

## The teaching of physical education by projects and its applicability in the education of young people and adults in prison in Brazil

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### ABSTRACT

This article brings reflections on the teaching of Physical Education by projects and its applicability in the Education of Youth and Adults prisoners, since Brazil has the third largest prison population in the world, composed mostly of poor, black and brown people, people living in peripheral regions and the LBTQIA+ group. It aims to identify how this pedagogical approach oriented to the discipline of Physical Education can contribute, develop and enrich the acquisition of knowledge of students of Young Adult Education (EJA), within the scope of the Brazilian prison system. The methodology used was the bibliographic research, carried out from November 2023 to January 2024. The research was based on references from books, articles, monographs, dissertations and theses and on authors such as Foucault (1987), Arroyo (2006), Mazur (2015), Onofre (2016), Miranda (2016), Mattar (2017), Costa (2020), among others, who guided the theoretical framework of the topic under debate. From the perspective of what is recommended by the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs), it is expected that the student from EJA can have autonomy and enjoy a set of knowledge acquired at school, recognized as necessary for insertion in the world of work and preparation for the exercise of citizenship, even in places with unfavorable conditions. Therefore, using active methodologies that include the teaching of Physical Education by projects will enable the adoption of practices that will allow the student to better participate in the learning process, delegating to the EJA student the possibility of building their unique knowledge base. As a pedagogical resource that meets the Curricular Guidelines of Basic Education, project-based teaching is an active methodology that proposes practical activity as a tool and aims at the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values, under the guidance of the Physical Education teacher. The results indicate that the learning of Physical Education based on instructional activities of project-based teaching can engage incarcerated EJA students to become protagonists in the process of building their own knowledge, which is the key element for the exercise of citizenship, as well as their desired resocialization.

**Keywords:** Project-based physical education teaching, Youth and adult education, Active learning methodologies, Prison education.

### INTRODUCTION

The present work aims to identify how the teaching of Physical Education by projects and its applicability in the Education of Youth and Adults prisoners in Brazil can contribute, develop and enrich the acquisition of knowledge of students of Young Adult Education (EJA), within the scope of the Brazilian prison system. Considering the dimension and historical context of the subject investigated, Physical Education in Brazil has its first records with the arrival of the Portuguese in April 1500. The Amerindian peoples who lived here practiced activities such as swimming, fighting, dancing and hunting.

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Certainly, these were exercises linked to the indigenous culture that became initial evidence of what was later called Physical Education. Subsequently, according to Chiés (2004), "in the schools founded by the Jesuits, students participated in games and games, which were considered the first Physical Education classes in Brazilian territory".

At this juncture, in 1982 we had Rui Barbosa's opinion on the "Reform of Primary, Secondary and Higher Education", in which he defended the value of physical development combined with mental development in the most developed countries, and suggested the mandatory practice in all schools (for both genders), including Physical Education as a subject of study. This fact highlighted the importance of Physical Education in the educational process of the Brazilian people.

During the military dictatorship in Brazil, Physical Education gained the status of government propaganda and all teaching began to be directed to sports performance and athletic performance. Currently, the role of Physical Education for full human development is recognized, being an essential didactic resource for learning, social integration and the exercise of citizenship (KNUTH, 2017).

On the other hand, in the school environment, Physical Education has as its main objective to develop the knowledge of the body culture of movement, seeking to create a critical, participatory and autonomous citizen. It is an area of human knowledge linked to the bodily practices historically produced by humanity. Therefore, it consists of a pedagogical process that aims at the formation of man capable of conducting himself fully in his daily and work activities. Allied to this, it is noteworthy that,

The identity of Physical Education is presented in a reconstruction in which the practice is reflective, in which it is effected as a contribution of the social and critical consciousness of the students, assuming that this student is a socially participatory agent and that the practice in the discipline develops the human potentialities in their totality (GUIRALDELLI, 2004, p. 37).

Despite this, education in the Brazilian prison system remains on the margins of what is proposed and defined by the Federal Constitution of 1988, by the Law of Guidelines, by the Bases of National Education (LDB) of 1996 and by the Penal Execution Law of 1984. In this scenario, Physical Education is called upon to align itself with a project of transformation of incarcerated people, who will remain excluded from social life for a period of time, under constant surveillance, controlled, manipulated and trained through disciplinary rules and norms (ONOFRE, 2013).

Another important aspect, also pointed out by Onofre (2012), is that the provision of education for young people and adults in deprivation of liberty has been configured as a fictitious right, camouflaged between the official discourse and the reality of pedagogical practices inside Brazilian prisons. In addition, there is a lack of and/or precariousness in the infrastructures intended for didactic activities in penal establishments, which are carried out in adapted and improvised places or shared use with other services (MIRANDA, 2016). We also highlight that in prison units, educational activities are permeated by



unpredictability, where, even with teaching planning, there is no guarantee that the teacher will be able to execute it (SILVA, 2011).

The importance of this investigation lies in the fact that Physical Education reflects a practice modulated by environmental, cultural, social and academic factors, centered on promoting students' interest in exercises and that they reflect on the benefits promoted to health through this practice, which strengthens human well-being and can become an essential factor for the social reintegration of EJA incarcerated students. Thus, we intend to understand the impacts and benefits of the teaching of Physical Education by projects for EJA students in the Brazilian prison scenario.

That said, we raise the following questions: does the traditional teaching of Physical Education provide real or simulated experiences that cause the development of EJA students? How can project-based teaching strengthen EJA students' learning? What are the main strategies of project-based learning and benefits for the student of the discipline of Physical Education in the sphere of EJA in deprivation of liberty?

In view of these assertions, this study will cover project-based learning, as well as its concepts, stages and applicability in EJA in the context of Prison Education. Then, he will discuss the situation of EJA in Brazil. Soon after, it will be discussed about the impacts of the teaching of Physical Education by projects in EJA for incarcerated students and finally the final considerations, with the synthesis of the ideas that were presented throughout the research.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The theoretical foundation of this research was structured through bibliographic research that aims to improve and update knowledge, through a scientific investigation of works already published and was carried out from November 2023 to January 2024. To this end, different types of documents (books, articles, periodicals, theses, dissertations, online texts), among other sources, were consulted. Some authors such as Foucault (1987), Arroyo (2006), Mazur (2015), Onofre (2016), Miranda (2016), Mattar (2017), Costa (2020), who allow us to discuss and formulate questions about this field of study, also supported this investigation.

As Fonseca (2002, p. 32) points out, bibliographic research is based on a survey of theoretical references already analyzed, and published by written and electronic means, such as books, scientific articles, and web site pages. On the other hand, bibliographic research, according to Gil (2007, p. 44), has as its main examples the investigations on ideologies or those that propose the analysis of the various positions on a problem. This type of research provides support for knowledge on the subject under investigation, allows a broad description of the subject, how and from what perspectives the subject



presented in the scientific literature was treated. However, it does not exhaust the possibilities of debates that surround the researched theme.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

School Physical Education is an essential curricular component for the student's educational pursuit, because, along with the other school subjects, it helps in multiple aspects for their formation and instructs them for responsible participation in society. The Federal Council of Physical Education – CONFEF, understands that,

Physical Education at school should be a discipline inserted in the pedagogical and formative context of citizenship, with the purpose of explaining corporeality, the meaning of quality of life through an active lifestyle, which offers some thematic experiences so that students can experience exercises and practices. Discipline cannot be based on, nor be justified only in its practice, but by its purpose (CONFEF, 2002).

From this same point of view, the contributions of Physical Education competencies are relevant, especially in the current Brazilian social scenario, stigmatized by high rates of unemployment, crime, low investments in education, school dropout, precarious health, insecurity and governments marked by episodes of corruption (LOUZANO, 2014).

Even considering such aspects, one of the social functions of School Physical Education is to improve the formation of students, through recreation, games, games and strategies that propose analysis, decision-making, self-confidence, mutual respect and teamwork and, concomitantly, can provide the cognitive, sensorial and motor evolution of EJA inmates. In view of this, the teaching of Physical Education by projects can help in the formation of these people, providing them with a better capacity to carry out socialization, as well as provoking the necessary and urgent transformations for Brazilian prison education. From this angle, it can be seen that,

The socialization of the individual or child occurs precisely through the internalization of values and norms and behaviors of the society to which they belong. The school is one of the institutions that promotes such socialization. Therefore, the phenomenon of socialization or social learning also occurs in Physical Education classes, and is even emphasized as an important function by sports pedagogy or Physical Education (BRACHT, 2013, p.74).

In addition, in order for project-based Physical Education to effectively support the full physical, emotional, and intellectual growth of EJA students in the Brazilian prison system, the articulation between school, family, and society in the implementation of public policies that contemplate students who are the target audience of Prison Education is imperative. Probably, without this articulation, it will be difficult to have the conceptual, attitudinal and procedural adjustment that consist of fundamental dimensions for the formation and resocialization of students in deprivation of liberty. The orientation of inseparability



between family, school and society in the sharing of the preparation, training and educational development of students in the Brazilian prison system is evident here. From this perspective, Costa (2020) argues that "learning is an action that takes place in the interaction with the world, necessarily mediated by the other, by language and by the social context and any attempt to isolate the learning process from these aspects will be doomed to failure".

## **WHAT IS PROJECT-BASED LEARNING?**

Project-based learning integrates the so-called active educational methodologies, as it offers students the opportunity to identify real problems and act in a dynamic and collaborative way in search of a solution. It is a pedagogical innovation that gives students the possibility to expand knowledge and skills through projects defined around challenges and problems that they may face in their daily lives.

Project-based Physical Education learning is a teaching strategy based on experience and action, whose main benefit is the fact that the student, instead of rehearsing, acts. He just doesn't train, he plays. This pedagogical approach confronts the EJA student directly with the action by testing their abilities in creating something new and thus paving the way for their learning process, which occurs when this student is able to convert information into knowledge. The main virtue of project-based learning is that it is possible to address several subjects in the school curriculum at the same time. In an interdisciplinary work, there is no one discipline that is superior to another, all have important roles in the integration process (CAMPOS, 2011). It is an inclusive methodology that gives the opportunity to identify the different learning rhythms of a class and/or student and address this with a proposal of activities that cover various degrees of complexity.

According to Barros (2007), project-based learning represents "a teaching methodology in which a problem situation is presented as a motivating factor for students' studies that places them at the center of the teaching and learning process". As a consequence, unlike traditional teaching methods,

With the use of projects, teachers start to act as facilitators and advisors to their students, encouraging and contributing to the learning process, making these students more confident, especially when applying the knowledge acquired in practice, also improving their relationship with colleagues (BARBOSA and MOURA, 2013, p. 63).

Embodying this intention, the acquisition of knowledge as a result of an interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment, in which they act in response to external stimuli, constructing and organizing their own knowledge, can be stimulated by project-based teaching and/or different active learning methods (DARIDO, 2005). From this perspective, the teaching of project-based Physical Education can contribute to arouse the interest of the incarcerated EJA student in learning, proactively interacting with others and resocializing. The experiments that underpin project-based learning



stimulate reasoning, the development of critical thinking and motivation, promote engagement and the desire for knowledge. One of the main differentials of this didactic proposal is that it places the student at the center of the learning process, as a protagonist and not a mere spectator (CAMPOS, 2011).

## **BENEFITS OF TEACHING PHYSICAL EDUCATION BY PROJECTS**

The teaching of Physical Education by projects corresponds to a didactic resource that has as one of the important points of its practice the relationship between teacher, student and the content to be studied (O'GRADY, et al 2012). This teaching methodology can contribute to the broad development of pedagogical principles that link teaching and learning with real situations and reinforces the student's independent, active and responsible activity in the construction of new learning. The teaching of Physical Education by projects also improves the teacher's practice to the extent that it encourages the teacher to follow the research process developed by the students and how they arrive at the solution of the problems they propose to solve, in the face of the elaboration of new learning challenges (NEVES, 2011).

Based on these concepts, Barros (2007) points out that among the main benefits of learning Physical Education by projects, we have: students can assume a posture of greater autonomy and independence to discuss, plan and learn; focus on developing skills that are useful to students' daily lives; designation of a strategic role for teachers, who begin to act as mediators in the educational process; better opportunities for the implementation of technologies in the educational process; interdisciplinarity and diversity involving concepts from different disciplines; innovation-driven cognitive development and student-centered approach.

## **SCENARIO OF EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS IN PRISON IN BRAZIL**

According to data from the National Penitentiary Department of the Ministry of Justice (DEPEN - MJ), Brazil (2022) has the third largest prison population in the world (886,872 prisoners), composed mainly of young people and adults, among whom 75% have not completed elementary school and 5% are considered illiterate. Thus, to approach Youth and Adult Education in the context of the prison system is to debate about Brazilian minorities, which are the social groups historically excluded from the process of guaranteeing basic rights due to ethnic, financial, gender and sexuality issues (MOREIRA, 2007).

In Siqueira's (2017) view, the EJA theme for people in deprivation of liberty involves exclusion, racism, diversity, ethnic identity, social vulnerability, unemployed, homeless and/or food insecure people, that is, young people, adults and the elderly who for some reason did not have access to education in conventional school at the appropriate age and who, to a certain extent, they are excluded from social guarantees and are part of Brazilian Prison Education. In explaining this observance, Foucault (1987)



argues that "the education of the detainee is, on the part of the public authorities, at the same time an indispensable precaution in the interest of society and an obligation towards the inmate".

Acknowledging the expressiveness of this contingent, it should be noted that Prison Education was established by Presidential Decree No. 7,626/2011, which establishes the Strategic Education Plan within the prison system, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice, and which also has the help of the States. Based on these data, it is detected that the EJA for incarcerated people represents a controversial panorama and confronting it requires the courage to admit that these Brazilian students do not have political, social or educational representation. For this reason, EJA students in prisons live on the margins of what the fragile Brazilian educational system can offer, especially with regard to the quality of education, access, permanence and social reintegration. EJA is also characterized by an ethical, political and racial specificity, because it is in the vacuum of the power relationship between the educated and the uneducated, between the literate and the illiterate, and also between the marginalized and the non-marginalized. As Machado points out,

In EJA the power relationship is built through discriminatory and exclusionary representations and practices. And also because people labeled as dumb, mobral, among others, manifest an ethical-political suffering of injustice towards the educated and a feeling of inferiority and incompetence, including a loss of self-esteem in the eyes of their family and social group (SIQUEIRA, 2017, p. 75).

On the other hand, according to Arroyo (2006), EJA teachers face numerous difficulties in carrying out their teaching practice, such as heterogeneity, students with great difficulty in reading and writing, students' health problems, dropout, lack of specific teaching materials, low students' self-esteem, lack of conduct, violence, low teachers' salaries and institutional rigidity. By contemplating these aspects, it is revealed that prison units are rarely planned with classrooms and that,

As these are Physical Education classes in prison units, the strictness of the internal rules is configured as an intervening element in pedagogical practices, such as, for example, the prohibition of the use of pedagogical materials such as ropes, balls, hula hoops, athletics materials, or even those that may cause cuts or that are pointed, the restriction of the bodily practices allowed or (SALVALAGGIO, 2016, p. 49).

Regarding the perspective of the EJA inmate student, Physical Education in the prison context is seen as a process of health education, through formal and non-formal means, as it promotes an effective contribution to health and a healthy occupation of the incarcerated student's free time in prison. And, it represents an achievement for the active lifestyle, which contrasts with the reality of the internal environment of Brazilian prisons, favoring a greater possibility of locomotion of prisoners (NEVES; VELARDI; CORREIA, 2011).



Understanding this process more deeply, Louzano (2014) believes that the teaching of Physical Education, in addition to contributing to the balance of the incarcerated student, should clarify him about his reality, seeking from him positions that are not conformist. So that he can visualize not a static, alienated and disconnected balance from reality, but a dynamic, conscious and critical balance, which helps him to fully develop, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work, through the pedagogical practices experienced with Physical Education based on projects.

## **PROJECT-BASED PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF EJA IN PRISONS**

The origin of Project-Based Learning (PBL) is usually associated with inquiry-based teaching, which in turn was strongly influenced by the ideas of the American philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey (MATAR, 2017). However, technological development, research and transformations that have occurred over time have strengthened the constructivist view of learning, its context, as well as the importance of participation and interaction between students and between them and the school and the school. All of these factors underscore the complex and non-linear nature of the learning process and point to projects as a centerpiece of constructivist philosophy in the classroom (Hernández, 1998).

In this universe, Matar (2017) identifies a literature review in which he examines research on PBL and presents five criteria that a PBL proposal must contain: centrality: refers to the need for projects to be the central teaching strategy, that is, it is through them that students should learn the central concepts of the discipline; Driving Question: focusing on issues or problems that move students towards the central principles and concepts of a discipline; constructive investigations: which involve transformation and construction of knowledge, develop new understandings and new skills; Autonomy: This concerns the freedom for students to determine the path of their research and realism: which requires the incorporation of real-life problems and solutions with the potential to be implemented.

Considering these aspects, the teaching of Physical Education to incarcerated students in EJA represents a didactic strategy that seeks to stimulate the protagonism, critical thinking and autonomy of these students. From this point of view, both the Federal Constitution of 1998, as well as the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education of 1996 (LDBEN), prescribe the importance of contextualizing the themes in relation to the student's daily life. In this way, the student will have the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired to the concrete situations of his life.

As far as it is concerned, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Secondary Education (DCNEM) support this idea in its article 12, in which they recommend "adopting teaching and learning assessment methodologies that stimulate student initiative" and in its article 13, in which they suggest that curricular propositions have "research as a pedagogical principle, enabling the student to be a protagonist in the





investigation and in the search for answers in an autonomous process of (re)construction of knowledge (CNE, 1998). In project-based learning, the line of reasoning is with the student, contrary to what happens in expository teaching, in which the reasoning comes from the teacher (MAZUR, 2015). However, as Matar (2017) argues, for this to occur, teachers must propose challenging and interesting questions in the sense that the acquisition of meanings occurs, as well as the students' understanding of the contents.

Embodying this intention, Physical Education based on the PBL methodology can be applied in the context of Prison Education and adapted to the school level of EJA students in deprivation of liberty, considering the following steps: **1-** Project approach and work plan: establishment of project objectives, deliveries and expected results. Distribution of responsibilities so that everyone has responsibilities and roles to assume. **2-** Implementation: process of investigation, search, treatment and analysis of information and activities. Interactions between students and teachers (orientations). Creation of a final product chosen by the students (infographic, murals, exhibition, video, music, speech, research, game, contest, debate...) **3-** Presentation: presentation of the project's activities and/or the final result. **4-** Evaluation of the results: feedback on the process by the teacher. Promote self-evaluation of each team member and peer review, in addition to plenary evaluation (lessons learned). Assessment should focus on the development of educational skills and competences, valuing the path to learning and not just the results (SILVA, 2011).

Reaffirming the importance of this research, the authors Horn and Staker (2015) indicate some important aspects in the field of active learning methodologies, among which the following stand out: planning joint actions, aligning the project with the student's social and cultural paradigm; to carry out approaches that awaken the investigative process, to have a broader and deeper understanding of the topics of study; interpret results, data or information obtained and participate in the communication of the results, as well as review what is already known about the experiences and provide the foundations for students to build their hypotheses, paths and expand their educational knowledge through project-based learning.

In this trajectory, it is observed that the traditional teaching methodology of the discipline Physical Education is inconsistent with the current educational needs of EJA students in deprivation of liberty. With the adoption of project-based learning, "it is considered that it will be possible to relate the contents addressed in school with the educational needs of the incarcerated EJA student, bringing meaning to their learning and to their future performance as a resocialized citizen" (MOREIRA, 2007).

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

With the purpose of verifying the contributions of project-based learning, as well as verifying the strategies for operationalizing these methodologies, and determining the benefits and challenges of using them for the construction of meaningful learning through the teaching of Physical Education to EJA



students in deprivation of liberty, the present research presented a pedagogical approach with the potential to unite contextualization and project-based learning as didactic strategies that focus on student-centered learning, in collaborative work and based on educational activities that can proactively contemplate the difficulties experienced by EJA students in Brazilian prisons in relation to the contents of the Physical Education discipline.

In view of the scope of this research, it is possible to consider the method of teaching Physical Education by projects effective, due to its ability to generate greater dynamism in classes, stimulate the resolution of problems experienced by the school community itself, incite research, expose concepts and ideas, promote greater student autonomy in the search for answers in the process of construction of scientific knowledge.

Thus, it is worth mentioning that the challenges and possibilities related to learning by projects operationalized by the discipline of Physical Education can produce elements favorable to educational development and re-signify the participation of both the teacher and the EJA student in Brazilian prisons, helping to overcome the difficulties of students and in their preparation for the exercise of citizenship and their qualification for work.



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