classes are implemented to the daily life of this school. In this case, absenteeism could also be point to a factor closely associated with what students wear and their appearance. This subject matter needs to undergo further empirical studies in order to understand the issues related to apparel in the school environment and period as a pedagogical bias-free issue in relation to this theme.

On the other hand, it could be interpreted that the teacher’s stand of imposing the use of the uniform for PE classes is a deliberate or unconscious form of limiting the

number of students in order to ‘fit’ the infrastructure and teaching material available.

Group III was comprised by students that claimed they did not enjoy Physical Education.

“I don’t really like physical education. I don’t like ball games, I’d rather sit here.” (Interviewee # 16 – girl)

“I don’t like exercising; running from here to there is no fun.” (Interviewee # 13 – girl)

“Exercising is really boring; it’s more fun up there” (referring to other subjects taught in the school’s facilities). (Interviewee # 14 – girl)

It should be noted that teacher Marta considers student participation in Physical Education as optional, i.e. they can decide for themselves. According to teacher Marta,¹⁷ the Physical Education class is a venue reserved for students that enjoy this subject. Therefore, we observed that the stand taken by this teacher, which occurs in other schools more often than one is to believe, shows that the dialogue between Physical Education and different modalities of recreational body-related education in our society. In other words, sports or certain types of exercising require a minimum of physical skills and depend on affinity or talent. Talent is like a ‘black box’ that only reveals the prophecy after the miracle takes place. How is it possible to impose affinity and demand that non-skilled individuals join these activities? This issue shows that Physical Education is still perceived as the venue where students can ‘let off steam’ rather than a venue for knowledge and learning. In this case Physical Education takes on a different role compared to most school subjects. Other subjects base their discourse on norms and usefulness. To this end, the justification given by students that do not enjoy PE or have no desire to join the classes are combined with a measure of

¹⁷ “Sometimes I even call them to join in, taking photocopies, but you know how it goes, there’s no point in forcing them. So I prefer to let the ones that want to join to do it.” (Field Logbook, 31 Oct 2006. Statement given by teacher Marta).

coercion, where they are threatened with flunking, and convincing them that the subject is important in terms of their participation in the job market. Statements given by teacher Marta seem to point to one of the dilemmas of the current Physical Education field, e.g. on the one hand the subject still claims it is undervalued and is trying to obtain legitimacy in the school environment. In this case one can observe the efforts to include PE into the schools disciplinary logic. On the other hand, there are teachers that like Marta let their students decide whether or not they are going to join the activity. Justification such as “I don’t like it”, “I don’t want to”, “I’m tired” are accepted. In this case, the norm applied to Physical Education in schools is far from the logic applied to other school subjects.

It should be noted that we are not hereunder passing moral judgment of the different treatment, but shedding light to the fact that this issue should be addressed, i.e. all subjects should be treated equally in terms of time and venue under their syllabuses. This issue seems to affect the daily life of Physical Education classes in the school at hand and other schools as. In this case, time and venue for this subject adopt provisions for the participation that is totally in sync with the images and representations of sports in society, i.e. it is an activity that participants should enjoy and have the talent and/or self-discipline to become successful in it. On the other hand, this mechanism adopted for Physical Education classes goes against the legislation in effect that rules on mandatory attendance and syllabus, except for religion classes. This is a typical example of how culture is managed in specific learning institutions and of how it maintains an ongoing dialogue with social institutions, exceeding the limits imposed by teaching related legislation.

It should yet be noted that all interviewees that claimed they did not care for Physical Education classes were girls. This particular data should be used to observe the role of gender in joining Physical Education classes based on the cultural coercion imposed on students within the context

where they. Experience shows that when girls become adolescents they take on a more unbending stand in terms of what they wear and their general appearance. In this case, the Physical Education class is an activity that clashes with the investments made by girls on how they present themselves in the school environment.

On the other hand, it should be noted that Physical Education classes in Brazilian schools in the '80s condemned gender-exclusive classes, which was a model that was based on the principle of Physical Education where the syllabus made gender differences in terms of physical performance. This model of Physical Education was aligned to the cultural organization of sports; therefore, the Progressive or Renewed Physical Education of the syllabuses of the 1980s discontinued some formats of the sports culture. Presently, there is a new issue to be addressed by scholars that study gender in this field, i.e. do coed classes foster a higher or lower number of girls joining this subject? One should take the interpretation of this matter to the next level, including other factors, such as age bracket and socialization, which could be associated with how girls behave during an in relation to their participation in PE classes.

Group IV was comprised by students that justified their non-participation due to a poor menu of activities.

"I don't really like it, but sometimes I feel like joining, but I don't really care for playing handball." (Interviewee # 4 – girl)

"The class is really boring; she always does the same thing, so it's a drag." (Interviewee # 8 – girl)

"It's all about playing ball, really boring." (Interviewee # 10 – girl)

"I don't really care for ball games; I like running." (Interviewee # 11 – boy)

In regard to these statements, we observed that these students did not agree with the strongly sports-based PE

education classes, which justified their lack of motivation to join them. Thus, we noted that Physical Education classes in this school and in other institutions provide a meager menu of options (BASSANI; TORRI; VAZ, 2005). Even taking into account the media coverage given to sports events, one should remember that recreational activities related to body education go beyond the standardized activities offered in most schools.

5 SPORT TEAMS AT SCHOOL

The Euzébio Bragança Municipal School traditionally participates in the Student Games¹⁸ in the futsal and handball modalities. However, in 2006 the school decided to allocate more time for handball practice given the good results obtained by the handball teams in the previous year. In 2006 the school formed three handball teams: an all-boys league, a kid's league and an all-girls junior league. The junior league was comprised by 8-10 year old age students. The kid's league was comprised by 11-13 year old students.

In the beginning of the year, school managements and Physical Education teachers agreed that teacher Jorge Wagner would be responsible for putting the teams together and coaching the all-boys and all-girls kid's teams, while teacher Marta would put together and coach the all-boys and all-girls junior teams. Each team would practice during one and a half hours weekly.

When asked about the process of putting the teams together in the school, teacher Marta voiced her dissatisfaction with the status quo:

“Jorge Wagner puts together the school teams; he even skips teaching two classes every week to coach the handball team. He wanted me to join the junior league but I

¹⁸ The Students' Games are sponsored by the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, which are organized and carried out by the Municipal Department of Education. The students are for students from Primary School.

don't think it's fair to deprive the children of a class to coach a team. So I asked Jéferson, who's the best player of the older students' team to coach the younger kids [...] Jorge and I are different; I prefer teaching and he likes to put teams together." (Field Logbook, 25 Oct 2006).

"I don't do this type of work with teams, that up to Jorge. Jorge Wagner has been working with Futsal and Handball for some time; he wanted me to coach the junior handball team [...] so they'd grow up and when they reach the kid's league they'd have some idea. I told him that I'd give it a go because I've never formed a team before [...] I don't like it, I didn't study to be a coach, my job is to teach [...] I don't think it's fair to work with 10 students while the rest just sit there doing nothing. I asked that boy Jéferson to coach the team for me outside school time, so nobody would miss out... it seem that the team went ahead. About Jorge, I don't know how he does his job. I think that first he does it as part of his class, where he identifies the best players and calls them to join the team [...] he was taking class time for practice time because that's the only way you can coach a team. The school Ceará does it this way: they have workshops and then they choose the best players [...] then they send the students to the teacher of that sport modality. I believe there should be three or four teachers in the school; those that like coaching can do it and the other teachers handle the Physical Education classes." (Interview given by teacher Marta on 29 Nov 2006)

We noted that there are different opinions in the school in relation to putting teams together and coaching them for competitions. On the one hand, there is teacher Jorge Wagner backed by the school's administration, who advocates for putting teams together; on the other hand there is teacher Marta who does not agree with the team formation and coaching in the school. Similar conflicts were observed by

Trotte (2005), who noted a tense relationship between the teachers that gave collective sports based classes leading to team formation and teachers that included other types of body-related contents in Physical Education classes. Conflict among PE teachers take place due to the manner how the school community dialogues and decides on the parameters for educating the body in recreational and syllabus activities in the school.

In a broader sense, it could be deemed that this conflict is based on the very ponderings of the issues that are addressed in relation to Physical Education in the school environment. Teacher Marta is not against the sports aspect of this subject taught in the school, but only disagrees how it is included in the time allotted for it in the school. According to the teacher, the school should provide for other syllabuses so their rights are not hindered by Physical Education, i.e. the school should allocate time that is not necessarily school time and to appoint teachers that are actually committed to teaching performance sports. It should be noted that despite the remarks made by teacher Martha, her classes have a low attendance rate.

Despite not having observed the practices of sports teams in the school, statements made by teacher and students provided us with much information on the motivation of the team members. The excerpts below were taken from the statements made by students that are members of the school's sports teams:

“When we arrived at São Januário to play the semifinal, everyone thought there'd a lot of scouts [...] specially being the Vasco stadium.” (Interviewee # 1)

“When we were the winners of our area, everyone thought that the teacher's friend would invite us to his club, like he did for the girls.” (Interviewee # 2)

“The girls didn't win or anything and they went to play for a club; we won and the

teacher still hasn't said anything."
(Interviewee # 3)

"They even said that the girls were going to get paid." (Interviewee # 2)

"The teacher said that people have been invited to play for clubs after these games."
(Interviewee # 3)

It is evident that students perceive their participation in the school's sports teams as a launching pad to become a professional sportsperson.¹⁹ They believe that by joining a team they can get internal prestige and to dream about moving up the social and economic ladder through sports. Regardless of the positive effects affirmed by the students, we noted confusion and overlapping times and venues allotted for Physical Education classes and practice. This shows that teachers responsible for this type of activity in the syllabus have failed to reach an agreement. On the other hand, it could be deemed that sports teams, drama or music workshops and the literature and Math competitions held during school time are means of encouraging talents. By all means, why can the school not have this purpose?

6 RECESS AND FREE TIME

During the observation period, we identified that activities carried out in "times" at school Euzébio Bragança are related with sports and other games and recreational activities. These "times" are self-managed by the students without teacher supervision. The school has no employee or teacher to mediate problems that may ensue from these "free times" between classes, only during recess there is a school employee that looks after the students. During recess, for example, we identified four groups. The soccer group would take over the sports court, while the other three groups would

19 It should be noted that we do not consider sports professionalization as dedicated to recreation and as non-work, but rather as a self-construction venue.

go to other venues by the sports court, namely: the dodgeball group, 'bobinho' group (a variation of dodgeball), and the table tennis group. Group organization mechanism during recess called our attention because of its singular nature, revealing a play of hierarchy among students. When arriving at the sports court and at the side facilities the group self-organize quickly compared to their participation in Physical Education classes. To this end, teacher Marta that was observing the students with us remarked:

"Now is the best time for them [referring to recess], you'll see that there's no fighting [...] we don't even have to be here." (Field Logbook 31/10/2006).

"Now is a good time [referring to recess] because they won't cause trouble." (Field Logbook, 09/11/2006).

The supposedly pacific organization, according to the teacher, can only mask other conflicts that are not visible because of the type of school organization. The process by which the sports court is appropriated during recess is structured based on gender and power relationships between the groups, where age is a determining factor. The "older boys" group controls the occupation and actions in the sports court during the times reserved for recess to play soccer. The other groups could not use the sports court during recess, and for this reason had to resort to the side facilities to do their physical activities. It should be noted that this model of self-organization of time in these venues are naturalized by teachers and employees responsible for school management. The statements below helped us understand this mechanism:

"You'll see that it's always the same group that plays; they're the best players in school and they form a kind of clique where nobody else can join in." (Field Logbook, 4 Oct 2006. Statement given by teacher Marta)

"Court occupation during recess is elitist and sexist, they (referring to the soccer group) stay there during the whole recess. Nobody

can use it.” (Field Logbook, 13 Nov 2006. Statement given by the school principle)

“The older students won’t let us play; they act like they own the sports court.” (Field Logbook, 13/11/2006. Statement given by a student from the ‘*bobinho*’ group)

In the free times, the organization model is similar to recess. Comments made by the principle and the teacher about the absence of fighting and conflicts during recess and free time are balanced by the above statement given by the student, showing that both situations are muffled by the relationship of power established in this venue based on age bracket and gender. The venue is controlled by the ‘older students’, naturalized as a ritual, where younger students occupy the ‘sideline of the sports court’ or empty venues, until they are the ‘older students’ and on their turn have the power to control the sports court. One could ask: when children are left to their own devices to organize the time and venue. Are they not being exposed to authoritarian relationships that are built based on the unequal balanced between one another? In other words, without adult supervision, e.g. teachers, inspectors and other educational agents, youngster could have to resort to violence when fending for themselves (ARENDT, 2005). In the school at hand, the ‘survival of the fittest’ that rules on how the PE time and venue use discontinued ‘times’ in comparison with other classes seems to resonate in the relationships that take place outside the school environment, specifically in terms of the community where they live.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Studying the participation of students in Physical Education classes at school Euzébio Bragança revealed that the venue and time allotted for Physical Education classes are not identified as an added value, at least for a large number of students. The reasons are part of a complex, tense and conflicting web of relationships between actors of the learning

institution, the community where it is located, different values about the creation of citizenship and the role of Physical Education within this context. We are in no way stating that we were able to determine the black box mechanism that could explain or solve these relationships, but rather only to give clues that would shed light to the dilemmas faced by the Physical Education subject in terms of time-venue in this school, and to a certain extent, in other associated environments.

In Physical Education classes, sports make up the greater part of the syllabus. We observed a high rate of students present at the venue but that did not attend class (35.5%). The total number of students present and not attending classes added to the number of absent students (15.5%) was 51%, i.e. over half of students in the classes addressed in this study do not benefit from the Physical Education subject. At first glance we could simply affirm that the school venue, specifically Physical Education classes, is not valued by the students. However, this would fail to take into account the web of relationships and conflicts that are part of the school's day-by-day. As part of their daily lives, these students have to face ongoing police raids that directly affect local businesses and institutions. Hence, the presence of students also depends on the outcome of the conflicts between the police and drug lords. Even facing this scenario, a certain group of students for different reasons use their school time in the facilities attending all classes.

In Physical Education classes, only 35% of the students chose not to join the activities because they were not wearing the uniform or simply because they did not like the teacher the activity or the subject. The uniform justification is another socially accepted excuse that conforms and justifies other types of motivations and hinders us from carrying out a more significant analysis. However, other answers given by the students show that 'like' or 'dislike' are actually the prevailing mindset for self-expression and motivation in these venues, perceived fundamentally as an environment for social

relationships. On the other hand, the pedagogical experience reported by the teacher seems to reinforce student non-participation as it accepts the 'like' or 'dislike' justification for self-exclusion from classes. We can affirm that there is a form of non-explicit dialogue on the role of PE during school time, which takes place in the school's day-by-day interactions. Furthermore, we noted internal tension among Physical Education teachers in relation to the role and goals of this subject. Tension surfaces when the issue at hand are sports teams; if they should or not break away from the Physical Education syllabus? This scenario of conflict and tension in Physical Education enabled us to question the role played by Physical Education nowadays. Should students be obliged to comply with the allotted venues and times, or should they be allowed to choose according to likes and dislikes?

The problem is that Physical Education, despite being a long-standing tradition in the venue and time of modern schools, still lacks minimal consensus in terms of educating the new generations. Alas, it seems that we are going towards the opposite way that could lead to rendering PE a legitimate subject, as fervently discussed in the '80s. In order to encourage student participation or non-participation based on 'like or 'dislike', a fundamental principle is overlooked, e.g. the class is the venue and the time to transfer knowledge, values and skills in an intentional and systemized manner.

Hence, the justification for student self-exclusion based on 'like' or 'dislike' gain momentum and generate a perverse effect on the venue-tempo for classes. When teachers and students take on this mindset without taking into account the other roles of a learning institution they end up relegating the Physical Education subject to an optional practice.

During free time and recess, younger and older students can enjoy the activities that take place in the main sports court, either games or sports. Both venue and time used randomly, as it is unsupervised by any teacher or school management. Hence, small-size venues for younger students or girls to carry

out their activities are restricted to whatever is available around the sports court. It should be pondered that if we want an equalitarian society, the time and venues for sharing knowledge and social experiences should be addressed in school syllabus. What takes place on the school yard could have a measure of interference in the subjectivity of future citizens.

Tempo e espaço para educação corporal no cotidiano de uma escola pública

Resumo: O objetivo é analisar as possibilidades de educação corporal no espaço e tempo das aulas de educação física, treinos, recreios e tempos vagos numa escola pública do Rio de Janeiro. Foram realizadas observações das aulas, dos tempos vagos e dos recreios e entrevistas com alunos e a professora. Conclui-se que o espaço e tempo das aulas não são identificados positivamente, ao menos para grande parcela de alunos. Os motivos estão intrincados numa teia complexa de tensões entre atores da instituição escolar, comunidade que acolhe a escola, diversidade de valores sobre a formação do cidadão e “função” da educação física.

Palavras-chave: Observação. Motivação. Educação Física.

Tiempo y espacio para la educación en el cuerpo a diario de una escuela pública

Resumen: El objetivo es analizar las posibilidades de La educación corporal en el espacio y el tiempo en las clases de educación física, treinos, recreos y tiempos vagos en una escuela pública en Rio de Janeiro. Se realizó La observación de las clases, recreos y tiempos vagos y entrevistas con los estudiantes y el profesor. Se concluye que el espacio y el tiempo de clases no son identificados como valor positivo, al menos para gran parte de lós estudiantes. Las razones son una intrincada red de complejas tensiones entre los actores de la escuela, que acoge a la comunidad escolar, la diversidad de valores en la formación de los ciudadanos y “función” de educación física.

Palabras clave: Observación. Motivación. Educación Física.

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