




Experience report in early childhood education: Olympic education and women's soccer with a focus on inclusion

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ABSTRACT

This report presents a pedagogical experience in Early Childhood Education, focusing on children under 5 years old, including those with special needs. From Elenor Kunz's critical-emancipatory perspective, several playful and motor activities were developed, adapted from the Olympic Manual and other official materials, which stimulated creativity, cooperation, mutual respect and the appreciation of differences. The experience demonstrates the importance of offering opportunities to experience sport in a pleasant and meaningful way, contributing to the formation of fairer citizens.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Olympic Education, Inclusion, Child Development, Public Health.

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education, throughout history, has assumed different roles in the formation of the individual. From the school perspective, it aimed to be a means of preparing young people for adult life and work, and the discipline evolved to a broader perspective, which values movement as a form of expression, socialization and learning. However, contemporary society, marked by the crisis of childhood inactivity and the excessive use of technologies, presents new challenges for this practice.

In view of this scenario, this experience report proposes to discuss the possibility of promoting Olympic education and critical-emancipatory physical education with children under 5 years of age. The choice of this theme is justified by the need to expand the opportunities for everyone, especially girls, to participate in sports. The literature on child development highlights the importance of physical activity for children's physical and mental health. However, research such as that by Guthold et al. (2020), which reveals a significant disparity in the practice of physical activities between girls and boys, highlights the need for specific interventions to promote gender equality.

In addition, Olympic education, with its values of respect, friendship and excellence, offers a rich repertoire for the formation of fairer citizens. The articulation between social sports projects of Olympic education and their partnership with formal education is a gap that could present positive results (Perovano-Camargo, 2022).

The general objective of this report was to investigate the effects of a pedagogical proposal on the integral development of children in early childhood education. Specifically, it was sought to: (1) analyze the development of children's motor skills; (2) to evaluate the impact of the proposal on socialization and the construction of values; and (3) identify the challenges and potentialities of implementing the proposal in inclusive classes.

The research is based on the critical-emancipatory perspective of Elenor Kunz, who defends the importance of autonomy and the collective construction of knowledge in physical education. In addition, the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC) and the IOC Olympic Manual provide theoretical and practical subsidies for the implementation of pedagogical practices that promote health, well-being and the formation of critical and participatory citizens.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this report converges to the understanding of Physical Education as a fundamental field for the integral development of the individual. Elenor Kunz (1996), in her work 'The didactic-pedagogical transformation of sport', proposes a critical view of the traditional teaching of sport, defending the valorization of autonomy and the collective construction



of knowledge. This perspective is echoed in the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), which emphasizes play, diversity and the integral development of the child.

The BNCC highlights the field of experiences 'Body, gestures and movements' (not being the only one possible to work in Physical Education, but the most requested by the pedagogical team), corroborating the importance of the development of fundamental motor skills (MFH), as pointed out by Tani (2021). The author, in his comparative analysis between the developmental approach and physical activity programs, emphasizes that MFH are fundamental for both motor development and health.

However, Tani (2021, p. 245) warns that "the acquisition of motor skills, whether fundamental or specific, has a goal in itself". This view is considered limited by many critics due to its essentially motor character, however, within the specificity that is expected from Physical Education, this motor "literacy" could determine the opportunities to move in the future, co-determining biological indices of avoidance of chronic diseases, and access to sports, health, and leisure programs. Despite the criticism of the reductionist character of this approach, a "complementary" view is expected to give a broader character to the pedagogical perspective.

The IOC's manual 'The Fundamentals of Education to Olympic Values' (2017) complements this discussion by presenting a set of values and pedagogical practices that can be integrated into Physical Education. In upholding excellence, respect and friendship, the IOC (2017) emphasises that the most important thing would not be to win, but to participate, progress and benefit from the healthy combination of body, spirit and will.

In summary, this theoretical framework demonstrates the relevance of Physical Education for the integral development of the individual, focusing on autonomy, diversity and the appreciation of movement as a form of expression and learning. Kunz's works, the BNCC and the IOC manual provide theoretical and practical subsidies for the implementation of pedagogical practices that promote health, well-being and the formation of critical and participatory citizens.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND DETAILING OF ACTIVITIES

The activities were developed in several Early Childhood Education classes, with children under 5 years old, including those with special needs. The choice of this age group represented a challenge, considering that the Olympic Manual (OVEP) and other official materials are aimed at older children. However, the pedagogical team, in partnership with a specialist in special education, adapted the activities to meet the needs and interests of all children.



THE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES WERE AS FOLLOWS

Athlete Painting

"The painting of athletes provided a space for artistic expression and the construction of identities. By representing female and male athletes in different sports, the children not only developed their fine motor skills, but also expanded their repertoires about the sports universe, challenging gender stereotypes and promoting equality. This activity, in line with the principles of Olympic education, encouraged the appreciation of diversity."

Finger football game

"The game of finger soccer, in addition to developing fine motor coordination and concentration, stimulated strategic reasoning and decision-making. This activity, which requires precision and control, contributed to the development of cognitive and motor skills, preparing children for more complex sports activities. By playing in pairs or small groups, the students learned to cooperate and deal with victory and defeat, fundamental values for the practice of sports."

Ball dribbling in mixed groups

"Driving the ball in mixed groups was an opportunity for the children to experience the importance of teamwork and respect for differences. By interacting with peers of different abilities and characteristics, students developed social skills such as cooperation, empathy, and communication. This activity also contributed to the construction of a culture of inclusion, where everyone feels valued and respected."

Hitting the target

"The activity of hitting the goal, in addition to developing motor coordination and precision, provided moments of celebration and overcoming challenges. By receiving the support and cheering of their classmates, the children experienced the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship. This activity, in line with the principles of Olympic education, contributed to the development of self-esteem and confidence."

Notions of care

"Using stuffed animals as a metaphor, the children explored the importance of caring for others. This activity, which involved the expression of affection and responsibility for life, contributed to the development of empathy. By taking care of the pets, the children learned to value life in all its forms."



Planting and harvesting

"The planting and harvesting activity provided the children with a concrete experience with the cycle of life, fostering environmental awareness and the importance of healthy eating. By following the growth of the plants, the students developed patience, perseverance and respect for nature. This activity also contributed to the development of fine motor skills, such as the manipulation of gardening tools, and to the understanding of basic concepts of biology."

Watching and celebrating games

"The experience of watching women's soccer games provided the children with the opportunity to identify with female athletes and to understand the importance of sport for women. By celebrating victories and following plays, students developed a sense of community and sportsmanship. This activity also contributed to the deconstruction of gender stereotypes."

Futebo

"Soccer, in addition to working on motor coordination and balance, stimulated the notion of space and time, precision and strength. By knocking down the cones with the ball, the children experienced the feeling of conquest and overcoming challenges. This playful activity contributed to the development of self-esteem and confidence."

Play circuits and motors

"The play and motor circuits were designed to meet the needs and interests of each child, providing challenges appropriate to their level of development. By overcoming the obstacles, the students developed motor coordination, balance, agility and strength. This activity also contributed to the improvement of concentration and attention."

Field of Sleepers

"The travinhas field offered a free space for children to explore their motor and social skills. By playing soccer spontaneously, students developed creativity, imagination and the ability to work as a team. This activity also contributed to socialization and the construction of positive interpersonal relationships."

Visit to a sports project

"The visit to an official sports project was an enriching experience, which allowed the children to experience different sports in a professional environment. By practicing soccer on the official field, athletics and long jump, the students expanded their motor repertoires and had the



opportunity to learn about new sports. This activity also contributed to the formation of healthy lifestyle habits and to the appreciation of physical activity."

Picnic in a sand field

"The picnic in a sand field provided a moment of relaxation and socialization, allowing the children to play freely and explore the natural environment. This activity contributed to the development of autonomy, creativity and the ability to interact with colleagues. By playing in the sand, the children also developed sensory and motor skills."

Mural

"The mural with photos and drawings of the children practicing different sports and playing served as a visual record of the evolution of each student and the success of the project. This activity provided a sense of belonging and pride, encouraging the children to continue practicing physical activities and seek new challenges."

ADAPTATIONS TO THE OLYMPIC MANUAL AND IOC ACTIVITY PLANS

Based on the Olympic manual and in dialogue with special education experts, our activities provided the children with a rich and meaningful experience, which transcended the boundaries of physical education. By exploring the history of the Olympic Games, from Ancient Greece (an activity was developed adapting Homer's Iliad to send a moral message to children) to the present day, the little ones came into contact with different cultures and values, developing a critical look at the importance of sport in building a more just and equitable society.

The integration between sport, art and history, present both in Ancient Greece and in the modern Olympic Games, stimulated creativity, artistic expression and cognitive development in children. In addition, by discussing topics such as the inclusion of women in sport and the importance of *fair play*, we promote reflection on relevant social issues and the development of values such as respect, cooperation and solidarity.

By tailoring activities to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs, we seek to ensure the inclusion and active participation of each child.

DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT

The pedagogical experience reported here demonstrates the feasibility and importance of promoting Olympic education and women's soccer in Early Childhood Education classes. By adapting the Olympic principles and pedagogical practices to this age group, it was possible to create



a playful and meaningful learning environment, which contributed to the integral development of children.

The analysis of the experiences and the data produced reveals that the proposed activities were effective in promoting the development of various motor skills, such as coordination, balance and strength. Children have demonstrated significant progress in their abilities to perform movements with greater precision and control, which is critical for healthy motor development. In addition, the activities contributed to the construction of values such as cooperation, respect and *fair play*, which are essential for social coexistence and for the practice of sports.

The inclusion of children with special needs was one of the highlights of the experience. The adaptations made in the activities allowed all participants to feel included and valued. The observation of interactions between children demonstrates that sports practice can be a powerful instrument to promote inclusion and appreciation of differences.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of the experience. The sample used, although representative of the place where the research was carried out, may not be generalizable to other classes or schools. In addition, the intervention time may have been insufficient to observe more significant changes in the long term.

The results of this research suggest the need to invest in continuing education programs, so that they can implement innovative and inclusive pedagogical practices. In addition, it is essential that public policies encourage the practice of physical and sports activities in early childhood, ensuring access to motor and social development opportunities for all children.

Experience has shown that it is possible to promote Olympic education and soccer for women with children under 5 years of age, including those with special needs, using a playful and meaningful approach. From Elenor Kunz's critical-emancipatory perspective, it was possible to create a learning environment that values the autonomy, cooperation and active participation of all children.

It is important to highlight that the adaptations made to meet the needs of children with motor difficulties or with general developmental disorders were fundamental to ensure the inclusion of all participants. The partnership with specialists in special education allowed the activities to be carried out safely and effectively, promoting the development of each child according to their potential.

The continuous evaluation of the activities, carried out through systematic observations and records in portfolios, was essential to identify the advances and difficulties of each child, allowing adjustments to be made in the pedagogical proposals. This practice ensured that all children could actively participate and benefit from the experiences provided.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The reported experience demonstrates the potential of physical education in early childhood to promote the holistic development of children, in line with the principles of Olympic education. By integrating play, movement and Olympic culture, it was possible to create a playful learning environment. However, it is essential to recognize that this research has some limitations, such as sample size and intervention time. In addition, the implementation of projects like this on a large scale requires overcoming challenges such as lack of resources and training that covers these pedagogical possibilities.

For future research, it is suggested to carry out long-term studies to evaluate the lasting effects of the intervention, the investigation of the articulation between school physical education and sports projects certified by the IOC. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate the role of the family in promoting the practice of physical activities at home and the impact of the intervention on public health in the long term.



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