




## PLAYFULNESS IN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Christiane Diniz Guimarães<sup>1</sup>**

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### ABSTRACT

The present work aims to understand how playfulness has been approached in studies that deal with School Physical Education. It is intended, with this, to investigate, in addition to the number of works on the theme, the focuses given in these works to the role that playfulness has in School Physical Education. To this end, bibliographic surveys were carried out on the CAPES Journal Portal platform aiming to identify works that dealt with School Physical Education and Playfulness. By using these descriptors, 26 studies were initially found. When refining the search, seven papers were selected for full reading and analysis. The results found indicate the importance and need for playfulness inserted in the contents of School Physical Education, which can impact the integral development of students, as well as school performance and performance.

**Keywords:** School Physical Education. Playfulness. Bibliographic Survey. Literature Review.

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<sup>1</sup> Master's student in Emerging Technologies in Education  
MUST University  
E-mail: christianedguimaraes@hotmail.com  
LATTES: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/5103925193965572>

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between playfulness and school physical education represents a dynamic and essential field of study for the integral development of students. The search for understanding these elements, when combined, aims to enrich pedagogical practices in the area, promoting a more stimulating, participatory and effective educational environment. In this context, a literature review presents itself as a valuable tool to map, quantify, and evaluate the existing academic production on the subject, providing data on trends, gaps, and directions for future research. This study seeks to explore the relationship between playfulness in school Physical Education, using the analysis of the literature review as an investigative lens to understand the current panorama of this theme in the academic literature.

The theme leads us to the need to rethink pedagogical approaches in the school environment, especially in the discipline of Physical Education. Traditionally, this discipline has been predominantly associated with sports practice and formal physical activities, often disregarding playful and creative aspects in the teaching and learning process.

However, there is a growing awareness of the importance of incorporating playful and creative elements in the educational context, including in Physical Education. Playfulness, understood as the insertion of playfulness, play and play, and creativity, related to the ability to propose and explore new ideas, have been recognized as fundamental tools to make classes more dynamic, motivating and aligned with the characteristics and interests of students.

This contextualization gains relevance in contemporary times, considering the transformations in educational conceptions and the search for more inclusive and meaningful practices. In this way, exploring playfulness and creativity in Education can enrich students' experiences, in addition to contributing to integral development, promoting the learning of motor, social and cognitive skills more integrally. In this sense, research and reflection on this theme become essential to advance discussions about the role of school Physical Education in the formation of students.

Given the above, we observe that the research on playfulness in school Physical Education is justified by the importance of understanding and improving pedagogical practices in this context. Playfulness, associated with creativity, can make classes more attractive to students, but it also contributes significantly to the cognitive, emotional and social development of students. Understanding how these elements intertwine and impact the learning process allows educators to improve their approaches, promoting a more stimulating, participatory educational environment aligned with the needs and potential of

students. In addition, the literature review provides a panoramic view of the existing scientific production, identifying gaps and directing future research, thus contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the area of school Physical Education.

In this sense, the present work aims to research to understand how playfulness and creativity have been approached in studies that deal with School Physical Education. The aim is to investigate, in addition to the number of studies on the subject, the approaches given in these works.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

Literature Review is an essential stage in academic research, consisting of a critical and systematic analysis of existing works on a given topic. Its purpose is to provide a broader understanding of the current state of knowledge on the subject at hand, identifying gaps, trends, discrepancies, and areas that need further investigation.

Conducting a Literature Review involves a few steps, such as clearly defining the scope and objectives of the review. Another fundamental point is the identification of sources, which requires a meticulous search in academic databases and libraries. Careful selection of studies is a key aspect of the review. When synthesizing and analyzing the information, it is essential to organize the material in such a way as to highlight patterns, disagreements, and research methods used in the selected studies. Therefore, the Literature Review, in addition to serving as a theoretical basis for research, has a fundamental role in providing context, rationale and justification.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this part of the work, the results and discussions from the collection and analysis of research data are presented. To facilitate understanding, the chapter is subdivided into: School Physical Education: history and characteristics, Playfulness: concept and importance; Bibliographic survey.

### **SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION: HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS**

School Physical Education is a fundamental discipline in the educational context, having a great contribution to the physical, motor and cognitive development of students. The history of this discipline dates back to Ancient Greece, where the formation of the integral citizen was valued, including the education of the body. However, over time, Physical Education has undergone several transformations, reflecting changes in the conceptions of society, health and education.

For much of the nineteenth century, Physical Education was centered on militaristic and competitive practices, influenced by the view that robust physical development was essential for the training of soldiers. However, in the twentieth century, movements for pedagogical renewal and advances in the sciences of human movement contributed to a more holistic and educational approach to the discipline.

During this period, School Physical Education acquired characteristics more focused on the student's global development, including affective, social and cognitive aspects. Concern with health promotion, encouragement of regular physical activity and the development of motor skills have become central.

From the last decades of the twentieth century, there was a growing movement towards valuing inclusion, diversity, and adapting content to meet the individual needs of students. Physical Education has come to be recognized as promoting not only the healthy body, but also values such as cooperation, respect, responsibility and autonomy.

Currently, School Physical Education seeks to integrate theory and practice, providing meaningful experiences and contributing to the integral development of students. Challenges persist, such as adequate teacher training, the promotion of inclusive environments, and constant adaptation to socio-cultural changes.

This brief history of School Physical Education reveals a significant evolution, reflecting the conceptions of health and movement and social values. Its current characteristics seek to go beyond the physical aspect, incorporating social and emotional dimensions, consolidating itself as an essential discipline in the contemporary educational context.

## PLAYFULNESS AND CREATIVITY: CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE

Playfulness refers to the ability to introduce playful and recreational elements into educational activities, promoting a light, pleasurable environment conducive to the construction of knowledge. When incorporated into educational practices, it provides a more attractive and engaging atmosphere for students. Games, play, and recreational activities not only make the learning process more enjoyable, but also stimulate the development of motor, cognitive, and social skills. Playfulness allows the child to explore, discover and actively build their knowledge, favoring autonomy and creativity.

Playfulness and creativity are elements that favor the construction of a more collaborative, stimulating and inclusive school environment. Through play, children learn to work as a team, to respect differences and to share experiences. Creativity, in turn, promotes the appreciation of the diversity of ideas and perspectives.

Therefore, playfulness and creativity are pedagogical tools, but also guiding principles of an education that seeks to form critical, collaborative, and adaptable citizens. Introducing playful practices and stimulating creativity from the first years of life contributes to academic success and to the formation of individuals who are more resilient, curious, and prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. Let's see what the studies say about the subject.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC SURVEY

As explained in chapter 2 of this work, to achieve the proposed objective, a literature review was carried out. For this, the CAPES Journal Portal was selected as the database. In this repository, articles published in journals that address School Physical Education and the use of playfulness and creativity were searched. To this end, the following search strategy was used: "School Physical Education" OR "Physical Education" AND "playfulness"; "School Physical Education" AND "creativity".

It is important to describe, before presenting the results, how the number of studies found was reached. First, from the definition of the theme and the objective of the research, from the keywords, the descriptors were established, which were tested, thus building the search strategies of the research. After choosing the descriptors, the platform was chosen and the descriptors were tested. After this stage, searches were carried out. The works were first selected by reading the title. Then, the works that addressed the intended theme were selected. To refine the studies, in the next stage, the studies selected by the title were analyzed according to the reading of the objectives. The last stage of the refinement was carried out by reading the selected works in full.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the descriptors, the initial research was carried out using the keyword "School Physical Education", which resulted in a large sample of 3,641 studies found. This expressive number highlights the diversity and breadth of studies within the scope of this specific theme.

Subsequently, by incorporating the descriptor "playfulness" to the first term used, the research revealed a significantly smaller contingent, totaling only 23 studies. This discrepancy points to a very small representation, corresponding to only 0.6% of the initial universe of 3,641 studies, which address the theme of playfulness in School Physical Education.

These results suggest a relative scarcity of specific investigations on playfulness in the context of School Physical Education, highlighting the need for greater attention and focus on this particular domain. The quantitative analysis of the available works reveals a

gap that can be exploited to promote a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between playfulness and School Physical Education.

The 23 studies found were pre-selected based on the reading of the titles. It was found that there were many duplicate or tripled studies, in addition to studies that dealt with playfulness, but that did not dialogue with the theme of School Physical Education. In this sense, these studies were excluded from the literature review, leaving 16 selected articles. These 16 articles were submitted to abstract analysis to verify whether they were related to the theme of this analysis. Thus, 7 works that are most related to the theme analyzed here were finally selected. These articles are presented in the following table.

**Table 1.** Selected articles

n.	Year	Authorship	Title	Keywords
1	2021	PEREIRA, Michael Jeferson Pinheiro; SAUAIA, Gustavo Rachid Mesquita; OLIVEIRA, Lucio Carlos Dias	Fights in Physical Education classes: difficulties and possibilities	Fights. Physical education. School. Playfulness. Prejudice of Struggles.
2	2016	SANTOS, Wagner dos et al.	The relationship of students with knowledge in education classes Physics	Physical education. Narratives. Students.
3	2022	SILVEIRA, Juliano	Physical Education, Early Childhood Education and BNCC: Reflecting on Possible Expectations Curricular	Physical education. Early Childhood Education. BNCC.
4	2017	TONIETTO, Marcos Rafael; GARRANHANI, Marynelma Camargo	Children's Culture and the Relationship with the Knowledge of Physical Education at School	Physical education. Games and Toys. Education Infantele.
5	2020	SO, Marcos Roberto et al.	Game and playful content Fights in school physical education classes	Fights. Game. School Physical Education.
6	2019	BATISTA, Cleyton; MOURA, Diego Luz	Methodological principles for the teaching of school physical education: the beginning of a consensus	Teaching Methods. Pedagogical Practice. School Physical Education. Education.

7	2016	BRITO, Stéphany Vieira et al.	Playing and Learning: Improving School Performance and Behavior of Children through Physical Education Reinforcement Classes Integrated with School Content	Teaching. Leisure Activities. Education. Behaviour.
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**Source:** prepared by the author (2024).

Of the texts selected for analysis, as we can see, only one has playfulness as a keyword (Pereira, Sauaia and Oliveira, 2021), the others address playfulness indirectly, when they work with games, games or playful experiences.

In the work of Pereira, Sauaia and Oliveira (2021), the authors discuss how fights as school content are carried out in the context of School Physical Education. To this end, the authors address the contributions of struggles to the body development of students, in addition to the stereotypes built on the theme, which hinders their insertion in the school environment. In addition, the authors point out the lack of knowledge and training of teachers in this content, which ends up favoring the strengthening of stereotypes. As strategies, the authors address the importance of diversity in the ways of approaching the content, in addition to the use of playfulness in body practices. The authors consider:

Melo Junior, Barbosa (2018), explain that the ludic in the body practices of Physical Education is important due to its maintenance in the teaching-learning process, as students achieve a better performance, as they end up motivating themselves and overcoming fears, and reinforces that experiencing the Fights in class requires a high level of creativity from the teacher since the child is not only interested in learning the techniques, but seeking pleasure, fun and relaxation, so it uses playfulness to achieve these feelings. (Pereira, Sauaia, Oliveira, 2021, p. 172).

Approaching this theme a little, the article by Santos et al (2016) addressed 'The relationship of students with knowledge in Physical Education classes'. Here, as observed, it also focuses on the contents/knowledge worked on in Physical Education classes. As a hypothesis, the authors point out that "Because Physical Education is a discipline that works with bodily experiences and practices, students tend to associate the learning of the contents with playfulness and pleasure" (Santos et al, 2016, p. 01). This hypothesis is confirmed by the authors who analyzed the narratives of 6th and 9th grade students. Such narratives were collected through dialogues and drawings produced by the students.



Addressing playfulness more, Silveira's text (2022) proposes to analyze the presence of Physical Education in early childhood education, highlighting the absence of specific national curriculum guidelines that direct the contributions of this discipline in this educational stage. The objective of this essay is to establish a relationship between the theoretical assumptions that underlie Physical Education and the curricular expectations of early childhood education within the scope of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC). The author indicates that

During the process of analysis of the documents, keywords were identified that represent the curricular expectations around Physical Education in early childhood education (body; movement; human movement; body culture of movement; body practices; expansion of repertoires; culture; access to the cultural universe; enrichment of experiences; games; play; playfulness; playfulness; fields of experiences; body language). These keywords made it possible to bring them together around thematic units that composed the four specific axes of discussion presented here: 1) bodily practices as an object of pedagogical practice; 2) the expansion of the children's cultural repertoire through the language of movement; 3) play and playfulness as pedagogical principles of Physical Education in early childhood education; 4) the contributions of Physical Education about the fields of experience. (Silveira, 2022, 07).

In the analysis of the data, Silveira, citing Mello et al, points out that

Among the languages and cultural assets to which children are entitled, play and play occupy a prominent place in the legal documents of Early Childhood Education. Through games and interactions with their peers and the context in which they live, children think, feel, act in the world in their way and produce knowledge. In this way, the centrality of play and play in pedagogical practice in Early Childhood Education confers an appreciation on children's playful and imaginative processes (MELLO et al., 2016, p. 141 apud Silveira, 2022, p. 13).

Still dealing with Early Childhood Education, the article by Tonietto and Garanhani (2017), talks about children's culture, relating it to the knowledge of School Physical Education. In the same vein as Silveira (2022), Tonietto and Garanhani (2017) begin by characterizing the structuring axes of children's culture. Here, playfulness appears for playful cultures inserted in and constituent of children's culture. Relating the playfulness axis with the knowledge of Physical Education, the authors verify, based on interviews conducted with Early Childhood Education teachers who work in Physical Education, that play appears as a playful activity in physical education.

Another text analyzed that addresses play in the context of School Physical Education is that of Brito et al (2017). The authors point to motor skills and playfulness as essential in the integral development of children. The study investigated "the influence of playful physical education reinforcement classes integrated with school content on school performance and the perception (report) of parents and teachers about children's behavior"



(Brito et al, 2016. p. 308). An Active Play Reinforcement Group, called GRLA, and a Passive Play Reinforcement Group (LPRG) were created, in the latter no high physical efforts were made. Both the GRPA and the GRLP were related to the curricular subjects. Such playful reinforcements resulted in improvements in the students' performance. For the authors "Through playing, moving, the child experiences conflict situations, planning, problem solving, interacts with the other, learns to win and lose, to participate effectively, and in this way, goes through experiences that provide both development and learning". (Brito et al, 2017, p. 328).

In a different vein, Batista and Moura (2019), explored in their study the methodological principles of School Physical Education through a systematic review. They found, as results, the following methodological principles: "Interaction; Contextualization; Dimensions of the contents; Valuing students' experiences; Diversity of experiences; Problematization; Autonomy and Creativity; Playfulness; Understanding and Skill Transfer; Structural modification of the content; Use of technological resources". (Batista, Moura, 2019, p. 01). Regarding playfulness, the authors found that

The principle of playfulness was observed in 15 studies. The authors defend playfulness as an important tool in the teaching-learning process of students. Therefore, teachers should use pleasurable activities such as games and games, making Physical Education classes a pleasant and satisfying environment for students. (Batista, Moura, 2019, p. 05).

Finally, the study by So et al (2020) addresses the game and playfulness in the content fights in school physical education, approaching the study by Pereira, Sauaia and Oliveira (2021) who discuss the same theme (fights). So et al (2020) differently conducts a case study, seeking to discuss "the influence of games on the relations of meaning and mobilization in the content struggles from the perspective of students" (So et a, 2020, p. 02). The results found in the study indicate a significant change in students' perceptions and attitudes towards fights after participating in specific games. At first, the students associated the struggles with negative feelings, such as fear of getting hurt, anxiety, and connection with fights and violence. However, after the practice of fighting games, there was a resignification of these initial feelings.

The results showed that the fighting games contributed to the alteration of the initial senses, leading the students to experience greater pleasure, fun and playfulness during the activities. The resignification of the initial meanings through fighting games allowed the mobilization and participation of students in Physical Education classes. The students' testimonies highlighted the central importance of the playful character of the games in the process of learning the fights. The playful approach minimized the association of fights with

violence, making the content more accessible to students. The strategy of teaching the fights through games, instead of focusing specifically on judo techniques, was effective in the students' acceptance of the content.

The analyzed texts converge on the importance of playfulness in School Physical Education, with emphasis on classes that address fights as content. The study by Pereira, Sauaia and Oliveira (2021) highlights the relevance of the playful approach, highlighting how fighting games contribute to the resignification of initial negative feelings associated with this theme. The results indicate that playfulness provides pleasure, fun and playfulness, promoting a significant change in the perceptions and attitudes of students.

Other research, such as those by Silveira (2022), Tonietto and Garanhani (2017), Brito et al (2017), and So et al (2020), corroborate the importance of playfulness in different contexts. Silveira (2022) highlights the absence of specific curricular guidelines in Early Childhood Education and proposes a relationship between the theoretical assumptions of Physical Education and the curricular expectations of the BNCC, including playfulness as a pedagogical principle.

The study by Tonietto and Garanhani (2017) associates playfulness with children's culture, while Brito et al (2017) explore how the playful approach, integrated into school content, influences children's performance and behavior. So et al (2020) discuss the influence of games on the relations of meaning and mobilization in the content of struggles, evidencing the ability of playfulness to overcome initial resistances.

In addition, Batista and Moura (2019) carried out a systematic review that highlights playfulness as one of the essential methodological principles in School Physical Education. The authors emphasize that pleasurable activities, such as games and games, make classes more enjoyable and satisfying for students, contributing to the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the analyses point to playfulness as a central element in the integral development of students in School Physical Education, positively influencing the approach to sensitive topics and contributing to the construction of more engaging and effective educational experiences.

## CONCLUSION

The analyzed data suggest that the playful approach plays a crucial role in School Physical Education classes, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics such as fights. The emphasis on playfulness emerges as a significant strategy to overcome challenges in teaching this content, including negative stereotypes and lack of preparation of teachers.

In the context of Early Childhood Education, the absence of specific curricular guidelines highlights the need to relate playfulness more directly with the theoretical principles of Physical Education and the curricular expectations of the BNCC. Playfulness is considered vital to create stimulating and pleasant learning environments, contributing to the integral development of children.

The association of playfulness with the pleasure, fun and integral development of students is evident in studies that indicate positive results in the perceptions and participation of students, particularly when it comes to topics such as fights. Playfulness emerges as an effective tool to transform initial resistances into more positive experiences.

The inclusion of playful reinforcement classes in Physical Education, integrated into the school content, is pointed out as a positive factor for children's school performance and behavior. Playful activities provide experiences that contribute to both development and learning, suggesting the importance of pleasurable approaches in the teaching process.

In general terms, there is a consensus among studies about the importance of playfulness in School Physical Education. It is recognized as an essential tool to promote a more engaging and effective approach, creating a more supportive educational environment. These conclusions point to the continuous need to integrate playfulness in a meaningful way in the pedagogical practices of School Physical Education.

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