

# Physical education teacher training and communication concepts in teaching considerations

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**Abstract:** Contemporary social dynamics, marked by accelerated symbolic exchanges with the support of multi-language, have urgently required new teaching-learning processes. The objective of this experience report is to reflect on the process of continuing education to physical education teachers in the city of Natal, RN, using communication concepts that imply new teaching methods. The description is the result of action research and is based on systematic observation of continuing education meetings held in 2016. By using narrative and

**Resumo:** A dinâmica social contemporânea, marcada por aceleradas trocas simbólicas em suportes com multilinguagens, tem requerido urgentemente novos processos de ensino-aprendizagem. A partir deste relato de experiência, objetivamos refletir sobre o processo de formação continuada de professores de educação física na cidade de Natal (RN) ao acionar conceitos oriundos do campo comunicacional, mas que implicam novas formas de ensinar. A descrição é tributária de uma pesquisa-ação e tem por base a observação sistemática de encontros de formação continuada realizados em 2016. Ao resgatar os

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communication concepts and a mediation process, teachers recognize and reflect on such concepts as they are discussed in their pedagogical practices, allowing them to experience these concepts in daily school routine.

**Keywords:** mediation; narrative; communication; continuing education; physical education.

conceitos de narrativa e comunicação, além do processo de mediação, compreendemos que os professores demonstram reconhecer e refletir sobre tais conceitos na medida em que estes são problematizados em suas práticas pedagógicas, sendo possível experimentá-los no cotidiano escolar.

**Palavras-chave:** mediação; narrativa; comunicação; formação continuada; educação física.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that media discourses permeate cultural practices in contemporary society, altering their communication dynamics, we understand that media studies constitute an interdisciplinary axis that is necessary to any academic training. In the educational field, the number of initiatives aiming to understand and implement possible and required interactions between formal education and media grow in quantity and theoretical-methodological depth. It is accepted that media produce and convey proper senses/meanings for the school culture, and disseminate content whose assimilation takes place through new languages and convergence of technologies. Then, it requires teacher training that enables systematized access to media concepts and languages so that teachers can use conceptual and technical tools to understand and re-signify emerging literacies<sup>1</sup>, seeking to associate them with the themes of school culture.

Considering that initial training cannot fulfill all demands of the teaching profession, current literature has focused on continuing education as ‘an interactive and dynamic, individual and collective process, which occurs in connection with school projects, creating a network of knowledge production and development of curricular organization’<sup>2</sup> that should seek relations with broader cultural changes to oxygenate the pedagogical practice, such as the emergence of mediation supported by communication concepts.

A gradual and concentric association has been observed between the pedagogical and the communication fields, converging in physical education more systematically starting in the 1990s<sup>3</sup> and becoming stronger over the years. This association has generated significant experiences in the school context creating discussions and allowing expressions of young people and children related to the aspects of advertising, consumption, appropriation and critical analysis of media discourses, based on pedagogical themes of physical education.

Several definitions have been attributed to this educational perspective. However, today the most frequent terms in Brazil are educommunication<sup>4</sup> and

1. PASSARELLI, Brasilina; JUNQUEIRA, Antonio Helio; ANGELUCI, Alan César Belo. Digital natives in Brazil and their behavior in front of the screens. **MATRIZES**, São Paulo, v. 8, n. 1, p. 159-178, 2014.

2. MELO, José Pereira; BORBA, Sandra (org.). **Caderno informativo do Paideia**: a importância do ensino de Arte e Educação Física na escola. Natal: Paideia, 2006, p. 12.

3. PIRES, Giovani De Lorenzi et al. A pesquisa em Educação Física e mídia: pioneirismo, contribuições e críticas ao “Grupo de Santa Maria”. **Movimento**, Porto Alegre, v. 14, n. 3, p. 33-52, 2008.

4. SOARES, Ismar de Oliveira. **Educomunicação**: o conceito, o profissional, a aplicação: contribuições para a reforma do Ensino Médio. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2011.

media education<sup>5,6</sup>, which, although contextualizing some divergences, have supported a new thinking about the communication processes in educational environments, thus becoming a theoretical contribution for enabling a qualitative and innovative perspective of the pedagogical practice.

Porto<sup>7</sup> argues the need to develop communication pedagogy that, in addition to using technologies as tools or learning enablers, provides a reflexive and critical contact with media culture, analyzing their messages and understanding how their senses are technically built by technological resources.

In this sense, it is interesting to discuss and produce environments for initial and continuing training of teachers so that they perceive in this field other possibilities of teaching and explore in school time-space themes and knowledge of media culture. In this attempt, this study will specifically focus the context of continuing education of physical education teachers.

Therefore, or reflection emerges from a training process that was conducted in biweekly meetings with physical education teachers of the municipal education system of the city of Natal (RN), promoted by the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), through its Laboratory of Physical Education, Sports and Media Studies (Lefem), in partnership with the Municipal Secretary of Education (SME) of Natal, represented by a team of teacher from the Continuing Education Program for Physical Education Teachers (Foco-EF).

This partnership aims to discuss and disseminate the theme of media education among physical education teachers working in the city of Natal. This action of continuing education was performed under an extension program linked with UFRN and coordinated by Lefem named 'Physical education teachers training: connecting disciplinary knowledge, school and media culture in times of mega sporting events,' which was funded by the 2016 RFP of the University Extension Support Program (ProExt) of the Ministry of Education (MEC).

While seeking to systematize information about media education and continuing education in physical education, other experiences were found in the literature, already reported by Mendes<sup>8</sup> and Bianchi<sup>9</sup>, which showed the authors of this study some possibilities of thematic articulation for this proposed action. This study will emphasize topics emerging from the training meetings as field issues, based on communication concepts. In this sense, this study aims to reflect on the process of continuing education of physical education teachers in the city of Natal by using communicational concepts that imply new teaching methods.

## 2. STUDY DESIGN AND NARRATIVE METHODS

This is a qualitative descriptive study. The instrument of data collection was participant observation in continuing training meetings in 2016 in the

5. FATIN, Monica. **Mídia-  
-educação**: conceitos,  
experiências, diálogos  
Brasil-Itália. Florianópolis:  
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6. BELLONI, Maria Luiza. **O que é mídia-  
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v. 11, n. 31, p. 43-57, 2006.

8. MENDES, Diego de  
Sousa. **Luz, câmera e pes-  
quisa-ação**: uma inserção  
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Federal de Santa Catarina,  
Florianópolis, 2008.

9. BIANCHI, Paula. **Forma-  
ção em mídia-educação  
(física)**: ações colaborati-  
vas na rede municipal de  
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rina, 2009. Dissertação  
(Dissertação em Educa-  
ção Física) – Universidade  
Federal de Santa Catarina,  
Florianópolis, 2009.

municipality of Natal. The study that originated this report is based on a social intervention that used the action research method<sup>10</sup>, considering the objective of this method, and of this study, is to promote changes in a social reality (assuming that reality needs to change).

The universe where this study was conducted consists of 155 physical education teachers who work in the 73 public schools in Natal. However, the sample representing the experience is a group of 96 teachers, corresponding to a total of around two thirds of the number of physical education teachers in the municipality who participated in the continuing education program.

In a brief characterization of the teachers, data reported by Souza Junior<sup>11</sup> were used here to show these teachers had mean age of 41 years, initial training in physical education at UFRN or the Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (UERN) in the first decade of this century, with no experience with media studies or communication concepts during their initial training. Most teachers participating in the program are graduates and access the internet mainly to interact on social media. Most of them reported television as the most frequently used media device, of greater familiarity and use in pedagogical practices. On the other hand, videogame was the least frequently used media device in school environments.

Regarding data collection techniques and instruments, participant observation<sup>12</sup> and field notes<sup>13</sup> were used in this report. Some photographs were also used as a complement to illustrate the experience. All inferences made in this study were obtained from reflections of the group of teachers.

### 3. COMMUNICATION CONCEPTS DISCUSSED IN THE TRAINING

The first meeting conducted by Lefem set the following question to guide the discussion: How do media and technologies reach schools, classes and students? The idea was to create a network of knowledge and opinions about the types of access to media and technologies in the school environment and the teacher attitude towards them. Multiple behaviors, testimonies and speeches were provided, some of which are reproduced below, collected at the meeting held on April 25, 2016<sup>14</sup>:

*WhatsApp has been a fantastic tool for this communication about sports with the boys, about competitions, with time information [...]. But what I see is only that, on social media and selfies with the teenagers [...]. (GGB, 2016)*

*It was indifferent, because as I work with smaller students there at school, they don't take their cell phones. At school, at this moment, they have no access to any media. They might have it at home. When they come from home, they don't bring any information. [...] Replacing this moment of motor education with another, honestly... It's an element for you to use, a resource, but it cannot be the main mode of physical education. (HGACS, 2016)*

10. BARBIER, René. **A pesquisa-ação**. Brasília, DF: Líber Livro, 2007.

11. SOUZA JUNIOR, Antonio Fernandes de. **Os docentes de educação física na apropriação da cultura digital: encontros com a formação continuada**, 2018. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação Física) – Centro de Ciências da Saúde, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, 2018, p. 84.

12. The training meetings were held in 2016, on Mondays at the Municipal School Reference Center (Cemure). Participants were teachers/coordinators of Lefem, master's program students, scholarship holders linked with the extension project, teachers from the city administration and teachers of the municipal public system. The meetings were filmed and photographed, and then evaluations were conducted by the teachers, master's program students and scholarship holders of the project, which included our observations about the training. In these evaluation processes, we discussed about our impressions of the meetings and organized the next ones, in an action-reflection-action process.

13. GIL, Antonio Carlos. **Como elaborar projetos de pesquisa**. São Paulo: Atlas, 2010.

14. To ensure anonymity of teachers, their initials were used to identify their statements.

In the development of debates in this and other meetings of physical education teacher training, some resistance emerged and expressed inconsistencies of their understanding of the communication process in the education environment. Such inconsistencies resulted in reflections about the need to consider the communication process more broadly while applying it to education. The idea of considering the communication process focused on the field of education was based on the dialogue of teachers and the power seen in the first movements of a Latin American theory of communication in connection with education<sup>15</sup>.

The authors decided to use concepts from the field of communication that could support teaching considerations. These concepts emerge in different ways in the training debate, such as a comic strip produced by the teachers, in the interactions between research subjects and technological devices, or in the dialogue about the organization of pedagogical experiences. These precious and singular moments enable an understanding of the ways to learn and teach with technologies, so that these concepts could be debated and inserted in the training.

This study is focused on two scenes experienced with physical education teachers from the public school system that support our discussions on concepts of narrative and communication.

## 4. REPORTING SCENES AND USING CONCEPTS

### 4.1. Experiences and reflections of teachers regarding the concept of narrative

The first scene is a development of the network of knowledge and opinions about media and technologies in school environment. First, when large groups of teachers were created, an activity was performed which consisted of a narrative based on the meeting questioning. Then, the narratives were symbolically connected by a string (Figure 1), while a mediator discussed the speeches. This way, a network of experiences was established.



Source: Lefem archive (photo taken by Josivan Junior on April 25, 2016).

**Figure 1:** Network of knowledge and opinions

15. MARTÍN-BARBERO, Jesús. **A comunicação na educação**. Translation: Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes & Dafne Melo. São Paulo: Contexto, 2014.



Different experiences were observed in the speeches of these teachers, which referred to different understandings of media, education and physical education. In all cases, somehow media were perceived as a phenomenon associated with school and the subjects that are part of it, thus demonstrating the need for dialogue. Then, the challenge was to produce, in small groups, narratives about the debate written on tablets offered for this purpose (Figure 2).



Source: Lefem archive (photo taken by Marcio Romeu Ribas de Oliveira on April 25, 2016).

**Figure 2:** Dialogues about the produced narratives

At that moment different relations with devices were observed, including challenges to turn on the device, non-perception of all resources of the device, lack of video production and editing skills (more recurrent language among teachers in this activity).

The process of narrative construction had different developments and levels of creativity as the group handled the devices. Then, narratives were produced through photographs, comic strips or interviews, acting and recorded dialogues.

Unlike propositions for constructing oral or written syntheses, the challenge with the 'strange' device questioned the narrative skills of teachers and their expressions about what happened. The situation reminds of the following statement by Walter Benjamin: "It's more and more difficult to find people who can narrate properly"<sup>16</sup>.

Not referring to digital devices, but perhaps considering a historical moment of fast changes, this author also argues that "it is as if we were deprived of a faculty that seemed safe and unalienable: the ability to exchange experiences"<sup>17</sup>.

Benjamin considers the narrative act as an ability linked with sharing things and communicating, which is used when narrating and listening to the various narratives. In this sense, it is possible to believe in the practice of narration as an interactive and communicable activity. According to him, this experience would be in decline, as it is not often practiced and of poor quality.

These meanings of Benjamin's early thoughts on narrative skills can lead to questions due to the teachers' inability: Do we have the skills to produce contemporary narratives with technological devices? If so, would these skills be more technical or more related to understanding the implications of a new language?

16. BENJAMIN, Walter. O narrador: considerações sobre a obra de Nikolai Leskov. In: *Magia e técnica, arte e política: ensaios sobre literatura e história da cultura*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1987, p. 197.

17. Ibidem, p. 198.

When we think, with Benjamin, that our communication skills would be in decline, it is possible to consider that technologies and the communication systems would be significantly influencing our practices of narration and, therefore, of communication.

Benjamin reported the imminence of communicating narratives being replaced, due to experiences in modernity. This statement can be illustrated by the characterization of the changes from modernity reported by Lévy<sup>18</sup>; for him, mass communication reached its peak in the mid-19th century and changed people's experience in the world.

These modern machines and objects would be diminishing the daily experience of meetings and talks, or they could signal something new in the culture. In our observation of the scene with teachers, recognizing the need to consider media culture in the educational context is evident in the teachers' speeches; but some issues are discussed, especially those addressing the relation and appropriation by teachers of technical skills to handle digital devices.

These concerns and reflections resulted in a new plan of action for the next meeting with teachers, to reflect on the concept of 'narrative,' focusing on the narratives about the 2016 Olympic Games. Then, Olympic education was discussed and later videos were presented by the organization of the 2016 Olympic Games.

The proposal for the meeting was the production of narratives about the Olympic Games using an app called *Comic Strip It!* where pictures are organized in sequence and narratives are created through specific resources, something that would not be possible if the elements and functions were used separately (Figure 3). These activities took place in a technical-instrumental perspective, so that the functionalities of the app were explained to the teachers. However, our actions were not creating a sharing relationship, but informative attitudes, as we will demonstrate later.



Source: Pictures edited by the authors (taken on May 30, 2016).

**Figure 3:** Creating digital narratives (comic strips)

18. LÉVY, Pierre. **A inteligência coletiva: por uma antropologia do ciberespaço**. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 1994.

The positive point of the training session was to realize that the experience of constructing a comic strip via app on tablets provided the teachers with a perception of how narratives about the body and corporal practices can be manipulated through mass communication devices. According to our view of this activity, the technical discovery triggered a critical attitude that positively changed the teacher's view of using media and technology in pedagogical practices.

#### 4.2. Experiences and reflections of teachers regarding the concept of communication

Although the process of narrative construction showed how teachers relate to devices and their usability, one of the end products of the activity also caught our attention. It is a narrative comic strip in which one group of teachers used a picture to narrate and make a joke with one of the trainers who explained how to use the app.

In this comic strip (Figure 4), the picture, text and layout show the teachers understood the language proposed by the app, but the meaning produced by the comic strip indicated another issue related to education: a notion of communication.



Source: Developed by the teachers in a training session held on May 30, 2016.

Figure 4: I wonder if they understood it



When the trainers received the comic strip, they questioned themselves: Are we just informing or establishing a communication interaction? Clearly, self-reflection relies on the concern about the anti-dialogical attitude materialized in the perception and narrative of one of the groups. While the trainers sought an attitude of construction and discovery by experimenting devices, the moment of traditional and expository teaching was still pointed out by the group of teachers, perhaps using irony when addressing the trainer's explanations about the app functionalities.

These reflections on training processes showed that practices linked with media culture in contemporary society comprise information and communication elements. Today, a huge number of messages are exchanged<sup>19</sup>, with access to different types of information on various media and platforms, and the characteristics of the methods to learn about and interact with such information are what we call 'information transmission technologies' (ITT).

According to Gutierrez<sup>20</sup>, using and testing of technologies and information involves an ability to 'transform media into a communication system,' so that access to information also offers learning from criticism, observation, creativity and expressiveness, which are essential elements in dialogical narratives in contemporary times. Communication has an interaction character, since the act of communication is "the relation that occurs through co-participation of the subjects in the act of knowing"<sup>21</sup>, because, as Benjamin<sup>22</sup> argues, information can be an obstacle to the possibilities of sharing experiences, once it is exhausted in a conclusion, while a narrative enables dialogue and sharing of experiences in a communicative and dialogical process.

When reflecting about this meeting, we see in communication a problem that is based on a challenge to narrate, share experiences and connect dialogues of teachers and trainers<sup>23</sup>. It should be noted that, when referring to communication, we are not corroborating the interpretation of this concept in the perspective of transmission of information, but in the sense related to its etymology, derived from Latin *communio* and *communicatio*.

We understand that educational environments lack communicative practices, which Paulo Freire<sup>24</sup> considers as dialogical environments. Thus, we have developed different possibilities of experiences for the communicative process, using several technological supports and encouraging different languages. These exercises showed challenges in expression, sometimes triggered by a non-understanding of the language or difficult organization of expression in a different way from the oral or linear writing established in the teacher-student relationship.

Different activities were proposed as a circuit of experiences: groups of five to six teachers were created, who conducted different experiences. The teachers were challenged to perform physical and sporting activities using different signs to communicate, such as gestures, text messages in apps, emoticons, oral language or drawings.

19. We understand the need to discuss the meaning of 'communication' that is similar to 'transmission' because of the mathematical theory of communication proposed by Weaver (1977). It indicates technologies are much more for the transmission of messages and information than for communication.

20. GUTIÉRREZ, Francisco. **Linguagem total: uma pedagogia dos meios de comunicação**. São Paulo: Summus, 1978, p. 20.

21. SOARES, Ismar de Oliveira. Gestão comunicativa e educação: caminhos da educomunicação. **Comunicação & Educação**, São Paulo, n. 23, p. 16-25, 30, 2002, p. 18.

22. BENJAMIN, op. cit.

23. This element related to communication is a concept that was discussed in the evaluation processes of the training. We realized that, instead of proposing communicative and dialogic processes in training meetings, we were informing or transmitting information. This evaluation showed that communicative practices need to be understood as collective areas of communication, with respect for diversity, and expanding our opportunities to share and dialogue collectively, because it is not through prescription processes that training will become more communicative. However, understanding that the various technological devices connect people and, in this situation, it is possible to understand and combine learning to significantly contribute to knowledge exchange and construction of a more communicative environment.

24. FREIRE, Paulo. **Extensão ou comunicação**. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2015.

These activities showed the teachers opportunities for new perspectives; they, when using new signs and strategies to communicate, perceived subtleties of contemporary communication that did not make sense to them until that moment. Many of them even reported that they started to understand certain expressions used by their students and were indifferent to them until that moment.

## 5. REFLECTIONS ON CONTINUING EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS: MEDIATION PROCESSES

An association between the fields of education and communication into an interdisciplinary perspective has become stronger and received more visibility. This attempted association starts from divergences and convergences regarding the structuring of a corpus of knowledge, methodologies and objects of study, respecting the peculiarities of each knowledge area, since each occupies a socially distinct place.

In this sense, an association of these fields or a possible relationship between them cannot be denied, since education occurs through communication, and the field of communication can objectify education in such a way that, for Gutierrez<sup>25</sup>, “perfect the communication enables valuable education.”

We understand with the group of teachers in these and many other training scenarios that new methods to narrate knowledge in educational dynamics do not mean exclusion of traditional structures to transmit educational messages, but a possibility to understand the educational process as something complex and dynamic, especially when we think of children’s and youth cultures.

For students and teachers, a school can be understood as one of the places of appropriation of cultural filters or, as addressed in the Latin American sociology of communication, one of the structures of mediation<sup>26</sup> that can enable dialogue about culture media. We believe the media narratives will not allow a critical treatment of the messages. Then, a new role for the school is presented.

In addition to the described scenes, records in the training reports pointed to a perception of unidirectional and still little dialogical communication of the teachers and, therefore, with reduced potential to associate physical education content in connection with student knowledge. They also showed teacher challenge to narrate with different codes or formats from written or oral language, indicating appropriation still processing methods of mediation and using means of information and communication.

Based on the context described above, we have used possibilities to think of continuing training in connection with media culture, but some

25. GUTIÉRREZ, op. cit., p. 36.

26. MARTÍN-BARBERO, Jesús. *Dos meios às mediações: comunicação, cultura e hegemonia*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2001.

elements must be highlighted, especially when we question what kind of teacher training is necessary for a dialogue with the communicational field. This association has been strengthened when the experiences are placed as important elements for subsequent reflection, thus incorporating the concepts addressed. In other words, continuing teacher education, in our view, should not only be based on the relevance of media and technology in school, nor in use of specific devices. Before that, experience with such specific devices is required to generate concern in teachers, as a necessary movement towards clarification.

In this sense, when we assumed a unilateral perspective of communication, it was possible to identify direct and indirect resistance from teachers regarding this dialogue. However, when using a perspective that considered the experience narrated by the teacher, based on his or her reality, we were able to mobilize his or her attention to the theme.

We identified that narrative, communication and the mediation process are important concepts for teacher training processes and, when materialized into experiences, it is possible to incorporate and re-signify them in all different educational contexts, demonstrating the potentialities of triggering media culture to reflect on pedagogical practices of physical education. Likewise, we think that the scenes experienced and reported by teachers are part of what Passarelli, Junqueira and Angeluci call 'emergent literacies,' which are not stuck in school time-space, but in continuous development in terms of 'skills to communicate and interact using ICT'<sup>27</sup>. Then, so many others scenes will be produced, with these and other teachers, and with trainers – all of them, technique and language learners.

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27. PASSARELLI; JUNQUEIRA; ANGELUCI, op. cit., p. 163.

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