

Research Article

Gender inequalities in Physical Education classes: Between limit situations and viable novelties

Desigualdades de género en las clases de Educación Física: Entre situaciones-límite e inéditos viables

Desigualdades de gênero nas aulas de Educação Física: Entre situações-limite e inéditos viáveis

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the issue of gender exclusions observed in Physical Education classes, particularly in "self-managed" classes. The study aimed to analyze the limits and possibilities of a teacher intervention guided by dialogical pedagogy to challenge gender inequalities in Physical Education classes. To this end, action research was conducted over two months, focusing on gender issues within a didactic unit covering Sports and Dances. Fifthgrade students from a municipal school in Suzano, São Paulo, Brazil, participated in the study. Data was collected through participant observations recorded in class diaries. Data analysis was performed using the Categories of Coding method. The main results highlight two primary categories: Limit-Situations and Viable Unheard-Of, and four subcategories: Existential Weariness, Anti Dialogicity, Dialogicity, and To Be More. We believe that the entire process, particularly the moments of dialogue and action-reflection in conversation circles, contributed to addressing Existential Weariness and Anti Dialogicity, with the hope that, through Dialogicity, gender inequalities can be overcome, moving towards To Be More.

Keywords: Education; Gender equity; Students; Primary education.

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RESUMEN

La presente investigación aborda la problemática de las exclusiones de género observadas en las clases de Educación Física, especialmente en aquellas clases "autogestionadas". El objetivo de la investigación fue analizar los límites y posibilidades de una intervención docente guiada por una pedagogía dialógica para cuestionar las desigualdades de género en las clases de Educación Física. Para ello, se llevó a cabo una investigación-acción a lo largo de un bimestre, abordando las cuestiones de género en una unidad didáctica centrada en los temas de Deportes y Danzas. Participaron en el estudio estudiantes de quinto grado de una escuela municipal en Suzano, São Paulo, Brasil. Los datos se recopilaron mediante observaciones participantes registradas en diarios de clase. El análisis de los datos se realizó utilizando el método de Categorías de Codificación. Los principales resultados destacan dos categorías principales: Situaciones-Límite e Inéditos Viables, y cuatro subcategorías: Cansancio Existencial, Antidialogicidad, Dialogicidad y Ser Más. Consideramos que todo el proceso, especialmente los momentos de diálogo y reflexión-acción en los círculos de conversación, contribuyó a problematizar el Cansancio Existencial y la Antidialogicidad, con la esperanza de que, a través de la Dialogicidad, se puedan superar las desigualdades de género, avanzando hacia el Ser Más.

Palabras clave: Educación; Equidad de género; Estudiantes; Educación primaria.

RESUMO

A presente pesquisa trata da problemática das exclusões de gênero observadas nas aulas de Educação Física, especialmente nas aulas "autogestionadas". O objetivo do estudo foi analisar os limites e possibilidades de uma intervenção docente guiada por uma pedagogia dialógica para questionar as desigualdades de gênero nas aulas de Educação Física. Para isso, foi realizada uma pesquisa-ação ao longo de um bimestre, abordando as questões de gênero em uma unidade didática centrada nos temas Esportes e Danças. Participaram do estudo estudantes do 5º ano do ensino fundamental de uma escola municipal de Suzano, São Paulo, Brasil. Os dados foram coletados por meio de observações participantes registradas em diários de aula. A análise dos dados foi conduzida utilizando o método de Categorias de Codificação. Os principais resultados apontam duas categorias principais: Situações-Limite e Inéditos Viáveis, e quatro subcategorias: Cansaço Existencial, Antidialogicidade, Dialogicidade e Ser Mais. Consideramos que todo o processo, especialmente os momentos de diálogo e reflexão-ação nas rodas de conversa, contribuiu para problematizar o Cansaço Existencial e a Antidialogicidade, com a esperança de que, por meio da Dialogicidade, as desigualdades de gênero possam ser superadas, avançando em direção ao Ser Mais.

Palavras-chave: Educação; Equidade de gênero; Estudantes; Ensino fundamental.

INTRODUCTION

The present study is the result of a master's thesis in Physical Education (Silva, 2023) and addresses gender relations in school Physical Education contexts, specifically through action research in a public school in a municipality in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. To this end, both gender studies and Paulo Freire's dialogic pedagogy were used as a theoretical framework.

In relation to the practice of sports in Physical Education classes, it was long argued that boys were superior to girls due to biological issues. However, contemporary literature refutes this theory with arguments such as those of Souza Junior (2020), who states that "the differences between boys and girls, rather than biological, are socially constructed, since the experiences encouraged or denied to each gender have a great impact on the performance of these individuals in carrying out different bodily practices" (p. 155). Although there are biological differences between genders, as the author points out, equally notable differences are also observed between individuals of the same gender. Therefore, attributing these differences exclusively to biological factors is meaningless, as confirmed by other authors (Goellner, 2013; Nicholson, 2000; Silva & Gomes, 2013).

In this context, the term "gender" emerged in the academic field to reject the biological determinism that used terms such as "sex" or "sexual difference", emphasizing the relational and cultural aspect in the construction of masculinity and femininity (Scott, 1995). To better understand the term "gender", Goellner (2010) argues that it is socially and culturally constructed, and involves a set of processes that mark bodies according to what is identified as masculine and/or feminine, gendering the body, that is, inscribing gender marks on it.

Regarding gender relations in the educational context, Louro (2014) argues that school has always made, and continues to make, divisions, separating individuals within its walls from those outside, and even making distinctions between students who attend school, for example, according to "whether they get good grades". Similarly, Nascimento e Silva and Duarte (2021) claim that school culture highlights the different ways in which boys and girls are seen and treated, articulating practices and discourses that accentuate and mark differences.

In Physical Education, gender differences have been observed in terms of access, participation and interest in the subject (Metcalfe, 2018). In many places, school Physical Education follows this trend, with unequal and problematic gender participation (Del Castillo-Andrés et al., 2013). As can be seen, the learning opportunities that have historically been offered to boys and girls are differentiated. In order to provide students with the opportunity to broaden their interests and knowledge in an equitable manner in the physical field and in the development of their skills, it is necessary to diversify the content in Physical Education classes and guarantee equal access to this knowledge for all genders (Altmann et al., 2011).

Physical Education in schools in Brazil has been influenced by medicine, with an emphasis on discourses based on hygiene, health and eugenics, as well as by the military and political interests of dominant groups that used sport as an instrument of social manipulation, selecting the most suitable individuals to represent the country in different competitions (Darido, 2012). The military government strengthened the links between sport and nationalism, instrumentalizing school Physical Education

both for the formation of an army composed of strong and healthy young people and for the demobilization of opposing forces (Darido, 2012).

Regarding legislation, throughout the history of education in Brazil, there have been different regulations that have affected the participation of boys and girls in Physical Education classes. An emblematic example of this type of regulation can be seen in Decree No. 69,450/71, promulgated during the period of the military dictatorship that was established in Brazil after the coup in 1964. This decree describes Physical Education as an "activity that, through its means, processes and techniques, awakens, develops and improves the physical, moral, civic, psychic and social forces of the student, being one of the basic factors to achieve the objectives of national education" (Brazil, 1971). In Title IV of the decree, which deals with the organization and operation of Physical Education, Article 5 of Chapter I establishes that classes must be composed of "50 students of the same sex, preferably selected by their level of physical fitness" (Brazil, 1971). The regulations that divide Physical Education classes by gender and level of physical fitness are a reflection of the biomedical paradigm with a hygienist and eugenicist approach that has marked the identity of the field since its incorporation into the school context. This panorama began to change only in the 1980s, when a paradigmatic crisis occurred in the field due to the new political scenario marked by gradual democratic opening (Darido, 2012). The highperformance sport model in Physical Education schools began to receive significant criticism, and new ways of thinking about Physical Education in the school context emerged as alternatives. However, Darido (2012) highlights that, "despite changes in the discourse, especially in the academic field, the characteristics of this model still influence many teachers and their practice" (p. 10).

According to Souza Junior (2020), the simple composition of mixed classes in Physical Education does not guarantee the overcoming of conservative values. However, the author also admits that, after becoming accustomed to mixed classes, both boys and girls show solidarity with each other and concern about the violence they experience, both at school and in leisure contexts outside of it. Souza Junior (2003) argues that physical education teachers, even in conditions where educational networks and schools organize classes in mixed groups, opt for strategies that perpetuate the separation of boys and girls in the development of activities. These approaches reflect the difficulty of these teachers to deal with the gender differences that arise in their classes.

It is necessary to consider that, since 1996, under the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) 9394/96 (Brazil, 1996), physical education has acquired the status of a curricular component of Basic Education, which is substantially different from the character of the activity that prevailed before this regulation.

Despite all the legal transformations and advances in the field of Physical Education, there are still a number of limitations, such as the fact that students can be exempted from classes (Brazil, 2003), a procedure that does not apply to any other curricular component. As regards the composition of classes in mixed or gender-separated groups, the legislation does not specify any guidance in this regard. However, other documents of a pedagogical nature have addressed this issue in some way for some time, as seen in the National Curricular Parameters (NCP), which suggest that "mixed Physical Education classes can offer the opportunity for boys and girls to discover themselves and learn to be tolerant, not to discriminate and to understand differences, so as not to reproduce stereotypes in social relations in an authoritarian manner" (Brazil, 1998, p. 42). A study by Altmann (1998) analyzed how male

and female students construct gender relations in Physical Education classes, proposing three axes to observe: the occupation of the school's physical space; exclusion in sports and the intersection of gender boundaries; and sexuality at school. In her observation on the occupation of physical space, the author reports that boys and girls already showed different behaviors. Boys occupied more space and had more opportunities during games, even at recess. Altmann (1998) points out in her research that girls tried to gain their own space on the court by resorting to other activities such as jumping rope or playing elastic, among others. However, in team sports, especially in soccer, a male dominance could be observed. These findings coincide with what was expressed by Almonacid-Fierro et al. (2022), who argue that gender stereotypes present in the social imagination determine the type of sports participation in the school space. Therefore, it is important to carry out pedagogical interventions that promote mutual awareness, social justice and equal rights between boys and girls. These principles are expected to be reflected in the possibility for girls to participate in Physical Education classes equally to boys, since school should be an environment that promotes this social transformation and eliminates the male domination rooted in society (Ekholm et al., 2022; Hortigüela-Alcalá et al., 2021).

In this sense, Freire (2021), based on the dialectical relationship between oppressor and oppressed, addresses the process of dehumanization and humanization in educational practice, developing a set of principles and knowledge that support the theory of dialogic (liberating education) as opposed to the theory of anti-dialogic (banking education).

Among the foundations of this dialogic pedagogy, Freire (2021) proposes that knowledge, to be meaningful, must start from the thematic universe of the subjects, which requires that educational practice be built with the participation of these subjects through generative themes. In this way, we consider that generative themes are a strategy that promotes critical, interdisciplinary and contextualized training. Working with generative themes addresses problematizing issues. Freire (2021) explains that "problematizing education" is carried out from a situation in which students and teachers will jointly seek the necessary answers to understand the topics they wish to study, allowing men and women to develop a critical awareness in the world.

Generative themes can have a universal character or refer to more particular topics, such as, for example, the issue of gender separation in physical education classes. When considering the overcoming of banking education through a problematizing education that uses generative themes as a fundamental pillar, other conceptual categories of great relevance are the limit situations and the viable unpublished. To explain it, the limit situations are those that reveal the limit acts, that is, the human acts that carry with them the characteristic of freedom, the capacity to be active and that transform and overcome the reality in which one lives (Freire, 2021).

Freire (2021) argues that limit situations can assume a fatalistic condition by preventing people from "being more" (another important theoretical category in Freire's thought), becoming the border between being and nothingness. However, they can also be configured as the border between being and "being more" when, through a process of awareness, they become "perceived prominently" in their "background vision".

Therefore, when addressing the issue of gender separation in physical education classes, it can be stated that this limiting situation is due to a culturally constructed barrier between men and women in our society throughout history. In this work, we use generative themes so that this and other limiting

situations can stand out against the background, allowing for processes of awareness about gender inequalities and their overcoming. The concept of "viable unprecedented" represents the possibility of yet unpublished action that cannot occur unless we overcome limiting situations, transforming the reality in which it is found with our praxis (Freire, 2021; Gadotti, 2007).

Thus, the process of awareness through education (action-reflection-action) is the possibility of overcoming naive consciousness in search of critical consciousness. While naive consciousness is simplistic, superficial, nostalgic, mass-forming, mystical, passionate, static, immutable, prejudiced and lacking in arguments, critical consciousness is not satisfied with appearances, it recognizes that reality is mutable, replaces magical explanations with authentic principles of causality, is always ready for revisions, rejects prejudices, is restless, authentic, democratic, questioning, investigative and dialogical (Freire, 2021).

This research is based on this contextualization and on the teacher's observation that, by providing freedom of choice in the practice of activities, as in a self-managed lesson, boys and girls are separated. Although all actively participate in physical education classes, girls participate little in sports games such as football or in games proposed by boys, moments in which they tend to stay on the sidelines. Consequently, in line with the understanding of Ekholm et al. (2022) and Hortigüela-Alcalá et al. (2021), that there are episodes of exclusion of girls, especially in self-managed physical education classes, we assume the hypothesis that a pedagogical intervention, guided by the implementation of a didactic unit structured from generative themes that arise from dialogues and critical reflections on gender issues, could contribute to overcoming the limit situations related to gender inequalities in bodily practices. Taking into account this educational context as our research problem, a pedagogical intervention was carried out with the aim of critically and affectively raising awareness among fifth grade students in primary school about the importance of gender equality to guarantee equal learning rights for boys and girls in physical education classes (Godoi et al., 2021). The pedagogical intervention included generative themes that emerged from dialogues with the class, starting from a thematic area that they considered most relevant in relation to gender relations, in a perspective that agrees with Antonini de Souza & Mizuno Lemos (2023), who affirm the need to seek "an approach charged by their life experience, organizing themselves epistemologically by other forms, other methods and theories" (p. 401).

In this sense, the objective of the present study was to analyze the limits and possibilities of a teaching intervention guided by a dialogical pedagogy in order to problematize gender inequalities in physical education classes.

METHODOLOGY

This research is part of a socio-critical paradigm, as this paradigm stands as a school of thought that seeks to understand social reality from a critical and transformative perspective (Loza et al., 2020). The research was structured on the basis of a qualitative approach, chosen to deepen the understanding of problems, people and relationships (Burney et al., 2024).

Action research was adopted as a methodological assumption because the study focuses on the investigation of teaching practice. Action research, as described by Vasconcelos (2006), is based on three main pillars: research, action and training. In this methodological process, the focus is on achieving changes in practice, improving student outcomes and empowering teachers (Mills, 2017; Manfra, 2019). Following a cycle of inquiry and reflection, action researchers collect and analyse data related to a topic or topics of practice. The praxis of action research, framed in the socio-critical paradigm, is distinguished by its dual approach that intertwines personal and social transformation as interdependent processes. This holistic vision recognizes that changes in individual consciousness not only impact the personal sphere, but also contribute to the construction of a new social reality (Goessling & Wagner, 2021; Goessling, in press).

The intervention consisted of the implementation of a didactic unit structured in 16 classes, focused on the approach to gender issues related to the topics of sports and dance. Students from a fifth grade of Primary Education participated in the research, made up of 27 students between the ages of 10 and 12.

For data collection, participant observations recorded in class diaries were used, defined by Zabalza (2004) as "documents in which teachers write down their impressions of what happens in their classes" (p. 13). The class diaries address both descriptive aspects and personal reflections, making them a guide in which possibilities and potentialities are recorded (Zabalza, 2004). The class diaries were prepared after each class. All discussions held in class were recorded on video to avoid the loss of important elements. Therefore, the recordings were a supporting resource in the construction of the diaries.

The diaries were analyzed according to the coding categories proposed by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), in three stages: reading the class diaries, coding the materials, and combining and grouping the codes. Thematic saturation was chosen in the coding, referring to a stage in the data analysis process where repetitive codes or themes are identified and no new information or relationships between them emerge (Guest et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022; Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). This type of thematic data saturation improves reliability compared to data saturation, which is often limited to the data collection stage and focuses solely on the repeatability of the data (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024).

From this analysis, two categories emerged, inspired by theoretical categories taken from the work of educator Paulo Freire, considering "limit situations" and "viable unpublished items" as the two thematic categories, which were in turn broken down into subcategories: existential fatigue and anti-dialogicity for the "limit situations" category; and dialogicity and "being more" for the "viable unpublished items" category.

It is important to note that the research was submitted to the Ethics Committee for Research on Human Beings of the Federal University of São Carlos (CEP-UFSCar) and was approved by opinion

number 5,279,386. Furthermore, as part of the ethical principles adopted, all participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) and obtained the approval of their legal guardians, who signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF). Finally, it should be noted that the names of the research participants are fictitious and were chosen by them themselves.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Limit Situations

This category allows us to discuss and better understand the difficulties encountered in the face of the previously identified problems regarding gender inequality. The main aspects to be problematized together with the students refer to issues such as separations, exclusions and gender violence in physical education classes, especially at times when they have the freedom to choose activities. In light of these aspects, we resorted to the Freirean concept of limit situations, which we can understand in two ways: as an insurmountable obstacle or as a force that must be overcome. Limit situations therefore imply the existence of those who are served directly or indirectly, the dominant, and those who are "denied" and "slowed down" by things, the oppressed (Freire, 2021).

Based on the codes generated in the data analysis, the large category limit situations pointed out two subcategories that will be analyzed below: existential fatigue and anti-dialogicity.

Existential Fatigue

Freire (2021) states that the extreme situation can manifest itself through existential fatigue. In this situation, the violence of the oppressors and their domination become so profound that they generate in large sectors of the popular classes subjected to them a kind of existential fatigue, which in turn is associated with or prolonged in a historical anesthesia, in which the idea of tomorrow as a project is lost. The author also defends the need for a serious and rigorous "reading of the world", which does not dispense with, but demands a serious and rigorous reading of the texts.

This existential fatigue became evident in the first class, in which it was decided to allow them to self-manage their activities. The separation and distancing between boys and girls in the activities was observed. During this class, the boys played soccer and the girls played dodgeball, while other boys waited their turn in a corner of the court to join the game, and only one boy played dodgeball with the girls at the back of the court.

At the end of the class, this situation was discussed with the students to understand what had happened, and this existential exhaustion was evident in some of the students' statements, while the boys took on the role of oppressors and defended their views to prevent the situation from changing and not "harming" them, as can be seen in the following dialogue taken from Class Diary I:

Teacher: "During today's class some complaints came to me, I would like to understand, what happened for the girls to stay on one side and the boys on another?"

Sakura: "We wanted to go there, we wanted to play, but they kept saying: 'Get off the court!' and so, all the girls can't play on the court with them, we have to stay separated because they don't let us."

Monalisa: "I went to ask them if we could divide the court, and they said that the court was theirs."

Dudu: "We told them that we were using it at that time."

Teacher: "Girls, do you think you have the same opportunities as the boys?"

Monalisa: "No! They are dominating the court."

Dudu: "They exaggerate, we say something and they say something bigger."

Teacher: "Girls, if you are not satisfied, why do you accept this domination? Do you accept it?" Sakura: "We're not accepting it, we want to play too. They wanted to play soccer, and we wanted

to play dodgeball, so we said, 'Why don't we split up the field? Half of us play soccer and half of

us play dodgeball,' but they said no."

Teacher: "And you guys gave up?"

As can be seen, although they know they have equal rights to play and use the pitch, the girls did not immediately oppose the oppressive situation. When the boys said they were going to use the pitch, they simply left and looked for another space, which characterizes existential fatigue, that is, acceptance of the situation because they believe it is not worth fighting, they did not even try to talk to the teacher.

It is observed that the boys, in the role of oppressors, defend the idea that the game should be as they want it, and that the girls should submit to playing football. For the oppressors, what matters is to have more and more, even at the expense of the oppressed (Freire, 2021).

In this way, it can be stated that circle conversations were configured as a powerful space to problematize gender inequalities, since these moments of listening and dialogue were revealed as an excellent strategy to address values and contribute to the formation of citizens who are capable of living in society in a more respectful and supportive manner.

Anti Dialogicity

According to Freire (2021), the theory of anti dialogicity (banking education) is opposed to the theory of dialogicity (liberating education). The anti dialogic, dominant self turns the dominated, conquered you into a simple "this." For the author, an education without dialogue is not liberating, but a "banking education." The theory of anti dialogicity, according to Freire's vision (2021), comprises four characteristics: conquest, division to maintain oppression, manipulation and cultural invasion.

Below, we will present highlights of the research in which it is possible to identify marked characteristics of anti dialogicity, in which the oppressor perceives the need to exhibit his form of manipulation in order not to lose control over the already conquered object. These are situations in which oppressed people perceive themselves as inferior due to the difficulties they encounter in the game, while oppressors show themselves to be superior and individualistic, often arguing in a disrespectful manner.

In the Class Diary I, we find the following extracts:

Monalisa: "It's Dudu's fault, teacher, he said that the field is theirs."

Dudu: "I just said that we were using it at that time."

Zé Colmeia: "Why don't girls play dodgeball on the other side? It's easier to play dodgeball on the other side than on the field."

Teacher: "And why do you think that?"

Zé Colmeia: "Because the football field was made for playing football, right?"

In the above conversation, the boys never invite the girls to play or accept the division of the pitch. Instead, they keep arguing that the pitch is for playing football and that the girls should play somewhere else. This reflects a characteristic of seeking conquest and cultural invasion, as they fight not to lose their already dominated territories, while the invaded simply follow the choice determined by the oppressor, without question.

Freire (2022a) explains that self-contempt is another characteristic of the oppressed, and this perception reflects the internalization of the oppressors' opinion of the oppressed, as they are often used to hearing that they are good for nothing, that they do not have the capacity to learn anything, and that they are weak, lazy, and unproductive. They hear this discourse so much that they are convinced of their own inability.

These forms of oppression, as can be seen in the following dialogue, manifest when students use phrases that blame the oppressed, making them feel even worse.

According to Freire (2021), these anti-dialogical practices occur through tools used by the oppressors to maintain reality as it is for their own benefit, thus denying the possibility of the oppressed being heard

In Diary XI, which was about the Dance class, some of the children, although they did not have such an easy time, continued to criticize and present themselves as if only their ideas and tastes were correct and should prevail, as can be seen in the following dialogues related to the aforementioned Diary:

Messi: "I don't like dancing."

Luan: "It's not for me."

Zé Colmeia: "I don't like dancing."

Faro: "I didn't dance because I find it difficult, even though I wanted to."

Teacher: "Sakura, Robin, do you like football?"

Sakura: "No, but I play because I need to learn."

Robin: "Me too, teacher, I don't like it, but I played."

Messi: "They didn't even play, they were just there."

Zé Colmeia: "Opinion is opinion, if they don't like it, it's their problem."

Sakura: "They're unfair."

Messi: "Girls are on Tik Tok all day, I'm not, I just play football all day."

In the above dialogue, the discomfort is noticeable, especially among the boys, when the content of the dance is discussed. They do not show the same confidence as in sports classes, and in this context

they argue that they do not like it, that it is not their style. When questioned by the girls, they try to disassociate themselves from any responsibility. At the same time, they knew that physical education is a compulsory subject in the curriculum, so they were aware that they should participate. However, they did not admit their lack of interest and blamed the girls for not being like them and not sharing their same tastes.

Freire (2021) points out that anti-dialogical practices are characterized by being instruments used by the oppressors to maintain reality as it is, for their own benefit, regardless of whether they are right or not. The important thing is that their "advantages" remain as the existing reality.

The entire teaching unit was designed so that girls, as oppressed, could reflect on their rights and, at the same time, identify the "limit situations" expressed in their existential fatigue and reinforced by anti-dialogical practices that perpetuate the relationships that prevent them from "being more." In exploring the challenges we face, the possibilities of practicing a liberating education in the school space are recognized, which contradicts the dominant and opens space for creativity and hope (Misoczky, 2024). The search for these "viable unpublished", which supposes overcoming anti-dialogicity through dialogicity, will be discussed in the next category.

Unpublished Viable

This category presents us with ways to overcome one or more situations that require changes, known as "limit situations." In our case, the teacher perceives situations of gender separation and exclusion, and it is necessary to examine his or her practice and propose ways for students, through dialogue, to suggest ways to overcome these problems. Therefore, students were challenged to propose the best ways for all people to be included in classes without gender discrimination. Throughout the classes, students proposed changes at various times to ensure that everyone had the same opportunities to participate. On several occasions, these proposals were identified as possible "generative themes" in the search to overcome "limit situations" and achieve what Freire (2021) calls "viable unprecedented," understanding this as something new, not yet fully known or experienced, but somehow already projected as a dream. When it becomes something "perceived and highlighted" by those who imagined it utopically, they begin to believe that the problem is no longer just a dream, but can become a reality.

López Poblete (2020) highlights that Freirean praxis is constantly concerned with situations of discrimination, such as "capacity, incapacity or different capacities to perform physical activity, conception of normality regarding masculinity or femininity, prejudices or stereotypes that could stigmatize bodies, among other issues crossed by criteria of social justice" (p. 10).

Therefore, we looked for alternatives to overcome the barriers that existed until then in the perceived "Limit-Situations", starting with reflections and actions that became a dream. The actions were designed to possibly overcome the conditions that had been preventing people from dreaming and "being more", especially with regard to gender equality relations. From the codes generated in the data analysis, the large category "Unpublished Viable" also gave rise to two subcategories that will be analyzed below: dialogicity and "Being More."

Dialogicity

Freire (2021) believes that only through dialogue will success be achieved in the educational process. It is through dialogue with the other that banking education will be combated. For him, it is essential that reflection precedes action, and only in this way can changes occur in the reality in which we live.

As in the theory of anti-dialogicity, Freire (2021) presents four characteristics of the theory of dialogicity that are opposed to the previous ones: collaboration, union for liberation, organization and cultural synthesis.

In the following journals, the most significant moments of the entire research will be presented, where the students looked for solutions to include all people or express their feelings about the situations they experienced. In Journal II, the students discuss the best ways to achieve full inclusion.

Dudu: "I think when we used our hands, everyone was better included."

Messi: "What if the team that keeps possession of the ball for longer also scores points, not just by making 10 passes, but by keeping it in the team?"

Cinderela: "And if it's open, those who like to play with their hands, use their hands, and those who prefer their feet, use their feet. We can use either one, because there are situations that require hands and others that require feet."

In this dialogue, one student is initially seen to be concerned about the participation of all people in the activity, which triggered a discussion about how the game could be modified to include all people. From that point on, in a dialogical manner, the students pointed out ways to minimize differences, thus allowing all people to have more opportunities to participate in the activities.

Freire (2022b) argues that the school should encourage the student to ask questions, criticize, and create. It is in the school that the construction of collective knowledge is proposed, connecting popular knowledge with critical and scientific knowledge, mediated by experiences in the world. Therefore, dialogical relationships are vital for the success of students and to prepare them for a transformation in which everyone can coexist without prejudice or inequalities of participation.

These moments of dialogue occurred during several classes, as students modified the activities so that everyone felt included. Inspired by Paulo Freire's concept, Pessano (2012) understands "generative themes" as themes that lead to the generation of other related themes, weaving relationships between an individual or group of individuals with the world and the world with individuals. Therefore, this dialogical moment in which students understand that everyone must participate and, as a group, try to find ways for everyone to participate and not just be spectators, but protagonists in activities, is understood as "generative themes", as they generate new ways of playing and establish relationships between individuals both in participation and in the creation of activities.

Young people cannot be expected to magically "know" how to understand, question or navigate the complexities of gender or how to advance gender equity. Furthermore, schools remain places where individualizing discourses mitigate the complex contextual thinking that requires a subjectivity oriented towards gender equity (Maher et al., 2024). In that sense, it is necessary to practice problematizing and liberating education. Throughout the classes, it was observed that the girls, who previously accepted everything as it was without question, began to dialogue and look for ways to be

included in the activities. It was also possible to observe the boys, who previously did not notice or simply did not care, probably because it did not affect them, beginning to look for ways to include all people, which led them towards "Being More."

Being More

In this subcategory, we will discuss the students' journey in their search for "Being More." We will observe moments in which they stop accepting things as they are and, upon becoming aware of the often unjust reality in which they are immersed, they seek to transform it through dialogue, breaking down the barriers that previously prevented them from "Being More."

In the following dialogues in Journal IV, we can observe moments in which students in this research begin to question, recognize their mistakes, and respect others. Tensions are observed in situations of oppression, both on the part of the oppressors and the oppressed.

Robin: "We grow up with society saying that girls should be more delicate and boys should be strong."

Sakura: "Often, girls are more delicate. Like, girls wear more pink, society thinks it should be like that, girls in pink and purple. I don't think that's right; I prefer blue instead of pink and I think we should have the freedom to wear whatever we want."

Nescau: "Girls can do everything we do, it should be equal, right?"

Sakura: "Sometimes girls can't be equal because parents don't let girls do what boys do, like playing soccer in the street, skateboarding, just because they're girls. I think we should try to forget this idea that boys shouldn't mix with girls."

In Diary IV, we noticed that both boys and girls began to understand the need to be seen as equals in terms of guaranteeing their rights and commented on the need for change in society. In their responses, they expressed both discontent and an awakening towards the non-acceptance of this way of thinking and living.

The teaching unit ended with an activity called "Awakening of Consciousness Dynamic." In this dynamic, boys gave orders and girls carried them out. At the end, everyone received a prize for having done a good job, but boys were rewarded more than girls, which generated an interesting discussion in the group, as noted in Diary XVI.

Robin: "Why do I get three and she only gets one?"

At this moment, without me saying anything, Robin handed one of her candies to Lua. Goku, seeing Robin's attitude, did the same.

Professor: "What do you think we should do to avoid this problem then?"

Sakura: "Divide."

Formiga: "We should divide everything equally."

In this part of the discussion, it is observed that the girls did not have to fight alone for their rights and equality. Some boys recognized the injustice of the system and decided to share the way it really

should be. The girls argued about this injustice and did not accept the inequality. This allows us to understand that the girls, who were previously oppressed and easily accepted what the boys imposed, no longer remained silent. The boys, who previously considered themselves owners of the truth and full of rights, no longer believed in that way of acting. They understood that it is possible to live in a fair way, recognizing the effort and the right of the other. At this point, we can remember an important reflection by Freire (2022a) when the educator states that "only the oppressed and liberating themselves can liberate the oppressors."

As highlighted by Urrutia Medina et al. (2024), addressing gender differences through inclusive methodologies that recognize and value women's individual interests and abilities is essential to avoid perpetuating comparisons that do not contribute to gender equity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of this study was to analyse the limits and possibilities of a teaching intervention guided by a dialogic pedagogy with the aim of questioning gender inequalities in physical education classes.

Based on the reflections generated in the group conversations, it can be observed that, at the beginning, both boys and girls considered gender inequality in physical education classes to be normal. Girls often showed existential fatigue, that is, they felt unmotivated to play or claim their participation in boys' games because they believed that it was not worth the struggle, they thought that nothing would change and that it was not worth the effort or stress, so they accepted that life was like that. However, the dialogues built throughout the research showed that everyone had the same right to use the spaces, and that differences in skills or abilities should not be taken as criteria for inclusion or exclusion.

These obstacles were not only built at school, since boys and girls already brought this segregationist format from the society in which they lived. In some class diaries, students reported that they were forbidden to play together, as these were rules they brought from their homes. Many understood that football was a practice for boys and dance for girls, so breaking with this deep-rooted culture was one of the main difficulties faced during the teaching unit.

Throughout the process, it was identified that a way to address these prejudices with a view to overcoming them had to start from the principle that it was no longer enough to design content for students to practice. That is, it was necessary for students to also become protagonists in the construction of this knowledge. They had to participate in the development of the classes, overcoming anti-dialogicity. Students had to learn to listen to other people, respecting opinions and differences, and building mutual respect among all. It was therefore essential to be guided by Paulo Freire's liberatory education, in which students are protagonists of the teaching and learning process, and not mere spectators. Alfrey and O'Connor (2020) support the need for teachers to increasingly teach in dialogue with students, and to become jointly responsible for growth, considering the limits of their classes, and moving from a focus on performance to a focus on growth, gradually handing over control of decision-making.

We understand that the conversation circles contributed a lot to this process of transformation of the students, since it was a moment of dialogicity in which they could express what made them

uncomfortable and propose ways to overcome gender exclusions in the classes, thus giving rise to the generative themes. The main idea of the generative themes in the research was related to the transformation of the rules so that everyone was included fairly in the activities, without worrying only about who has more or less ability. At this moment, the intention was to recognize that something was wrong and, therefore, we had to improve by putting ourselves in the other person's place. As they lived together and participated in this listening process, we noticed that girls, in particular, woke up from their deep existential fatigue and lack of dialogue, which gave them hope, allowed them to feel free and, consequently, with the vocation to Be More.

A study carried out in the Professional Master's Program in Physical Education in the National Network-ProEF collaborates with the results found in this research. Pereira & Souza Junior (2020) discussed the empowerment of girls in bodily practices, specifically in invasion sports games, from a coeducational perspective. The authors concluded that coeducational classes, together with teaching practice, can contribute to significant changes in girls' empowerment processes, as long as moments are created in which everyone can be heard equally. For the authors, these moments raise awareness about the world, showing that they can play what (and how) they want, since they have the same rights as boys.

With this, it is possible to conclude that the teaching unit achieved significant progress and achievements, although not in an absolute way, since even in the last classes, prejudiced and intolerant attitudes were observed on the part of some students. Therefore, we understand that the students, in various ways, felt sensitized and were transformed by the action-research, understanding the human being, in the Freirean sense, as an unfinished being. This implies that they are individuals aware that each person is in a constant process of awareness and humanization, in search of their ontological vocation to Be More.

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