Intervention by Physical Education professionals, inter-sector management and territoriality: the case of Program *BH Citizenship*

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the intervention of Physical Education professionals in inter-sector and territory-based management of program *BH Citizenship* in the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Information was collected from observations of professional's everyday work, semi-structured interviews and comparisons to the program's documents. We conclude that in order to work with the complexity of those territories, professionals' intervention deals with issues of community mobilization; openness to participatory practices; teamwork; recognition of knowledge of different professionals and the public.
Keywords: Social vulnerability. Public policies. Sports. Leisure activities.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our research problem comprises Physical Education professionals' perceptions about new ways of conducting social policies. Such context of action has been historically defined under the precariousness of sports and leisure equipment, worker turnover, insecurity in everyday intervention, and clientelistic and functionalist orientations. Without ignoring these issues, by focusing on territorial and inter-sector principles guiding social policies, we face some specific aspects in our everyday work such as: the need

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for recognition of the Physical Education professional (FONSECA *et al.*, 2007; MINELLI, 2009; DAMICO, 2013), the community's inclusion in actions (ALMEIDA *et al.*, 2014; TSCHOKE *et al.*, 2011; PERES *et al.*, 2005) and the growing number of social projects for sports and leisure (VIANNA; LOVISOLO, 2009).

Program *BH Cidadania* (Belo Horizonte Citizenship) adopts these principles to fight poverty through the social inclusion of families living in vulnerable areas in Belo Horizonte (PREFEITURA..., 2004). We chose this case because the program interconnects social policies in health, education, social services, housing, and sports and leisure under integrated intervention units within the territories (PREFEITURA..., 2004). The Municipal Department of Sports (SMAES) is responsible for sports and leisure policies under *BH Citizenship*. The agency's technical analysts working in the program are the subjects of this study. They manage sports and leisure policies by articulating SMAES guidelines and actions with those of *BH Citizenship*.

Given the complex context of social exclusion, administrations adopt focused and inter-sector public policies to respond to those problems. Proposals focused on affirmative action such as quotas, tax incentives and special programs incorporate "[...] *positive discrimination* by ascribing priority to segments such as previously excluded *risk groups*" (FARAH, 2006, p. 61). Given its territoriality, *BH Citizenship* is an affirmative action policy that "consists in developing social planning after defining relevant regions or urban areas with certain geographical features and certain supply of goods and services" (PBH, 2005, p. 212). It refers to the structuring and delimitation of territories through georeferenced data on social, urban and health indicators that establish the vulnerable areas in the city. Space is a structuring vector since it establishes the territories of action (BRONZO, 2005).

In this sense, we approach territory as the communion of elements between spaces and subjects with their physical characteristics and their social relations (SANTOS, 2008).

We see the inter-sector principle through the perspective of complexity of subjects and territories guiding intervention (CAMPOS, 1999). That view understands subjects in the different dimensions of social life, such as health, education, housing, employment, income, culture, sports and leisure. For those subjects to be complete, these aspects must occur synergistically.

At *BH Citizenship*, the inclusion of an inter-sector orientation stems from problems of fragmentation of social policies, the existence of overlapping in social actions in vulnerable areas, where families are served by several programs with similar proposals that waste public resources mainly in fragmented investments, the difficulty of identifying social problems by sector-based work and inefficient services to the population living in risk areas who are the targets of their public policies (MOURÃO, 2007). Given these issues, the inter-sector perspective implemented is marked by the strategy of interconnecting services in the territory (BRONZO, 2005).

In this context, we ask: How does the technical analyst for sports and leisure work in inter-sector management focused on vulnerable areas under *BH Citizenship*? The results of this study can provide understandings that help Physical Education professionals working with public policy for sports and leisure to improve their intervention. It can also contribute to the program's evaluation.

2 Methodology

Qualitative research combined empirical and theoretical data to analyze Physical Education professionals' intervention through the emphasis on inter-sector management of *BH Citizenship* territories.

We adopted filters to discuss professionals' work by highlighting the guidelines of inter-sector and territorial political principles.

Empirical data come from participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The delimitation of respondents' sample considered SMAES's professional staff working in *BH Citizenship*, which include 13 technical analysts, 27 technical supervisors, and 70 facilitators. Technical analysts were selected for their status as permanent civil servants and their training in Physical Education; we also considered their continuing education and the possibility to analyze professionals from all nuclei of the program. Importantly, those individuals are responsible for making, implementing and evaluating sports and leisure policies under *BH Citizenship*. However, we consider that the 13 analysts selected have different trajectories in the program, especially considering their length of work and the ways and reasons why they joined it.

Immersion began with participant observation of analysts' routine actions such as: internal meetings at SMAES's administrative premises including sectors and representatives of the population in the territories and SMAES staff in the program's nuclei. Then we conducted the 13 interviews. We also looked at the program's documents to understand its concepts, proposals, developments and to assist in data analysis. All data were analyzed using content analysis technique (TRIVIÑOS, 1987).

3 THE PLACE OF SPORTS AND LEISURE AT *BH CITIZENSHIP'S* DESIGN

Program *BH Citizenship* is an action of the Municipal Department of Social Policy (SMPS) of the City of Belo Horizonte. Each nucleus of the program coordinates local social services within the focused territory. That coordination occurs according to strategic axes (right to health, right to education, income transfer, productive inclusion, and sociality) and are guided by the political principles of inter-sector nature, territoriality, decentralization and popular participation. During data collection, there were 27 nuclei with specific actions in sports and leisure.

Through the Inter-sector Board of Social Policies (CIPS),

SMPS should interconnect and coordinate the program's political and social actions (FARIA, 2009). CIPS is the administrative management unit designed to integrate social sectors at the central level, and each sector has its representatives in it. In the nuclei, under the responsibility of social services, coordination of actions must occur in meetings of the *Local Commission* (LC), but also in the *BH Citizenship Space*. The *Local Commission* is the organizational body proposed by the program to coordinate efforts with the local and regional service network, which should be composed of representatives of local services and the population.

BH Citizenship Space is designed to aggregate the Centers of Support to the Family (NAF), rooms for cultural activities, school tutoring and digital inclusion, and spaces for meetings and community training, as well as the program's planning activities. It also includes sports courts and preschools (UMEI). We note that not all nuclei have such a specific infrastructure to develop the program's actions.

SMAES's role, in turn, consists in providing physical spaces, equipment, sport and leisure activities, and staff. To implement sports and leisure activities, in addition to the *BH Citizenship* Space, they use specific equipment: football fields, sports courts, Community Service Centers (CAC), parks and courts. Actions also take place in public schools, private institutions, church halls and NGOs.

The implementation of interventions in strategic axes occurs by coordinating actions of municipal departments and sectors of the municipal administration (health, education, culture, social services, supply, citizenship rights, sports) and non-governmental organizations existing in each territory (BRONZO, 2005). The *sociality* axis, which is the space for direct intervention of sports and leisure policies, seeks to emphasize sociability and neighborhood relations through pedagogical, healthcare, artistic, sports and leisure, food safety and health practices.[1]

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[1]Data obtained from the *BH Citizenship* website. Available at <http://portalpbh.pbh.gov.br/pbh/

As for the place for intervention by technical analysts in sports and leisure, we observed that that they work at SMAES's administrative space, at *BH Citizenship* spaces and at the spaces granted to the program in each territory. At the Department, they formulate, plan and evaluate actions with the sports and leisure sector; in territories, in addition to managing actions with the implementation staff (supervisors and facilitators), analysts participate in the Local Commission and other inter-sector meetings. The 13 analysts manage the program's 27 nuclei, so that each analyst is responsible for two to four nuclei.

The priority of serving residents of the outskirts and slums affects the way sports and leisure technical analysts intervene. On the one hand, urbanization of those territories as clusters configures housing units with few and often inadequate spaces and equipment for sports and leisure activities. On the other hand, people served become less associational due to fragmentation of family and community bonds at those locations. Territorial complexity strains possible responses by the sector-based work and causes resistance by professions. This reality helped to define categories – territorial specificities, empowerment of subjects, organizational structure, and operational culture – to understand the relationship between Physical Education professionals' intervention and the inter-sector and territorial principles in social actions.

4 FROM A TERRITORIAL TO AN INTER-SECTOR NATURE: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION

Confronted by the guidelines of the territorial and inter-sector principles, analysts' daily work is faced with possibilities for of and limits to professional intervention. As part of territoriality, we established two issues to be discussed: precariousness of sport and leisure infrastructure and reduced social bonds among residents.

According to the inter-sector principle, the debate occurs within the relations between organizational structures (such as the Local Commission) and the operational culture (such as teamwork, recognition of knowledge and flexibility).

The issues presented here are a result of the interpretation of the analysts' perceptions about the principles involved in the description of their professional work. The first problem narrated by subjects concerns mainly the relationship between physical infrastructure and urban formation of the territories – many of which are clusters of homes with neither space nor proper structure of municipal services, especially for sports and leisure policies. Respondents' accounts showed issues relating to territorial specificities, such as precariousness, adaptations and changes in infrastructure to implement leisure actions in the territory:

> When we started, the initial nuclei used to have great difficulty with respect to equipment and structure. I believe that in order to implement it, and within the territorial boundaries [...], we sought or adapted spaces. Since then, some visible changes have taken place [...] because some nuclei have been opened and others were relocated (Respondent 3).

> Each territory has its specificity. Some have physical spaces proper for practical activities, including sports courts, often indoors; others, in turn, have no sports equipment nearby. It has to be brought from the reference point that would be the CRAS, the Reference Center for Social Services, to that location. Others don't even have that.

> The activities are often developed in inappropriate places, activities are adapted there. [...] There is no longer just CRAS; today there is *BH Citizenship*, which already includes a sports court, a hall that allows activities for elders – sports as a real part of the program's policy (Respondent 6).

Issues relating to the precariousness of specific equipment are consistent with the troubled reality of sports and leisure

policies already pointed out by Marcellino (2006). With the limits imposed by urbanization of the territories, we realize that along the development of the program, each nucleus was making changes and adjustments in the equipment. Most nuclei are no longer precarious in terms of availability of specific equipment to perform sports and leisure practices as they were in the beginning of the program, since specific equipment was built in many of them. However, there is a big difference between territories with regard to access to public services and their physical equipment structures.

By observing the nuclei we noted that most analysts have reference spaces to coordinate actions in their areas, even with major differences between them. Some analysts have specific rooms to plan, evaluate, meet with their teams and keep material, while others do that in adapted places or share them with other professionals and partners of the territory. Therefore, we consider the construction of *BH Citizenship Space* as a possibility for recognition of Physical Education professionals' intervention, due to the availability of specific equipment for planning and execution of sports and leisure activities together with other social sectors.

While infrastructure issues have marked numerous limits on Physical Education professionals' intervention, the reality of reduced social ties establishes the opposite relationship. From the initial action of SMAES professionals with professionals from the Reference Center for Social Assistance (CRAS) to implement the program until the negotiation of sports and leisure activities with the population, we see the importance and the need for their intervention:

> I think they're starting to realize that Sports and Leisure are much more than just playing ball, passing time; they have much more to offer. I think it's because of this perception and also the wide acceptance by our community that we are often used to open a few doors in the community. A nucleus has opened and which is the first policy that comes? It's sports. Why? Because sports can mobilize the community and attract more public attention (Respondent 6).

According to his experience, the respondent points out that *sports can mobilize the community and attract more public attention*. Subjects belonging to those spaces are indifferent to successive processes of exclusion, the absence of several links and low associativism; they feel that fear, mistrust and insecurity are part of local services. Therefore the motivational aspect of sports and leisure practices that attracts the public facilitates implementation of social services during the initial period of government action.

SMAES's technicians also report that the adequacy and/or insertion of subjects' demands in their work plans established participatory practices for the program. For most of them, *listening to/consulting with* the subjects in their professional work is a form of popular participation. Stigger (2003) considers that professionals' listening skills in sports and recreation policies enhance popular participation by allowing the population to appropriate decision-making power. The accounts below show this identification:

> When we move the service to the communities, we are more open *to listening*, the community *speaks*, it makes its moves, it has tastes, she has different feelings, *each territory* you pass has a different desire (Respondent 5).

> You work hard on this issue of *listening*, *of better listening to the population*, [...] you are not alone (Respondent 8).

> The *proposal of listening* more to the community in the specific action planning [...]. This idea exists when serving children. When we listen to them, they are more likely to express their interests. The same happens with teenagers or adults or the elderly. That has a consequence which is: you do not arrive there with a ready-made plan [...] to implement it in the community because that proposal might not meet their needs or at least will have to undergo some adjustments to better meet them (Respondent 11).

By linking these perspectives with the possibility of reaching, broadening or narrowing the processes of subject empowerment

corresponding to expansion of personal and collective autonomy, we identified actions of sport and leisure policies as a possibility for strengthening the social structure and establishing territorial links. We consider that form of participation as a possibility for expanding participatory dimensions in the program and fostering subjects' empowerment to be "core players in the social fabric" (VASCONCELOS, 2003, p. 43).

The emphasis on the role played by technicians in listening to subjects to build local participatory actions can represent their dominant place in decision-making spaces and in policymaking. This perspective is necessary to foster coordination of participatory practices, but it requires recognition of popular knowledge together with technical knowledge when making choices. To work in sports and leisure policies, Stigger (2003, p. 117) suggests an educator-professional:

> Thus, the listening exercise is not restricted to meeting the population's demands (which can happen in paternalistic and assistance-based policies, performed for the population in a market-like logic); it is rather a policy carried out with the population's participation, which is established in the democratization of decision-making power – the main political axis of a participatory social policy.

For the author, that might mean more than providing services, due to the conditions created for the development of a collective project. Planning territorial policies while seeking dialogue with community demands is thus contradictory with popular participation. On the one hand, it can strengthen it if it fosters autonomy, decision-making and the establishment of social and territorial ties to the subjects involved during that learning process; on the other hand, there might be clientelistic and paternalistic *antiparticipatory* practices. These, according to Stigger (2003), may cause personalization of community representatives or public services who, when addressing the community's demands, would establish dependent relationships.

In the program, incorporation of community and family needs was planned to take place by including their representatives in the *Local Commission* structure. However, we saw little population involvement in those spaces. Avritzer (2007) considers that deciding on a participatory structure is not enough to effect participation. Low mobilization and associativity in *BH Citizenship* territories may be the factors that justify low participation in the *Local Commission*. The forms of public participation in *BH Citizenship* point out to the problem found by Lipsky (1996) between planned and actual political policy.

While the Local Commission does not match planned policies because of low participation by the population, we found yet another reality in the inter-sector scope in the involvement of representatives from different local services in that committee. By taking part in some LC meetings, we approached the inter-sector proposal in the following evaluation meeting of *BH Holidays*:

> Then, they (psychologist, art educator from the culture foundation, a technician from the health center, an analyst and technical supervisor from SMAES, representatives of the integrated school, a social worker who headed the *BH Citizenship* Space, a court of justice technician, representatives of NGOs and UMEI) began to review the *BH Holidays* in July 2011. They sought to speak of the event in general and in the specifics of each topic. They said that participation of CRAS and the community in the event was rewarding. And they said that the community liked it. They underscored the little participation of the Culture sector, whose workers were on vacation, which restricted the debate about culture activities. They concluded that *BH Holidays* fosters closer relations between CRAS and *BH Citizenship*, mainly through the practice of leisure, such as the outings (Diário de campo, Belo Horizonte, 25/08/2011).

Both for the presence of several technicians and for the evaluation debate among representatives of the sectors during

the LC meeting, even in the absence of community members, we identified the joint work that was being carried out. It is also important to highlight the role of *BH Holiday* in inter-sector action because that leisure project developed by the program, which takes place in almost all nuclei, involves all sectors of social policies in its planning, implementation and evaluation process.

In addition to coordinating actions with other sectors of social policy departments at the LC, SMAES technicians also work with the program's partners at the *BH Citizenship* territory. Through local demands, they implement specific actions in each nuclei served, and their action is diverse as we can see in the reports that show the inter-sector coordination in order to address transversal issues like garbage and youth:

> There is the garbage meeting that already gathers two close quarters, that's also held monthly. [...]. There are these dialogues, these inter-sector conversations (RESPONDENT 1).

> There are programs in which meetings are transversal, ProJovem, for us, for example, we meet every month to discuss specifically the program with the partners involved (RESPONDENT 5).

The territories that coordinate transversal topics foster the inter-sector perspective in subjects' view of complexity (CAMPOS, 1999). In order to carry out the integrated work in the territories, the operational culture must adapt its ways of doing sector-based public policies. Inter-sector daily work addresses the determinants of culture at institutions and professions that encompass power relations and the unequal ideological, political and socio-technical competition to do joint work between sectors. So, I start by SMAES analysts' narratives on the operational culture that consensually sees inter-sector work as joint work between different technicians in the territory:

> Inter-sector work is *working together*, one being involved with the other. It's *knowing the work* of the other, it's *reaching out to the other*.

> [...] It's knowing the other, knowing the other's limitations, but being in dialogue with that other colleague all the time (RESPONDENT 5).

> Inter-sector work is working with all policies more integrated, more coordinated. You no longer work by yourself, you organize a certain activity and you rely on your partners. Once this principle is understood and established, it's much easier for you to work (RESPONDENT 8).

> The big challenge is *working together*. You see a problem. What's the principle? It's that the social problem today is not a problem that we'll solve just with school, or just with health, or just with social services, or just with little football fields or just with leisure. [...] Under this logic, work comes to the citizen, the family in this case, with *all policies associated and working* together (RESPONDENT 12).

According to respondents above, the way to approach the problem through inter-sector work includes working with the different sectors and professionals. We understand the differences between (1) integrating actions based on a collective definition of a problem and acting together on the whole process and (2) supporting the actions of each sector and establishing partnerships in inter-sector action. We agree with Gomà and Brugué (1994) that inter-sector work involves recognizing other sectors, other professionals, the population served and the local context. About the forms of recognition, respondents raise specific problems of leisure policies in inter-sector action and the possibilities to intervene under *BH Citizenship*:

> Sports policies today, as I see them, unfortunately, not everyone, but there is still that perspective of spectacle, of mobilizing [...] much more as a backdrop for things and not as a right [...]. *Most still see it that way, as spectacle and mass mobilization.* If the activities of a certain CRAS are to start, let's hold a leisure street, call people and draw attention. Because what draws attention is a leisure street. Then there is that leisure activity

by itself, totally meaningless (RESPONDENT 2).

To develop inter-sector actions, *you have to recognize that your knowledge in your area is complementary*, it is not superior to any other knowledge. And it's complicated, because at first you had an understanding that led to some hierarchy of those knowledges, that is, other thematic departments saw their action as more important than others. (...) Today I think it's more OK, over time you build it, but in the beginning it was very difficult to implement these principles in practice because it demands that *you change professionals' attitudes and it's complicated*. (...) The issue of you even really having professional vanities in field of knowledge (RESPONDENT 8).

The role played by sports within BH Citizenship is recognized by the other partners, by the other departments. I realize that people consider it to be a policy and they don't see it as an offer of activities. They leave and it's over. They know the importance of that practice, its benefits and results, they know what it represents for the community, they know that it represents improvement in quality of life for those people (RESPONDENT 10).

Professional recognition can determine inter-sector action between professionals involved. By analyzing respondents' statements about recognition at *BH Citizenship*, we realized that they consider it difficult because of the clash between visions on sports and leisure policies associated with the nature of *spectacle, mobilization and accessory*, in addition to *appreciation* of those policies and their practices, and the *hierarchy of values*, knowledges and social segments. It also involves recognition of professionals who intervene in sports and leisure policies, who have their work *subdued* by others during their participation in the program. When actors understand the multiplicity of knowledge and interests of professions, of rules and values of sector-based institutions and territorial conditions of the community served, the political game

in inter-sector action allows identifying the different dimensions of that process.

However, respondents report that the performance of SMAES analysts is responsible for the current recognition of their work under the *BH Citizenship* strategy. We agree that the current recognition is due to the commitment of the analysts' role in inter-sector action, but we also consider the following factors: qualifications of those professionals; low turnover of those public servants; staying in the same region and nuclei, in some cases; and government incentives to their professional qualification. Incentives for training range from government financial investment to internal training, such as: "The graduate school I'm attending is paid by the City" (RESPONDENT 4), "A great training moment coordinated by Professor Leila Mirtes" (RESPONDENT 8) and "Every post-graduation studies you have, you get a 5% raise, for example" (RESPONDENT 9).

However, some narratives include views that fragment the ways of doing politics under the *BH Citizenship* strategy. In some nuclei, it corresponds to dilution of communication between sectors, difficulty to share information, spaces and actions, and also prevalence of dominant professions' knowledge and values over other services. These difficulties may represent forms of resistance by different political actors to inter-sector work, as shows by accounts:

> The schools, they are self-sufficient, they have Physical Education teachers, they have courts, they have everything. We came with a service that depended on the principal's profile, the profile of the health center manager, of what they believed in (...) if they did not need it much, they would create that barrier, because they do not embrace our entry into school and the health center (RESPONDENT 1).

> Another issue is weekly activities. Thus the practice of physical activity, even if it is with the main principle of socialization, I don't think it should be offered only once a week.

(RESPONDENT 10).

> I don't see that *inter-sector work going as well as I see in other regional sections*. I see some... I don't know if it's because they have changed the analysts of this nuclei so many times – that can be a problem – but I don't see the Sports section only as a leisure street event where we lend toys (RESPONDENT 13).

The fragmented view corresponds to problems to understand the purpose of the program regarding technical knowledge that does not understand the process of the integral unit of inter-sector intervention. We understand and agree with that concern about the frequency of those served in sports and leisure practices raised by Respondents 10 and 13. However, if subjects are being fully served, bonds resulting from socialization do not correspond only to the action of the sports and leisure team, and the process will be complemented with the work of other professionals. Actions of sports and leisure policies in the territory should cause interaction between technical and political aspects so as to minimize their overlaps and thus allow higher engagement by professionals.

Analysts' views on inter-sector work represent, in the operational culture of the professionals involved in *BH Citizenship*, a way of doing politics in which political actors must act together. Therefore, ways of working with other social segments vary among the issues of: technical recognition; multidimensional or technical view; facing the institutional and professional culture; information sharing; spaces; subjects served; and problems and forms of resistance. Therefore, flexibility in everyday intervention is required for them to adhere to the learning processes resulting from this practical experience. The new knowledge coming from inter-sector action focused on the territory derive from local practical experiences, through exchanges between sectors and through dialogue between professionals and the community in the territory.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In spite of limitations and criticisms, *BH Citizenship*'s history in social policy management is consistent with its goal of targeting families in territories of vulnerability. Therefore, it adopts the form of management that brings public services closer to the population in territories served and implements organizational structures to enable inter-sector action and popular participation. These paths are full of uncertainties arising from the problem of coping with poverty, as well as conflicts of interest between government and technicians, distinct technicians, and technicians and the population.

At *BH Citizenship*, we observed that the motivational nature of sports and leisure policies is crucial to the process of raising community awareness. The professional educator is essential to work with sports and leisure practices in order to strengthen the social fabric in territories of vulnerability. Meanwhile inter-sector collaboration has difficulty to involve different local representatives, whether they are health technicians or residents in an integrated agenda. The case of Project *BH Holidays* is a possibility to solve this problem.

These processes involve recognition or not of Physical Education professionals. Facing the culture of institutions and professions in order to establish recognition of the field of sports and leisure policies is also essential for the recognition of Physical Education professionals. The two processes – raising community awareness and the project *BH Holidays* – are examples of contexts where SMAES technicians break away from those historic constructions.

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