

The silencing and exclusion of a student with motor disability in Physical Education classes

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Abstract:

This study investigates the teaching of a student with motor disabilities, focusing on physical education classes. It aims to understand and identify the meanings that a student with motor disabilities attributes to physical education classes. The research is based on the historical-dialectical method and biographical studies by bringing the narrative to the production of empirical work. The data were constructed in a municipal public school in a medium-sized city in the interior of the state of São Paulo, recorded through photographs. The results found point to the need for an educational change, which includes a real and effective teaching for students with disabilities, a policy model, a school, a pedagogical practice based on listening to these students, giving them the role.

Key Word: Special Education; Inclusive Education; Physical Education.

Date of Submission: 20-02-2023

Date of Acceptance: 03-03-2023

I. Introduction

The theme of Physical Education in the context of Inclusive Education has been a mobilizing axis of my studies. Looking at students with disabilities and trying to understand the meanings they attach to their school experiences was what motivated me to carry out this research. To do so, I aim to understand and identify the meanings that a student with motor disability attributes to Physical Education classes.

Currently, Physical Education is a mandatory curriculum component of Basic Education and is integrated into the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC). The document regulates the Common Basic Curriculum for all Basic Education in Brazil. In it, Physical Education is inserted in the Language area, together with the curricular components Portuguese Language, Modern Foreign Language, and Art (BRASIL, 2017). Physical Education is conceived and understood as language, with the fundamental purpose of contributing to the constitution of human subjectivity. The justification for including Physical Education in the area and understanding it as a language is done by understanding that, through body practices, it is possible to have a greater sociocultural understanding and provide its use as practices (BRASIL, 2017).

As observed, Physical Education has its legitimacy ensured for the basic levels in public education on a national scale. However, for it to become effective for the target students of Special Education, as the laws ponder, I understand it is necessary to create an articulation between school, curriculum, and their assignments. The teaching process of students with disabilities in Physical Education classes has taken place in a very conflicting and controversial way. Studies point to some obstacles and justifications, such as: inclusive policies developed, but not implemented; homogeneous curricula that do not meet the students' singularities; lack of support from the responsible bodies; lack of structure in schools (CARVALHO; ARAÚJO, 2018; FIORINI; MANZINI, 2018; CASTRO; TELLES, 2018).

However, these researchers emphasize that Physical Education has a strong and important role as a curricular component for the schooling of students with disabilities, contributing and overcoming stigmas about these students. They also point out that the limitations of the disability cannot outweigh the potentialities and point out the several benefits that Physical Education classes provide for these students, such as the contributions to the improvement of the physical, cognitive, and social aspects.

As mentioned above, there are many challenges to the educational process of these students in Physical Education classes. Thus, my thought is that Physical Education, in the context of school diversity, must highlight the potential of students with disabilities, aiming to shift the focus from organic deficit to the possibilities offered by the sociocultural environment. Studies by contemporary authors, based on the cultural-historical perspective, guide us and point to some possibilities of facing these challenges.

Such studies discuss that, if there is a proposal of deliberate intervention from the teacher, there may be the participation and learning of students with disabilities in Physical Education classes. The researches

emphasize that the teacher's role is preponderant in the organization of pedagogical practices, making available activities and strategies that consider the singularities of these students. In addition, the authors highlight that when the pedagogical practices are focused on the student potentiality, with meaningful and intentional activities, the students feel more motivated to participate in the classes (ANDRADE; FREITAS, 2016; BARBUIO, 2016; BARBUIO; CAMARGO; FREITAS, 2019).

I understand that Physical Education, as part of the school curriculum, walks towards an approach that works from the perspective of inserting all students in the teaching-learning process. In a literature review (BARBUIO, 2021), it was found a certain scarcity of researches that focus on the view of the public-target student of Special Education about Physical Education classes. Thus, in this study, I focus on listening to these students. To do so, I have as investigative questions: what do students with disabilities think about their Physical Education classes? What meanings do these students give to their experiences in Physical Education classes?

Based on the questions mentioned above, in this study, I approach the teaching of students with disabilities in the school context, focusing on Physical Education classes. The research is based on the cultural-historical perspective of human development, especially on Lev Semionovitch Vygotsky's elaborations about the social constitution of human development and his propositions about the conditions of possibilities of development of people with disabilities (VIGOTSKI, 1995, 2000).

Moreover, the study relies on the biographical method (PASSEGGI, 2018; SARMENTO, 2018), as a focus for narratives, understanding them as a symbolic instance of language (FREITAS, 2019), since, it allows students reflections on the learning process and, at the same time, mobilizes mediated psychic functions, such as emotions, memory, concept formation. Moreover, a careful listening to the students' narratives may allow us to raise indicators about the conditions and possibilities of learning, which will contribute to the development of pedagogical practices that will culminate with the schooling of these students.

The study is organized in three sections. In this introductory section, I present the theme, aspirations, and the objective of the study. In the first section, I discuss the cultural-historical perspective, the theoretical foundation that guides the investigation. In the second, I contextualize the research; the place where it was carried out, as well as the participants and the modes of data production. In the third section, I present the development of the empirical work; the student narrative and its respective discussions. I finish with some notes and considerations about the senses and meanings that the student attributes to his experiences in Physical Education classes.

II. Theoretical Foundation

Vygotsky (1995), a cultural-historical perspective theorist, sought to understand the origin and the human development. The author dedicated himself to understand the process of humanization of man in the intertwining between nature and culture. He points to a cultural development; however, he mentions that opposing a biological process does not mean that he denies or ignores the biological structure of the human being; human development processes are not defined only by the biological aspect.

The social and the cultural are two basic aspects of all human development, which is characterized as a process of transformation from a biological being to a sociocultural subject. For the author, functions of the nature of the species are not disregarded in human formation, but rather resized to the extent that the individual establishes social relations, through the mediation of cultural signs created in the social, signifying and internalizing them (VIGOTSKI, 1995).

The author presents his basis on the principle of the social nature of human development, exposing his ideas about the constitution of people with disabilities, focusing and discussing possibilities of development and education for these subjects. Thus, for him, the development of the student with disabilities is guided by the general laws which explain the human development of all people (VIGOTSKI, 1997).

For Vygotsky (1997), the biological condition is not the main factor for the development of the disabled subject to happen or not. In first order, the impediment for development comes from the social group, in other words, it depends on how society and the environment receive this subject. For the author, a social context with unfavorable conditions may cause primary disability to become secondary.

Primary disability is considered as biological, organic, what the subject has already biologically consolidated, characteristics already presented. Secondary disability are psychosocial consequences, which include the cultural context to which the subject belongs, the way this social environment is structured and how it interferes in this subject (VIGOTSKI, 1997).

Therefore, it is highlighted how the environment interferes in the development of individuals with disabilities. If the student with disability is inserted in an environment that receives little or no social and cultural influence, this will certainly cause a delay in his development. For Vygotsky (1997), children with disabilities, as well as all children, only develop their psychological functions through social contact, through mediations. In this way, the learning and development of the child with disability are essentially linked to the social.

The author guides to an education directed to the child and not to the disability itself; an education which considers the psychological and pedagogical aspects. For him, the school task, regarding the education for the handicapped child, is to introduce him/her into social practices, creating compensatory processes, which occur through intersubjective relations mediated semiotically, so that, in this way, this student may achieve his/her learning and development (VIGOTSKI, 1997).

Therefore, it is evident the impact that social relations have on the development of students with disabilities, making it easier or more difficult, depending on the possibilities and paths that the environment and social relations provide for it. In view of that, for this study, we proposed to listen to students with disabilities to understand and analyze their school experiences, especially their Physical Education classes, so that we could have a dimension of the impacts that the environment has on their schooling process.

III. Background of the study

In order to understand and analyze the meanings that students with disabilities attribute to their school experiences, specifically, about their Physical Education classes, for the development of the empirical work I assume the biographical method and have as device for data construction the narrative research (PASSEGGI, 2018; SARMENTO, 2018).

The research was conducted in a municipal school, located in a medium-sized city in the interior of São Paulo. The institution offers Elementary School I and II; and Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in the evening period. In 2019, the year the study was conducted, there were a total of 1,032 students enrolled, 492 in Elementary I, 376 in Elementary II, and 164 students in EJA.

The participant in this research is Lipão, who was in the ninth grade, was 16 years old, and was diagnosed with motor disability. The intention of choosing this student is justified because he is at an intermediate level of his school life and already carries with him a longer school trajectory.

For the development of data construction, the following instruments were used: field diary, narrative interview, conversation rounds, photography, and drawing. For the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the data, I selected narrative fragments that were more significant and relevant to answer the objective. In this study, I present narrative fragments captured by a photograph taken by the student himself, taken individually.

Based on the cultural-historical perspective (VIGOTSKI, 1995), and on the Indicative Paradigm method (GINZBURG, 1989), I present the student's narrative trying to analyze it, pursuing the clues that can guide me to the understanding of the meanings attributed by the student to his school experiences, especially to the Physical Education classes. The situation is named with a sentence extracted from the student's narrative.

IV. Narratives of a student with motor disability about his physical education classes

Researcher (Rodrigo): Tell me about this picture...

Lipão: Yes... This garden is next to the PE court... Sometimes I leave the court and go there... Well, yes, then I stay there...

Researcher (Rodrigo): Cool, I also like nature! But when you leave the court, doesn't the teachersay anything about you leaving the class?

Lipão: Yes, sometimes the teacher tells me to go sunbathing...

Researcher (Rodrigo): Wait, wait, wait, tell me something... does she tell you to get out of class and go sunbathe?

Lipão: Yes... She tells me to go sunbathe...

Researcher (Rodrigo): Tell me something else, does she tell you to go always?

Lipão: Well, yes, she tells me to go directly...

Researcher (Rodrigo): I see, tell me more about that.

Lipão: Ah, yes, she doesn't make you stay in class very much, you know? Well, yeah, she doesn't, yeah, yeah, she doesn't stay in class very much, yeah, yeah, you know what I mean? I can't explain it to you...

Researcher (Rodrigo): Wait, see if that's it... You mean she doesn't make much of an effort, it's... Yeah, a lot of force, a lot of question that you stay in class...

Lipão: Yeah... yeah, she doesn't care about me... whatever, whatever, you know what I mean?

Researcher (Rodrigo): How do you stand in the face of that?

Lipão: Well, yeah, sad, but it is already normal.

When talking about his photograph, Lipão says: "This garden is located is, next to the court... When I get nervous, I leave the court and go there... Well, yeah, then I stay there..." The student presents the photograph explaining that it is a garden that is located next to the school's PE court. He then reveals that sometimes, when he gets a little nervous, he goes to this garden and stays there. In completing his narrative, the student reveals, "Yeah, sometimes Dona tells me to go sunbathe..." Lipão makes an important revelation about how his PE classes are and about his relationship with his teacher, the student states that his teacher tells him to go to the

garden to sunbathe. From this narrative fragment, I infer a clue to think that his teacher is suggesting that he not participate in PE classes. Thus, it is possible to ask: what are the teacher's reasons for not ways for Lipão to participate in class?

I reflect on what thought Lipão's teacher has about him: a student affected by a disability, a student who can do less than the others? Souza and Smolka (2009) and Souza (2013) conducted observations in Physical Education classes and found that students with disabilities are conceived in the learning process as bodies marked by disability, which generates a different look by the teacher as to the real possibilities of learning of these students. According to the authors, this look at the marked body contributes to the conditions of access to school knowledge and learning for these students.

In contrast, Freitas and Monteiro (2016), in the context of a research in which the purpose was to enable teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, discuss the importance of changing the way teachers look at students with disabilities. The authors point out that when teachers realized that students with disabilities have learning possibilities, they started to (re)think their ways of understanding and acting in the classroom, seeking new ways to plan their work.

Freitas, Monteiro and Camargo (2015), in turn, address the contradictions and tensions that permeate the social relationships between teachers and students with disabilities in the context of inclusive education. They point out that teachers are aware that they are responsible for the learning of these students; however, they reveal conflicts in their speeches. Their statements show that they have low expectations about the learning possibilities of the students and point to conceptions about disability based on stigmas and prejudices, factors that contribute to divergences in student development.

To further clarify the episode, I ask the student to tell more, he narrates: "Well, it is, sometimes I go when I'm nervous... And, it is, sometimes Dona tells me to go straight..." The student goes on to reveal and restate more details about his going to the garden, mentions going when he gets a little nervous - however, he does not reveal the reason for his nervousness - and restates that his teacher tells him to go to the garden. Another thing that strikes me is the expression used by the student, "go straight", which may be a telling clue that the teacher sends him to the garden quite often.

Continuing with his revelations, Lipão adds: "Oh, yeah, she doesn't stay in class much, you know? Well, yeah, she doesn't, yeah, yeah, she doesn't do much for me to stay in class, yeah, yeah, you know what I mean?" The student questions me if I can understand what he wants to explain. I understand and interpret the narration: his teacher doesn't make an effort, doesn't make a big deal of the student's participation in class, doesn't encourage him to participate and perform the activities during class. As he completes his speech, he says, "It's... it's, it doesn't care about me... Whatever, whatever, whatever, you know what I mean?" The student expresses a sense that his teacher does not care about him, that she despises him.

It is important to look at the surroundings of this whole process and try to understand what obstacles are placed in the schooling of this student. What are the indications in Lipão's speech that allow us to think that his teacher prefers to silence him, to exclude him, instead of providing means and possibilities for the student? Could it be that the teacher herself is also excluded from the possibilities of performing quality educational work?

In this direction, Alves (2017), Fiorini and Manzini (2018), Greguol, Malagodi and Carraro (2018), Santos, Souza and Santos (2020) investigate the barriers pointed out by teachers for the process of schooling of students with disabilities in Physical Education classes. For the authors, the most highlighted hindering factors among teachers are: lack of disciplines related to diversity in the training and difficulties in continuing training; working conditions; lack of support from managers; very high workload; lack of experience; insecurity, fear.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the conditions that permeate the teacher's work to deal with the teaching of students targeted for Special Education. Moreover, historically, the education of people with disabilities has occurred in parallel with regular education, and we have been constituted with this segregation mark, that students with disabilities should study in specialized institutions. The Inclusive Education policy has produced many advances, but there has not been an investment in changing the school culture, the working conditions of the teacher; therefore, criticisms to teachers may exist, but they need to be made in the context of the conditions and contradictions that prevail in the daily routine of public schools in Brazil.

To understand the impacts that the absence in class entails for Lipão, I turn to Vygotsky's (1996, 2018) concept of the social situation of development. For the author, "the social situation of development is the starting point for all the dynamic changes that take place in development during the period of each age." (VIGOTSKI, 1996, p. 264, our translation).

Thus, the school and the teacher have an essential role in this process, promoting and enabling interventions that favor student development. Thus, development is not determined by the child's biological age, but by the social situation of development, that is, by the relationships established between the child and the environment. The environment is the source of development; in the relationship between the child and the environment, it is essential that its still elementary form of development relates to the fine and ideal form of

development, so that the child builds higher forms of thought, that is, what should be obtained at the end of the formative process (VIGOTSKI, 2018).

Also for the author, the existing relationship between the child and the environment is stamped by the affective character of the relationship. In this way, every time the child feels affected by a certain episode, he puts himself in a position of activity; therefore, each event he experiences promotes an advance in his development, which will result in a new formative social situation. Thus, resuming my initial question, for Lipão, his teacher has not sought strategies to insert him in class, which contributes to his exclusion and to his difficulty in reaching and developing higher forms of development, since these are found in the medium, "if in the medium there is no corresponding ideal form then the corresponding will not develop fully in the child." (VIGOTSKI, 2018, p. 87).

When asked how he felt about this situation, he says, "Well, yeah, sad, but it's already normal... So it stays the same..." The expression "it's already normal" leads me to think that these situations have been occurring for some time, which generated this feeling of the student towards his teacher. In this episode, the student makes an important revelation: his teacher excludes him from PE classes, telling Lipão to go to a garden that is located outside the PE court. By the narration, the student expresses a feeling of non-existence, in view of his speech about the way his teacher sees him. Moreover, it nods to a conformism, to the idea of something that has already become normal for him, to be placed in the place of the non-subject, of the one who has no turn or voice.

V. Conclusion

I started this study with the purpose of understanding and interpreting what a student with motor disability said, thought and felt about his schooling process, specifically, about his Physical Education classes. For this text, I aimed to understand and identify the meanings that a student with motor disability attributes to Physical Education classes.

With the intention of systematizing the findings, I believe it is necessary to synthesize the indications found in Lipão's narratives, in order to facilitate the understanding of the facts. His narratives raise different meanings about his school experiences in Physical Education classes, and it is pertinent to know them in order to understand aspects of the educational process of these students.

Lipão, a student with motor disability, attributes meanings marked by contradictions; liking, desire, frustration, and conformism. The student says he likes Physical Education, he wants to participate in the classes, but is prevented from doing so by his teacher, who sends him outside the court to sunbathe in the garden. The situation is routine, because the student accepts what happens, which generates frustration and sadness in the student.

Physical Education is a mandatory part of the regular elementary school curriculum. However, I believe that this idea should go beyond just guaranteeing the right to have the subject in the school environment. It is necessary to eliminate the obstacles encountered in the teaching-learning process of students with disabilities during Physical Education classes, seeking learning paths in sociocultural practices.

The results found in this study point to the need for an educational change, which contemplates a real and effective teaching for students with disabilities, a policy model, a school, a pedagogical practice based on listening to these students, giving them the protagonism. So that decisions about pedagogical proposals are not taken a priori, but are built on listening to these students.

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Barbuio, Rodrigo. "The silencing and exclusion of a student with motor disability in Physical Education classes." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 28(3), 2023, pp. 38-43.