




Good teaching practices in the initial training of teachers licensed in physical education¹

Boas práticas docentes na formação inicial de professores licenciados em educação física

Buenas prácticas docentes en la formación inicial de profesores licenciados en educación física

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Abstract: The objective of the present study was to identify and analyze aspects related to good teaching practices in the initial training of teachers licensed in physical education. This was a qualitative study, carried out by applying semi-structured interviews to professors selected by students and classified as good. The study showed that the good practices developed in higher education are directly related to professors' actions, such as recognition of the importance of balanced coordination between teaching, research, and extension; planning classes, considering them to be a time for reflection on what is taught; permanent updating of intervention practices and their interface with the political and social dimensions; and making commitment and responsibility effective in the daily teaching practices in higher education.

Keywords: Initial training. Higher education. Physical Education.

Resumo: Identificou e analisou aspectos relacionados às boas práticas docentes na formação inicial de professores licenciados em Educação Física. Realizou-se uma pesquisa qualitativa, a partir da entrevista semiestruturada com professores atuantes no curso de licenciatura em Educação Física. Observou-se que as boas práticas relacionam-se diretamente com o posicionamento dos professores e ações como o reconhecimento da importância da articulação equânime entre ensino, pesquisa e extensão; o planejamento das aulas como momento de reflexão daquilo que se ensina; a permanente atualização das práticas de intervenção e a sua interface com as dimensões políticas e sociais, aliada ao compromisso e responsabilidade efetivadas no cotidiano por esses professores em suas práticas no magistério superior.

Palavras-chave: Formação inicial. Magistério superior. Educação Física.

Resumen: Identificó y analizó aspectos relacionados a las buenas prácticas docentes en la formación inicial de profesores licenciados en Educación Física. Se realizó una investigación cualitativa, a partir de la entrevista semiestructurada con profesores actuantes en el curso de licenciatura en Educación Física. Se observó que las buenas prácticas se relacionan directamente con el posicionamiento de los profesores y acciones como el reconocimiento de la importancia de la articulación equánime entre enseñanza, investigación y extensión, la planificación de las clases como momento de reflexión de lo que se enseña, la permanente actualización de las enseñanzas las prácticas de intervención y su interfaz con las dimensiones políticas y sociales, aliada al compromiso y responsabilidad efectivas en el cotidiano por esos profesores en sus prácticas en el magisterio superior.

Palabras clave: Formación inicial. Magisterio superior. Educación Física.

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Introduction

As Plato said long ago, Eros is necessary for one to teach. Eros is not just the desire to know and pass on or the mere pleasure of teaching, communicating, or giving: it is also the love for what one says and thinks to be true. Love is what introduces the teaching profession, the true mission of an educator (Edgar Morin).

The present article shows the results obtained in the development of the first step of a study, carried out in two periods, focused on the pedagogical practices of professors in the initial training process for physical education teachers. In the first step, the objective was to identify the teaching practices of professors considered to be good (CUNHA, 2012) according to the opinion of students in the last year of a physical education undergraduate course (PAIXÃO *et al.*, 2018). The goal of the second step was to identify and analyze the aspects related to good pedagogical practices based on the accounts of the professors who were indicated by the students in the first step of the study.

In the past few decades, a significant number of studies have focused on examining teachers and professors, their training, and their everyday practice. However, it is still necessary to extend discussion and reflection on the implications of the training process for teachers in institutions for higher education in the country (RAMALHO; NUÑEZ, 2014).

Two aspects stand out among those that have decisively impacted discussion of the training and work of professors. The first refers to the coexistence of different types of understanding of the nature of teaching activity that sometimes lead to misunderstandings and conflicting situations, in which the fact that only some of the professors directly involved in courses dedicated to training teachers have some sort of pedagogical training in common. This situation is significantly different from what happens in basic education, in which the legal criteria that guide both training and admission of teachers in the basic education system are well-defined (MIZUKAMI, 2005-2006).

The second aspect is related to acknowledgment and/or status pursued by professors in higher education institutions in the midst of teaching, research, and extension demands. The reality is that this academic aspiration is usually fulfilled in the field of scientific research (PIMENTA; ALMEIDA, 2011; ALMEIDA, 2012). As Cunha (2012) correctly stressed, the status of professors in the academic sphere is directly related to research activities, including publications and participation in specialized events, in addition to supervision of students during the development of dissertations and theses and contributions to processes related to graduate courses.

Regardless of the teaching level, a simplistic and linear perception that mastering certain specific knowledge suffices for teaching has prevailed (MELLO, 2012; PAIXÃO; CUSTÓDIO; BARROSO, 2016). Until the 1970s, having a bachelor's degree and performing the activities of the profession were nearly mandatory for candidates to professorial positions, based on the principle that those who know can teach, with teaching activity being the true locus for professionals to learn how to teach (MASETTO, 1998). In most higher education institutions, professors still show unpreparedness and lack of scientific knowledge of the teaching and learning process when the subjects they are responsible for are considered

(PIMENTA; ANASTASIOU, 2014). However, it is well-known that some professors designate themselves as experts in their knowledge field and understand that their pedagogical training will occur naturally over their teaching trajectory (AZZI, 2000).

Without intending to depreciate the experience accumulated when the teaching activity is performed, it is possible to state that good teaching practices require, not only mastering specific content, but also considering class planning to be a permanent action and understanding that the teaching-learning process results from the development of knowledge by students (CALDEIRA, 1995). When teaching, professors must work as reflective and competent professionals regarding the contents of their subject, putting into practice their teaching capacity and carrying out investigative activities (PIMENTA; ANASTASIOU; CAVALLET, 2003). Most importantly, professors must know the program content of their subjects, in addition to having some knowledge related to educational science and pedagogy and developing practical knowledge based on their everyday experience with students (TARDIF, 2002).

The objectives of the present study were to identify and analyze aspects related to good teaching practices in the initial training of physical education teachers based on accounts provided by professors who teach in the physical education undergraduate course at the Federal University of Viçosa, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Methodology

This was a study in which guidelines for the approach to qualitative research were adopted to investigate aspects related to good teaching practices in the initial training of physical education teachers to prepare them to work in basic education (TRIVIÑOS, 1995).

The sample consisted of two groups: the first sample group, which consisted of students enrolled in the last year of the physical education undergraduate course at the Federal University of Viçosa or in an equivalent situation; and the second sample group, which consisted of professors who were responsible for some subjects in this course. The choice of students who were at the end of the course was justified by the fact that they had had more time to be around the professors and, consequently, a greater capacity to respond to the questions they were asked about the teaching practices of these professionals. The inclusion criteria were: being a student enrolled in the last year of the mentioned course; agreeing to participate in the study; and signing free and informed consent forms. The exclusion criteria were: not fitting the defined conditions; and not being interested in participating in the study.

The selection of the second sample group, which included professors who taught some subjects in the physical education course, was carried out in the first step of the study (PAIXÃO *et al.*, 2018), based on the procedures adopted in an investigation by Cunha (2012). A questionnaire with the following request was given to the students: "Please name the professor who, in your opinion, stood out the most in teaching one or more subjects taken by you up to this point in the course (you can choose professors from other departments)."

Each student was told to provide only one name. It is important to stress that the meaning attributed to good performance when teaching the subject is related to the teaching and methodological characteristics adopted by the professor in the teaching-learning process for the contents under discussion.

The definition of the sample group took into account the names that were most cited by the students. The number of participants was chosen by the researcher, based on convenience sampling bias, to guarantee that the study would have a representative sample. The five names that were cited more often (first place with 18.19% and fifth place with 7.26%) were included in the group, and they accounted for 64.18% of the answers given by the students.

Once the sample containing five professors was defined, the participants were told about the study, and their agreement to participate and authorization to carry out the procedures for data collection were requested.

The instrument used to collect data was a semi-structured interview, based on studies by Spradley (1979), who emphasized that interviews with ethnographic characteristics are discursive events, which can be described by the way some dialogues are carried out in social occasions or meetings. From this perspective, this author construes interviews as a series of conversations between friends, in which the researcher gently introduces new elements to help the informants answer the questions. Data collection occurred according to previous scheduling, at different places, between May and August 2018.

The interviews were transcribed and then the content analysis technique (BARDIN, 2011; CAREGNATO; MUTTI, 2006) was used to analyze the data. The cited authors identified three steps that make up the content analysis method: pre-analysis; material exploration; and results treatment and interpretation. The first step is an organization phase and may include several procedures, including skim reading and putting forward hypotheses, objectives, and indicators that provide a basis for interpretation. In the second step, data are codified based on register units. The last step focuses on categorization, which consists of classifying the elements according to their similarities and by differentiation, with subsequent grouping that takes into account common characteristics. The researchers opted to designate the respondents by P1 to P5 in the results and discussion section to maintain their anonymity.

The present study followed the considered the guidelines of Resolution no. 466/12 of the Brazilian National Research Ethics Commission. The proposal was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Federal University of Viçosa on July 14, 2016, as per report CEP no. 1,636,551.

Results and discussion

The discussion of the results was developed by using the data obtained in the interviews with the professors who participated in the study, the bibliography related to the examined subject, and the opinions of the authors of the present study regarding the theme. By applying these resources, it was possible to deeply understand and discuss the three

analysis categories: characterization of the professors who were included in the sample; the procedures and methodological strategies adopted in the classes; and the perceptions of the professors regarding teaching activities.

Characterization of the professors who participated in the study

The sample group consisted of five professors, three women and two men, who were at different points in their teaching trajectory. One of the professors, with 30 years of experience, was, according to Huberman (2000), at the end of the teaching professional life cycle. Another had been working in this activity for nine years. The remaining three had between two and six years of effective professional practice in higher education. Consequently, the present study had a sample group made up of professors who were at different phases. This expresses, according to the mentioned author, the distance between the ideas and realities that come up, the feeling of liberation and belonging, the sensation of routine, and increased motivation (HUBERMAN, 2000). This diversity contributed to expanding the perspectives on, and discussion of, the data collected.

Regarding academic background, only one of the professors was trained in history. She had a master's degree and a Ph.D. in education and an employment bond with the Education Department. The other professors had physical education degrees, with a master's degree and a Ph.D. in the physical education area or similar fields, except for one participant, who was at the final stage of their Ph.D. Two participants were not part of the effective teaching staff of the institution. Two professors belonged to the permanent teaching staff that worked in graduate courses (master's and Ph.D.) offered by the institution, in addition to developing their regular teaching and extension activities.

It is important to emphasize that, despite the heterogeneity of experience in the higher education area, two characteristics were common in the sample group: 1) all the professors had experience in basic education, because they had worked in schools in the public and private systems linked to the Minas Gerais Education Secretariat before being admitted to a university; and 2) when they began working as professors, they had no training or input of a teaching or pedagogical nature from the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to help them develop their teaching activities. During the interviews, the participants reflected on the way they initiated their activities in higher education, which they tried to substantiate by referring to experiences they had with their professors in the initial training course and when they worked in the basic education system.

This situation, pointed out during the accounts of the professors, is a reality that has historically prevailed in Brazilian and international higher education institutions (PIMENTA; ALMEIDA, 2011; ALMEIDA, 2012). According to the Brazilian National Educational Guidelines and Framework Law no. 9,394, enacted in 1996, the preparation of professors for them to develop their work in higher education must occur in *stricto sensu* graduate courses, in which research activities are usually given more importance. As pointed out by Almeida (2012), being unprepared to deal with the teaching-learning process, which professors are responsible for from the time they walk into a classroom, has prevailed.

Procedures and methodological strategies adopted in classes

Most of the teaching and methodological aspects adopted by professors in the teaching-learning process have a gradual and continuous nature over their professional trajectory. Thinking about these aspects that make up teaching practice requires taking into account the context and the scenario in which this practice is carried out.

The professors' accounts of the way they dealt with the teaching of the specific content of the subjects they were responsible for in the physical education course corroborated results reported in academic studies on the subject (PIMENTA; ALMEIDA, 2011; ALMEIDA, 2012; CUNHA, 2012). All the interviewed professors adopted teaching methodologies and/or procedures that were related to a consolidated perspective of the teaching environment, such as expository and dialogue classes, seminars, group activities, videos, and songs. However, these procedures are significantly different from traditional teaching practices that are still present in many educational spaces at the different teaching levels in educational institutions across Brazil.

It is important to emphasize that, given the difficulties detected by the students in the teaching-learning process (Chart 1), the professors pointed out a set of procedures that was adopted (Chart 2) to minimize these deficiencies over the term.

Chart 1. Main difficulties shown by the students during the classes

Difficulty expressing the content in written form.
Difficulty concentrating during explanations of content.
Deficient motor skills when executing the activities proposed in practical classes.
Lack of engagement and interest in the content developed in the subjects.
Distracting behavior during classes, such as cell phones and conversation.
Refusal to read the material about the content that is recommended and made available.

Source: Designed by the authors.

Chart 2. Procedures adopted to address the difficulties shown by the students

Handing over the theoretical tests and discussing the content addressed with the students during the classes.

Working on the content of the practical classes following a pedagogical sequence (from the simplest to the most complex actions).

Drawing the students' attention to the mistakes found in assignments and written tests.

Paying attention when choosing a theoretical framework and using texts that are clearer and use plain language to facilitate the students' understanding.

Using language closer to the reality of the students admitted to the course.

Adopting strategies oriented toward encouraging the students to develop a critical and reflective attitude regarding the content discussed in the daily routine of the classes.

Designing examination tests that require the students to ponder and make decisions when confronted with questions related to the profession.

Being fully dedicated to the students enrolled in a subject that is my responsibility.

Having the support of paid and voluntary teaching assistants.

Source: Designed by the authors.

Addressing the difficulties commonly shown by the students and adopting procedures to minimize the occurrence of these situations seemed to cause feelings of discomfort and anguish in the participating professors, because this reality is becoming recurrent in Brazilian higher education. The democratization of access to higher education embodied in the Brazilian Higher Education National Exam (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio - ENEM*) and the Brazilian Unified Selection System (*Sistema de Seleção Unificada - SISU*) has not taken into account deficiencies in the basic education offered by schools in the public teaching network, from which a significant percentage of students who are admitted to higher education institutions originate (ALMEIDA, 2012).

In this scenario, universities have encountered increasing demands related to their new students, which result from different factors, such as the quality of the training received in basic education, socioeconomic and cultural inequalities, and the lack of infrastructure and human resources to fulfill the set of individual needs (CUNHA; CARRILHO, 2005; CUNHA, 2012). Additionally, there are problems resulting from the adaptation process, which emphasize the countless difficulties of these students with meeting the demands of academic, interpersonal, and social activities (PIRES; ALMEIDA; FERREIRA, 2000).

From this perspective, which indicates a need for educational strategies to minimize possible negative implications for the academic performance of these students over their initial training, the greatest challenge faced by universities has been finding ways to encourage a significant portion of the students to remain in the courses they were admitted to. Despite this, teaching in Brazilian higher education institutions is strongly subject to market and consumption logic, which increasingly seeks to speed up the initial training process (PIMENTA; ALMEIDA, 2011). By this logic, universities are seen as large production

plants, whose only demand on the students is to acquire the minimum knowledge to fulfill their credits and get their degree. In opposition to this perspective, which increasingly devalues the general idea that underlies the higher education concept, there are many professors who, similar to the participants in the present study, have been seeking ways and procedures to guarantee the development of independent thinking by resorting to reflective practices that address the aspects that will directly or indirectly pervade the future professional activities of their students.

Regarding class planning, the professors mentioned a wide set of procedures that they usually adopt in this step, taking into account the specifics of the knowledge areas of the subjects they teach. This situation was described by a professor who taught the subject offered by the Education Department.

Usually, I use texts in the classes. I organize a lot of content into little files and bring elements of everyday life and the work world closer to reality, to education, I always do that [...]. If some piece of information related to the theme I am working on gets brought out, I link both things, because the content allows me to do that, my work has to do with public policies for basic education, so it is not difficult (P5).

This professor's comments reinforce the assertion by Nuñez, Ramalho, and Oliveira (2014) that professors, by means of the activities they develop, must share and participate in the changes that society imposes on educational culture and, consequently, on teaching activities. Not in a critical way, but recognizing the essential nature of the present era that pervades the professionalization process, as authors and catalysts of these changes.

Another professor mentioned the complexity of developing content for a new subject and emphasized the precautions she took when she accepted responsibilities in the course.

When it comes to a new subject, it is a little more complex, because we have to set up its framework from scratch. So usually I get the syllabus, the subject's analytical program, and see which content has to be addressed in it. From this point, I try to get materials, more recent ones, not just books and texts but also papers, theses, dissertations on that topic and I try to develop content that is not exclusively theoretical. Since my subjects are theoretical and practical, I try to put together the theoretical and the practical parts so the students can really see the relationship between what is being addressed in the theoretical classes and what is being done in practice (P4).

Based on studies by Ramalho and Nuñez (2014), it may be possible to state that, in general, professors, as experienced teaching professionals, have beliefs, ideas, concepts, knowledge, and attitudes about teaching and learning that result from several factors, especially their experiences over many years of developing this professional function.

From this perspective, it is important to stress an aspect that seems to contribute to the dedication and, consequently, the success of the intervention practices of these professors. All the participants said they establish a relationship of affinity and proximity with the content they develop, given that this content and/or topics are included in their specialization areas.

Perceptions of the professors regarding teaching, research, and extension activities in the initial training

The researchers sought information about the relationship that the participants established with teaching, research, and extension in the training of students during the initial training course. One professor expressed an opinion that showed the recognition of the importance of these three elements in the students' initial training.

[...] the three axes, teaching, research, and extension, are really very interconnected. But, if we think of a hierarchy, teaching is the main one. In the distribution of my activities over teaching, research, and extension, I try to give priority to the first. Without it, there would be no research, or there would be no reason for it to exist. That is because we would not be able to convey certain content during the classes. And extension, because we always do something outside the university, or inside it but outside the context here, that is, something that is not related to academia [...]. There is no doubt that the link between teaching, research, and extension is very important to the students' training during the undergraduate course (P4).

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Another professor recognized the existence of a hierarchy involving teaching, research, and extension in the universities and advocated what she called a union of the three strands as a way to make higher-quality teaching available to the students over the initial training.

I can clearly see a hierarchy involving teaching, research, and extension, in which the second is the "rich cousin." Some colleagues, when talking about teaching or extension, devalue these activities entirely [...]. There is this overrating. A good professor is one who is productive, one who teaches in graduate courses. They can do research without working in a graduate course, why not? And there we have a model based on high production that is very damaging, that makes people sick. I see students terrified because their papers were rejected or because they wanted to begin a graduate course and were not able to get admitted [...]. I think that putting together teaching, research, and extension will really make us provide good-quality teaching, which is our main goal (P5).

Regarding the teaching, research, and extension foundations of higher education, another professor seemed to indicate recognition of greater dedication to research activities. However, his perceptions seemed to implicitly contain the important relationship that research establishes with teaching in the initial training.

[...] I confess that I have a tendency more oriented toward research, but it is a personal thing, a greater affinity with research activities. However, I have always taught subjects in the undergraduate course over the years working in higher education. I believe that not every student has the opportunity to be admitted to an undergraduate research program [...]. I find it very important for students to be able to understand how knowledge is produced, how it is passed on. It is a way to make students become part of this progress instead of just receiving well-established knowledge (P1).

Overall, the professors emphasized recognition of a hierarchy involving teaching, research, and extension, in which the second is present in universities as the strand that provides professors with prestige and proves their productivity status, as shown by studies that have discussed the training of professors (PIMENTA; ALMEIDA, 2011; ALMEIDA,

2012; CUNHA, 2012). However, it is necessary to stress that, at different times in all the interviews, it was possible to identify concern about and dedication to teaching activities in the initial training of future physical education teachers.

Final considerations

The findings of the present study support the conclusion that the performed analysis, guided by the implementation of good teaching practices in the initial training of teachers who will have a physical education degree, revealed elements that provoke systematic reflection on teachers' training and work.

The current literature that addresses this topic indicates that activities related to teaching in higher education, especially in public institutions, are neglected in most cases, giving room for research-related tasks. The result is prevalence of a certain degree of unpreparedness and disregard of teaching activities, which compromises the initial training. The results showed alignment in the aspects that contribute to good pedagogical practices of the professors chosen by the students, which led the researchers to think that these characteristics are common to professors who have contributed to successful situations experienced by students who interact with these professors when they are teaching their subjects.

From this perspective, the good practices developed by the interviewed professors may be understood, taking into account actions such as: perceiving the importance of a balanced relationship between teaching, research, and extension; keeping intervention practices up-to-date and constantly reflecting political and social aspects; considering class planning as a time for reflection about what is taught; valuing teaching as one of the strands of the university; and showing commitment and responsibility in the everyday routine of higher education teaching.

Most importantly, it is believed that recognition of the possibilities of interaction between teaching, research, and extension favors the development of different types of knowledge skills, attitudes, and values in future teachers. This allows professors to develop and transform their teaching know-how based on the needs and challenges that teaching, as a concrete social practice, impose on them in basic education.

By emphasizing good teaching practices in the initial training of teachers in a context in which teaching does not stand out in the same way research does as a way to provide professors with recognition in the academic sphere, people are acknowledging the inefficiency of higher education institutions in dealing with initial training, the complexity of teaching practice, and the difficulties involved in preparing new generations of teachers to work in an uncertain context that is continuously changing. To solve this problem, it is urgent to rethink the distinctive merit assigned to research activities to the detriment of teaching activities.

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Notes

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