

Sports technique in physical education classes: a look at socio-cultural tendencies

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Abstract: The teaching of sports technique in physical education classes is a very controversial subject. We would like to emphasize that what has called our attention is the misconception that to treat a sport critically is the same as criticizing the teaching of the technique. Several factors have contributed to this reality, among which we suspect is a lack of understanding concerning the socio-cultural trends of a sport. Thus, the objective of this study was to investigate the technical aspects of sports in the teaching of physical education, specifically within the scope of socio-cultural trends. Throughout the text, we also identify new purposes for teaching sports techniques, such as concern for the interests of students who exercise and consideration for these students' cultures. Moreover, we propose that classes not be restricted to the performance of certain movements, as they should also include teaching of the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the sports universe.

Keywords: Teaching. Physical education and training. Cultural characteristics.

1 INTRODUCTION

Elementary and higher education faculty constantly debate what should be taught in physical education classes.

Despite opposing viewpoints, in recent years a consensus has emerged among socio-cultural tendencies involving what lessons should be taught and learned by students of physical education, more specifically, understanding of “culture of the body,” “culture of body movement,” or “culture of movement.”

For instructors, the physical education curriculum needs to deal with the manifestations of this culture, such as sports, games, dance, gymnastics, etc. However, educators disagree about what approaches to take to these manifestations of the body and what the role of physical education is in the school.

In general, in recent decades socio-cultural approaches to physical education have set forth severe criticism of the relationship between physical education and sport, emphasizing its reproductivist and conservative characteristics.

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In the analysis of Bracht (2000), for example, the critiques concerning the educational role of sports within a school setting generated a series of mistakes and misunderstandings, which brought consequences to the instructor's pedagogical practice.

The first mistake is the belief that those who criticize sports are against sports. This is a Manichean point-of-view—either one is in favor of sports or one is against sports. Thus, critiques follow a pattern of abolishing and denying sports as part of physical education classes.

Another misunderstanding is the one represented by the opposition between efficiency and recreation, which are considered distinct and opposite poles, attributing everything that is wrong with a sport to efficiency and everything that is right to play. This misunderstanding also points out that to view a sport critically would be the same as substituting movement in favor of reflection (BRACHT, 2000).

Among these misconceptions, one in particular called our attention, and this will be the focal point of analysis of this article. According to Bracht (2000), treating a sport critically is the same as being against sports technique. Therefore, those who treat a sport critically, deny its technique and consider those who use it technicians.

Bracht (2000) states that pedagogical proposals elaborated with a critical emphasis have not sought to abolish the teaching of sports technique, therefore, denying the learning of the motor dexterities associated with sports. Instead, they propose the teaching of these techniques filled with other meanings, objectives, and purposes. In Bracht's words: "What was criticized and is criticized still, is the unconscious subordination not to the technique itself, but to the purpose served by this particular technique" (BRACHT, 2000, p. xvii).

What are some of the new proposals concerning the teaching of sports? Have they really collaborated to a new vision of the teaching of sports techniques, or are there still doubts?

Thus, the objective of the present study is to investigate the conception of sports technique in the teaching of physical education, within the scope of socio-cultural tendencies.

We have opted for this theme because we, as well as Bracht (2000), have perceived many misunderstandings concerning the teaching and learning of sports techniques. However, we do understand that instructors have doubts concerning the role that technique should occupy when teaching sports to students.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the precursors to addressing technique from a socio-cultural point-of-view was stated in a classic text titled “Metodologia do Ensino da Educação Física” (Soares *et al* 1992). According to the authors of this text, this is an emergent pedagogy whose purpose is to respond to the interests and anxieties of the working class. This pedagogy intends to do this through premises related to the perspective of culture of the body of this particular social class, pointing out and building routes for social transformation.

Soares *et al* (1992) also heavily criticized sports and their relationship to physical education, and denounced the state of physical education’s subordination to the principals and codes of the sports institution, such as athletic efficiency, competition, efficiency comparisons, etc. Moreover, it emphasized that sports reproduce the results of a capitalist society, and as such, they are a form of social control through the athlete’s adaptation to the values and interests of this society.

In the Soares *et al* (1992) article, sports is considered a social phenomenon—a premise of the culture of the body—and deserves to be offered in school; however, it is necessary to question and analyze this phenomenon in order to demystify it.

With relation to sports technique, the authors caution that the teaching of a sport cannot be consumed by technicalities. In spite of this reservation, the authors clarify that these techniques can be taught; however, instructors should not be limited by them:

To limit the teaching of technicalities does not mean to remove it from physical education classes in schools because it is believed that to say a student has “knowledge” of a certain game that has been turned into a sport is not the same as saying the student dominates the sport’s technicalities (SOARES *et al*, 1992, p.71).

In this proposal to overcome criticism, it is evident that the teaching and learning of technicalities can be made available to students; however, its main purpose is for the pedagogical practices of the instructor to promote reflection and analysis of the economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of these practices, not excluding the cultural knowledge of the technique itself.

Kunz (2004) relied on the analysis of sports in our society. In his text, the author weaves many criticisms to this cultural manifestation, emphasizing the principles by which it is ruled, such as objective comparison and overshadowing, which lead to selection, especialization, and instrumentation.

To overcome this reality, the author proposes a pedagogic theory that is tied to an emancipatory communicative didactic. For this freedom to be effective, it must pass from an initial state characterized by false conscience and self-imposed coercion to a final state in which one is freed from this false conscience and self-imposed coercion (KUNZ, 2004). In the case of sports, a false conscience would be to consider a highly efficient sport the model to be followed by all and any persons, and to subject these persons to the physical requirements and techniques of this model. In that case, it would be characterized as self-imposed coercion.

Returning to the specific interests of this study, what would be Kunz's (2004) view about the question of technique within the teaching and learning process of sports?

Kunz (2004) clarifies that the great evolution of sports is owed to scientific and technological progress; however, this evolution has also contributed to the emergence of stereotyped exercises within the practice of a sport.

In this sense, Kunz (2004) considers exercise without subjectivity an alienation factor. The teaching and learning process must be concentrated upon the person performing the exercises and not the exercises that this person is performing, taking into consideration the interests, feelings, and meanings that each person attributes to these exercises.

Kunz (2004) also states there are several elements within the teaching of sports that impede subjectivity. This occurs because there are no opportunities for experiments and self-created movements, only for pre-established exercise (KUNZ, 2004).

Despite the author's criticisms with respect to sports, he does not appear to be against the teaching of sports technique. What he points out is that these movements can be reached; however, this will not be the main objective of classes that have a criticism-free focus. According to the author, the form and movements that prioritize technique need to be reformulated within the teaching of physical education (KUNZ; SOUZA, 2003).

From this author's ideas, we can infer that the technique can be performed by the student, but the teaching of the sport within this ideal will emphasize the creation of movements according to individual and collective experiences, which will make sense and have meaning to the person practicing these movements. These movements may not approximate the most efficient technical standard; however, students will be allowed to practice them autonomously, leisurely, solidarily, cooperatively, participatively, and above all, these movements will develop the students' creative and critical capabilities.

Kunz's (2000) analysis of sports through a phenomenological approach indicates a teaching of sports that attends to aspects related to perception, sensibility, and intuition, and affirms that these aspects are important to the quality of execution of different exercises. The phenomenological perception of sports is determined by the exercises one performs and, at the same time, the exercises one performs are determined by this perception. This allows us to state that one's perception of correct performance of an exercise will be the criteria for the formation of movement in a personal sense.

Kunz (2000, p. vii) states:

In sports, I achieve the greatest number of successes when I kick the ball towards the goal or shoot the ball towards the basket, and not when I correctly follow the technical indications and external commands of standard movement, but when I begin to feel that the movement was correctly executed. It is a sensation of "I got it!" [...]. Is it possible that excessive external commands during the execution of a movement in a sport could eliminate this valuable knowledge?

Kunz's questioning of the individual perception of correct performance in the execution of movements seems plausible; however, the uncertainty that arises is in relation to students who experience few opportunities to perform an exercise correctly. In this case, what is the role of instructors? Will instructors provide information and demonstration of exercises that they consider more efficient? Or, will instructors allow students to experiment until these students achieve success without interference from instructors?

We believe that it should be the compounding of these two factors. Students feel, perceive, and live the experience, while instructors provide them with some information. If not, we run the risk of restricting ourselves to an unjustified empirism in which students learn only by trial and error. In this case, we would be obligating students to "reinvent the wheel" with each try.

Daólio (2004a, 2004b), with the support of a group of anthropologists, has brought important contributions to the theme of technique within physical education.

To develop the notion of body technique, Daólio (2004b) uses Mauss (1974) as a basis for stating that body techniques are ways in which humans, in each society and in a traditional manner, know how to make use of their bodies. Mauss (1974) considers body movements an expression of the elements within a specific society. As such, there are no

natural movements, for movements have been determined by the culture in which they are socialized, translating the values of a specific group of people.

Another aspect emphasized by Mauss (1974) is that these body movements, more specifically body techniques, are incorporated by members of society through what he calls prestigious imitation. Children and adults imitate gestures performed by people of prestige or by people whom they trust, and who, in a way, have achieved success in the performance of these movements.

Moving this discussion to the scope of physical education, Daólio (2004b) states that the understanding of a technique has been traditionally linked to the efficient execution of the movements—an execution recognized as precise and correct. Thus, movements that do not resemble these models should be the target of interventions so that these may be perfected. For the author, the privileging of the efficient dimension of movement within physical education has put aside the symbolic dimensions thus losing the opportunity to consider the body capable of producing and expressing a cultural dynamic. Daólio (2004b) also adds that the majority of physical education studies give technique instrumental treatment. Movements deemed efficient are collected for a specific sports modality and organized in stages so that these may be learned.

Mauss (1974) also stated that members of a society incorporate the body techniques of individuals endowed with prestige or who have reached success in the execution of specific exercises.

Thinking of sports, what is the model endowed with prestige that is imitated and incorporated by students? Certainly, in most cases, it is the movements of highly efficient athletes. Many times, it has been observed that students break the basket from basketball backboards of schools as they try to dunk, copying the highly efficient model they have observed in the media. Maybe the biggest problem was for school physical education programs to have adopted, unconditionally, not only the movements and techniques of a sport, but also the codes, meanings, and objectives of the efficient sports model, such as exclusion and selection.

In a revealing paragraph concerning the teaching of techniques, Daólio (2004a) provides clues that the teaching of technical movements would be possible in certain circumstances. However, he does not identify which circumstances these would be: “[...] there is no better or more correct technique than the virtue of clearly explicit objectives and within which there exists a consensus between instructor and students (DAÓLIO, 2004^a, p. 95).

Discussing the pedagogy of collective sports, Daólio (2002) states that in a traditional perspective, sports technique has always been the center of attention. In this mode of understanding the sport, well diffused within the country, it is believed that students can play volleyball well when they correctly perform the fundamentals of the sport (forearm pass, set, and spike). Within the new point-of-view, the author, supported by Claude Bayer, emphasizes that technical dimension does not guarantee access to an intelligent player, since to play well implies an understanding of the logical structure of collective sports. Moreover, the author believes collective sports modalities can be placed into a single category because they have common characteristics.

In this text, the author also incorporates one more reason, with which we agree, for the minimization of the role played by sports techniques within physical education classes, because in this view, what matters is the understanding of the dynamics of the game.

When we refer specifically to the technical movements of high-level athletes, we are referring to their plasticity and efficiency. However, we must remember that this technique cannot be taught immediately to all students for two main reasons. First, because the learning of these movements demands a lot of training time; and secondly, because culturally situated students may have other movement interests.

At the end of Daolio's text (2002), he defends the pendulum model in which technique is taught after the game is understood. He later makes an important exception, reminding us that for Mauss any movement constitutes a body technique because it possesses a translation and a meaning within a specific group. Thus, for the author, in the beginning of the learning process, a student may shoot the ball towards the hoop with both hands, or receive the ball with a punch in volleyball; therefore, students are using intelligent actions with the technique they possess through their specific cultural context.

We agree with the author that the understanding of the tactical aspects, what to do, must precede the fragmented teaching of the technical movements. We must recognize the importance of initiating students in a specific modality through the understanding of the objectives and dynamics of the game itself.

However, it seems as if doubt persists. At what moment, after understanding of the game has occurred, is it appropriate to teach students the possibilities of the technical movements? To use one of the author's examples, until what moment of the learning process should/could the student continue shooting the ball with two hands or receiving the

volleyballs with punches, without the instructor presenting techniques that are more effective?

There is no definitive answer because each context has its own characteristics and involves students with diverse past experiences.

We defend the statement that information about technical movements should be offered after the game is understood, as long as this information makes sense to the student. In the same way, there should not be exaggerated expectation of those students who are unable to perform the movements in a correct manner. We would also like to clarify that, as stated by Daólio (2002), students will have few opportunities to practice technical movements repeatedly in school. What is expected is that students should have the opportunity to learn the technique even if they choose to keep shooting with two hands. This should not keep students from reaching the objectives of knowing, practicing, and appreciating the sport.

Even so, after the game is understood, we can still question when sports techniques should be offered.

We still remember a situation that happened a long time ago when we taught swimming (therefore different from the collective sports examples pointed out by the author). According to pedagogic recommendation, we offered activities that involved diversified experiences in the water in a recreational manner, without concern for the execution of the movements or the technicalities of the four swimming forms.

We were surprised when a seven-year-old girl approached the edge of the pool and asked; “Now I would like to know what to do with my hand?” How should she get into the water? In other words, what the student was asking was about the technique of swimming. That is, in this example, we lacked the perception that the moment to teach front crawl swimming had arrived.

In summary, Daólio (2002; 2004a; 2004b) views technique as every body movement, and each culture impresses upon the bodies of its members a series of identifying values. The contribution exists in the sense that physical education should take into consideration the cultural aspects of its practice, recognizing the resources of the body with which each student arrives at school, and not only the value of biological characteristics. In addition, it is possible to infer from his analyses that no technique is better than the other; therefore, there is also room for what we call sports technique, which is just another form of body technique. However, even though the author recognizes the

need for learning the dimensions of collective sports, he also believes that these movements must be introduced in a second stage, after the intelligent understanding of the sport has been achieved through the recognition and experimentation of its operational principals and rules of action.

Mauro Betti (1994; 1999) is another representative of socio-cultural tendencies within physical education. In his work, he does not specifically discuss the theme of sports technique; however, from his reflections it is possible to assemble a few relevant ideas that allow us to illuminate the field of sports technique in physical education school programs.

Dealing with the axiological and teleological dimensions of physical education, Betti (1994) states that physical education should be able to offer students motivations that generate an emotion. The goal is to integrate students into the sphere of culture of body movement, allowing students to find motivations to practice a physical activity. Betti also emphasizes that pedagogic action with these objectives will be filled with emotion and connection, but that the knowledge dimension, made possible through language, is essential for the student to attribute value to the manifestations of the culture of body movement.

In a study of physical education and its relationship to the formation of citizenship, Betti (1999) points out a few important principals for its consolidation, among which are complete formation—complete integration of the human dimensions. In a passage from Betti's reflection, it is possible to obtain some information about how he understands sports technique:

When we speak of learning a sport, it is the same thing. If instructors want to teach basketball, they need to teach the specific abilities of the modality. However, these must be integrated to other dimensions of the sport: affective (it is necessary to like basketball); cognitive (for example, it is necessary to understand the rules as something that makes the game possible, the organization of the sport, and the possibilities of access to the sport in our environment); and social (learn to form a group to be able to play basketball). (BETTI, 1999, p. 87).

Betti (1994; 1999) is not explicitly concerned about the discourse of teaching sports technique. In his articles, there is criticism of how this manifestation was developed in the Brazilian context, throughout the decades of 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Some proposals supporting a teaching of the sport in which students are not restricted by the practice of the specific abilities of each modality, but it recognizes that learning these movements is one

of the necessary dimensions to whole formation, taking into account the affective, cognitive, and social dimensions.

More recently, while reflecting with other authors, Betti *et al* (2007), emphasized some of the implications of the phenomenology to the physical education didactic. The authors state that physical education needs to let students experience the original movement of the sport, what they call the moving gesture. Thus, a first experience with a sport should not be marked by predetermined movements; instead, it should be marked by movements that allow a learner to know the sport through original movement and not by the imitation of standard predetermined movements. However, the authors do recognize that no movement is completely new; a movement might be new to a person in the field of perception but it is not in the field of culture. For example, the authors state that when a player is playing soccer, the player is naturally invoking the movements of all those who one day practiced the sport. We can infer from these considerations that many sports techniques, even though they may not have been experienced by a student's body, are "culturally recognized" within the student's imagination, where the student has previously been in contact with the technique.

Returning to the ideas of Kunz (2000/1; 2004) and Daólio (2002; 2004a; 2004b) it is possible to identify a common interest in breaking away from the teaching and learning of sports based on the dimension of efficient movement. Instead, we suggest that more attention be given to the person doing the movement and the aspects connected to this person's culture, taking into consideration the person's interests and desire to perform the movements. This is in addition to the need better discern the moment in which a technique should be introduced, certainly, after students are able to understand the objectives and dynamics of a collective game.

With relation to Soares *et al* (1992) and Betti (1994; 1999), there is a concern that the teaching and learning process of this practice not be restricted only to the performance of the movements when these are learned. In addition, the pedagogic practice within physical education also should be concerned with the dimension of knowledge, and more specifically, knowledge of the social, political, economic, and cultural universe, which fills sports manifestations.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this text, we have tried to investigate people's views of sports technique in the teaching of physical education from a socio-cultural scope.

Among the authors, there is an interest in presenting other goals for teaching and learning techniques so that besides those adopted by the traditional models there are those adopted by the sport. What is proposed is that the technical movements become a privileged means to reach other educational goals.

These techniques must be understood as patrimony to be transmitted to the students, for these are historically created movements, products of a cultural dynamic that should be preserved. It is also necessary to recognize technique as one of the elements of the culture of body movement that can give those who practice it the autonomy of leisure and the analysis of the sports spectacle, as long as it assumes the role of mean and not the role of end.

In this way, Pires and Neves (2005) emphasize that it is fundamental to know the techniques of a sport in order to find pleasure within it and/or in order to view it as an appreciative spectator. How one views a sport does not deny the role of technique, it causes one to rethink this role within both space and time.

The severe criticism sports has received due to its relationship to physical education has led to innumerable misunderstandings, among these the belief that a critical teaching of the sport should be given preference over the teaching of the technique.

Analyzing some of the socio-cultural tendencies, we have learned that the intention is not to abolish the teaching of sports techniques in sports.

What is being proposed is a new approach to the teaching and learning process of these movements. One that considers the specific context in which are the students as well as their interests and desires while "in movement." Researchers are also concerned that classes should include explicit knowledge of the sport as a whole and not only the exclusive practice of the sports' specific movements. Even so, when there is interest in teaching the sports techniques of collective modalities, researchers warn that this learning process must occur after the dynamics of the game are understood.

We would also like to point out that technical moves should not be a necessary and indispensable condition for the student to experience and practice a sport. These factors should not limit and exclude some of the students from participating of the classes, instead, we propose that students should make the moves their own; reproducing them and transforming them according to their own abilities—may these be material or related to the

move itself. This premise does not exclude the instructor's option of presenting technical moves to students because the decision to adopt or discard these movements will be made by the student, according to the student's own aspirations and needs.

With respect to the teaching of sports in school within the space/time of the physical education program, this teaching will occur as an introduction to the sports techniques; an environment in which students have their first contact with these movements. On the other hand, if we take into consideration the many objectives to be reached, this does not seem to be the adequate space/time for the exclusive, prolonged, and intensive training of specific sports techniques. Maybe this role should be delegated to specific sports schools, in which students choose the sport in which they would like to achieve technical excellence, because besides being granted many long practice periods, this is also one of the fundamental aspects of learning these movements.

We would also like to highlight that learning a technique is not antagonistic to pleasure and recreation in class. These aspects can all occur simultaneously and complementarily, depending on the type of pedagogical intervention used by the instructor; thus, the importance of the instructor's ability to recognize the appropriate moments and ways of teaching the technique. As stated by Caparroz and Bracht (2007), physical education instructors need to be autonomous with respect to pedagogic practice. They must try to build and rebuild their competence so that they do not become hostages of manuals written by other university researchers and/or instructors. Added to this, is the fact that instructors work in environments that are highly complex, uncertain, unstable, unique, and filled with moral conflict, and the teaching of technique is only one of the elements that form this image.

In this sense, the inquiries and practices of instructors should no longer be concerned with the teaching or not of technique, they should be concerned with rethinking the role occupied by these techniques when the sport is taught, keeping in mind the critical formation of the students.

A técnica esportiva em aulas de educação física: um olhar sobre as tendências sócio-culturais

Resumo: O ensino da técnica esportiva em aulas de Educação Física é assunto bastante polêmico. É preciso destacar que chama-nos atenção o mal-entendido de que tratar o esporte de forma crítica seria o mesmo que ser contra o ensino da técnica. Diversos fatores contribuíram na configuração dessa realidade, dentre eles suspeitamos da incompreensão das propostas elaboradas no âmbito das tendências sócio-culturais. Assim, o objetivo desse trabalho foi investigar a concepção de técnica esportiva no ensino da Educação Física, no âmbito das tendências sócio-culturais. Ao longo do

texto é possível identificar novas finalidades quanto ao ensino das técnicas esportivas como, a preocupação com os interesses dos alunos que se movimentam, consideração do repertório cultural desses alunos, além de propor que as aulas não se restrinjam à realização desses movimentos, mas também incluam o conhecimento do universo social, político, econômico e cultural das manifestações esportivas.

Palavras -Chave: Ensino. Educação Física e treinamento. Características culturais

La técnica deportiva en clases de educación física: una mirada sobre las tendencias socio-culturales.

Resumen: La enseñanza de la técnica deportiva en clases de Educación Física es un asunto polémico. Es necesario destacar que nos llama la atención el mal-entendido de que tratar el deporte de forma crítica sería el mismo que ser contrario a la enseñanza de la técnica. Diversos factores contribuyeron en la configuración de esta realidad, dentro ellos sospechamos de la incompreensión de las propuestas elaboradas en el ámbito de las tendencias socio-culturales. Siendo así, el objetivo de este trabajo fue investigar la concepción de la técnica deportiva de la enseñanza de la Educación Física, en el ámbito de las tendencias socio-culturales. Al transcurrir del texto es posible identificar nuevas finalidades cuanto a la enseñanza de las técnicas deportivas como, la preocupación con los intereses de los alumnos que se movimentan, consideración del repertorio cultural de estos alumnos, a parte de proponer que las clases no se restrinjan a la realización de estos movimientos, pero también incluyan el conocimiento del universo social, político, económico y cultural de las manifestaciones deportivas.

Palabras -Clave: Enseñanza. Educación y entrenamiento físico. Características culturales.

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