48 - THE TEENAGER AND SPORT AT SCHOOL

MARCELO MARQUES SOARES
FRANCISCO CARLOS LEMES DE MENESES
Centro Universitário Feevale
Novo Hamburgo - RS - Brazil
marcelodidi@feevale.br

1 INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The growing presence of sport in the social life of the members of contemporary societies, in the last decades, has been leading to relevant discussions in Sciences and among social scientists, who are interested in studying this phenomenon and its multiple facets, either of economical, political pedagogical or historical character. A simple search in historical records, evidences that sports represent a relevant social-cultural phenomenon in the life of all peoples in the most diverse cultural fields. Distinct cultures, in the most different historical contexts, have used sports to the most diverse ends, according to their interests and objectives.

Though recognizing the multifacetedness of the sports phenomenon under an academic view, it's appropriate to point out that in this paper's range, we do not intend to identify what is the face of the sports phenomenon which is present in teenagers' life, but understand what are the aims that lead teenagers to practice some sports activity in the school context.

The reasons that lead teenagers to practice sports active are various, the present article had as purpose to understand what are the aims which lead teenagers to practice sports in the school context. It's relevant to understand the aims presented by teenagers in relation to the practice of one sports activity and not other. Since Physical Education literature points out various reasons for sports practice in the school context.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology was designed according to the qualitative investigations paradigm, having as reference the case study. The field work consisted of six months of contact with the teenagers in their sports practices at school. The analysis and interpretation of information were constructed from Theme Units which emerged, mainly, from semi-structured interviews, performed with the teenagers, from records and notes resulting on the observations comprised in the field diaries and from theoretical reference concerning the aspects that constitute the research problem. The issues arisen from the construction of these Theme Units allowed for understanding what are the objectives that lead teenagers to practice sports in the school investigated.

3 INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Based on the collected information, we have identified that the aims presented by teenagers in relation to the practice of some sports activity can be assorted in three categories, that we define as: health concern, free time occupation and the cult to aesthetic values.

3.2.1 Health Concern

The choice of a sports modality as a justification for desiring a healthy body was one of the objectives found in the verbal expressions of teenagers from the school investigated. The worry of students, both males and females, in searching a condition of health through the practice of a sport, was very evident. The explanatory speech of only one of them summarizes the others': "*the main reason is for having a healthy body and good health" (Lauro 15 years old)*. Another statement that also points out this health concern is thus explained: *"I practice sports to my body's well-being, I think it's important to be in good health." (Sabrina, 17 years old).*

The explanations for practicing sports for the achievement of a better health condition can also be found in specialized literature, like in Pereira's case (1998, p.218), who explains the importance of sports practice this way: "Sport implies the improvement, development, betterment and maintenance of physical qualities such as: strength, resistance, speed and agility…". Justifying the search for sports practice just for the simple reason of achieving health is, in other words, reducing sport to a biological position and disregarding it as a social practice inserted in a cultural universe.

The proclamation of the benefits that physical activity, particularly sports, causes to health, isn't hard to be found in current bibliography, for Defrance (1995, p.70) states that "the idea of sports exerting a benefic influence on health is today well delimited". Thus, sport is usually associated with health, transforming itself in a conviction which seems to be shared by society in general. For that reason, it's not so unusual that this concept has taken roots in the discourse of students practicing Feevale's Applied High School sports activities.

3.2.2 Free time occupation

The second aim evidenced was free time occupation as an explanation for practicing a sports activity at school. In order to attest for this objective, I quote some speeches that are indicatory of it: *"I've decided to practice Futsal because I stood at home in the afternoon, doing nothing." (Jamerson, 16 years old)*. I point out another statement that shares this idea: *"the thing is that I was spending too much time at home, doing nothing and I wanted to practice something to move, have some leisure." (Sabrina, 16 years old)*. The responsibilities to which the informants refer to, are mainly school responsibilities, that usually take little time, allowing, thus, for a free time space that teenagers want to spend in activities which provide leisure, movement or merely occupy this period.

Another reason for occupying free time emerges from the cultural influence of industrialized society, to which doing nothing, without being busy with something, is considered a waste of energy and inadequacy to the globalized and industrialized lifestyle. Hence, in the same sense, it's interesting to quote a few more ideas: *"It was for the will of doing something, to have leisure and don't stay only at home, and be still doing nothing productive"(Laura, 17 years old).* Laura's speech shows a strong influence of the capitalist world principles and work division, to which feeling unengaged is a synonym to unproductive considering the ideals of industrial society. Leisure should be seen by the informant as what she looks for, in opposition to the set of responsibilities in her everyday life, and she should look for leisure linked to her interest and to her own personal satisfaction, for as Marcellino (2002, p.270) declares "a priority criterion for the choice of leisure should be personal interest".

Free time occupation, as for the teenagers, has also presented as an opportunity to practice an activity just for fun.

Amusement, in their opinion, is related to a personal satisfaction allied with a pleasure feeling. Their statements give information on this idea: *"I play handball as an amusement, there are people who go for a run on the street, I'm playing and having fun at the same time" (João, 16 years old).* Another statement that shares the same idea: "*Here at school, I practice sports for my amusement, I play with my friends, it's more fun, interacting with the group that's what sports are for." (Mariano, 17 years old)*. In short, it seems that, Mariano's entire statement is sustained by the amusement logic, directed to his individual satisfaction in participating of a sports activity with his friends.

The expressions of the collaborators show that school sport may have other aims, besides the ones characterized by the sports sphere, school context being a space where is still possible practicing and creating a sport which prefers the ludic sign and not performance. In relation to ludic sport, authors have already spoken out about it, one of them is Santin (1996, p.36) "The great merit of educational sport is in ludic creativity". In this sense, it's important to remember Vargas (1995, p.25): "There's only one reason for the existence of sports. This reason consists of the possibility of making man experience his ludic necessity".

Thus, as it was noticed, among the innumerable possibilities of the available activities that teenagers would take to occupy the free time in their lives, they've chosen sport as a leisure activity, to do something productive, for fun and being together with friends. Besides, they've chosen practicing it within a specific context, school. Stigger (2002, p.222), in his studies, reaches to the idea that "sports end up creating a real space for collective living together".

3.2.3 The Cult to Aesthetic Values

The cult to aesthetic values revealed itself, in most of the students' statements, as one of the main objectives to practice a sports activity, as Fabiana reveals: *"nowadays is nearly impossible that you know someone who doesn't care about the body, about the body aesthetic, everybody is always so concerned with the body" (Fabiana, 17 years old).* The concern of the research protagonists in assuring an activity to their bodies aroused my curiosity, reminding me of what Santin (1999, p.46) wrote about physical activities, in which he says that they "have become sometimes a resource to keep body shapes, sometimes a refuge to get rid of the nightmares of sedentary life." The cult to aesthetic values to Feevale's Applied High School students who participated the research can be summarized in three topics: aversion to fatness, the cellulite nightmare and body shape preservation.

3.2.3.1 Aversion to fatness

Aversion to fatness and the constant search of the research protagonists for a slim body revealed to be one of the strong aims to practice sports in this school universe. The fear of gaining weight, associated to the terrifying thought of their body shapes going distant from the aesthetic reference, of a slim body, leads a significant number of teenagers to participate regularly of a sports modality.

The solid presence of an aversion to fatness and a constant discourse in favor to the dictatorship of slimness were the facts which have most attracted my attention. Modern times beauty standards have changed from time to time, but one demand seems to remain: the slim body. All the care presented with the body is sustained in the name of slimness, the fear of gaining weight is present in almost every male and female collaborators. I begin with the statement that sums up not only the informant's thought, but also most of her friends': "*Most of my friends and I are worried with the body, maybe they don't even talk about it, but deep inside they are concerned in not gaining weight*." In order to keep her weight and don't put on weight, she continues "*I train handball to keep my body weight and thus, I don't gain weight" (Fabiana, 17 years old).* It's clear that the informant's concern with the body aesthetic sums up to don't gain weight, because being fat, according to Pope et al. (2000, p. 180), "in our society, is still usual to consider that obesity represents a flaw of the individual."

The experience of being or having been fat shows how much complicated is to face the discrimination and mockery of others, that difficulty is revealed by Jamerson*: "Only those who are or were fat, know how it feels, it's a bore, they always give you a nickname, always look at you at the restaurant, if you're eating an ice-cream, people think: 'he's eating an ice-cream, that's why he's fat' as if a fat person couldn't eat ice-cream" (Jamerson 16 years old)*. The difficulties and anguishes presented by the interviewees, are nothing more than the fruit of a society which worships slimness and lightness of the slim body, discrediting the obese body. Being fat has become a problem which goes beyond personal anguishes, for as Sant'anna denounces (2001, p.21), "Many times, urban spaces and their equipments are the first to exclude the presence of heavy and large beings: at schools, movies, theaters and airplanes, the seats and chairs are usually more comfortable to the slim and small ones. There are doorknobs which don't accommodate chubby hands, as well as there are doors through which many fat people can't pass".

The worry about losing weight can, sometimes, reach a level in which it puts a teenager's life in danger, because of the acquisition of certain body shapes. An account pointed out this danger: "*I've got a friend who was on a diet to lose weight, based on medicines, which were prescribed by an endocrinologist and on the information leaflet it was written that it caused sleepiness. She took it on a Saturday, drank beer and hit the car because she had slept while driving, later she stopped taking the medicine and gained twelve kilos" (Antônio 17 years old).* Other risks because of wanting to lose weight, without the proper supervision, may be checked in the articles: The dictatorship of the scale and The fat market of diets.

A fact left us intrigued as for the dictatorship of slimness expressed in the teenagers' discourses. The more the fashion world valorizes the slim body, the more population, especially the young one, becomes more and more obese, for that reason the World Health Organization referred to obesity as an epidemic. According to this Organization, in Brazil, it was calculated that 40% of the population is overweight. The discourse in the name of the slim body is, to Silva (2001, p.2), a proof that we are facing "a generalization of the aesthetic of slimness, especially among women".

Practicing sports is one of the resources for desiring to have a body within the aesthetic values, and also to escape all the damages caused by fatness, these may be considered the main objectives of the students in the universe investigated. The fear of gaining weight, associated to the dread of their body moving away from an aesthetic model, almost always having as model a slim body, makes a significant number of students in the community investigated practice sports and control their feeding.

1 A good example of slim body valorization is Paulo Sant'ana's column entitled "The Pride of the Tummies", published on August 24th 2003, in Zero Hora, issue nº13.882.

2 According to the article "The dictatorship of the scale", in Donna Magazine, pull-out of August 3rd, 2003 in Zero Hora. Beauty standards molded by fashion and entertainment industry favor the increase in feeding disorders among female teenagers.

3 The article "The fat market of diets", in **Isto É Magazine.** Issue n°1771, September 10th 2003, points out a series of risks to organism due to the constant fight to lose weight through a variety of diets.

4 War on fat. **Isto É Magazine,** issue n°1765; July 30th, 2003.

3.2.3.2 The Cellulite Nightmare

Another issue, not minor than aversion to fatness, is the cellulite nightmare. The fact of having cellulite is something which upsets most of the female teenagers interviewed. Their speeches are indicatory of it, for example: "*Sometimes, I even feel good for not having much, but if I had, it would bother me. Every woman is terrified of it and hates cellulite. So, some of them are even neurotic about the body, they take care of everything, they walk, don't eat this or that, they have a massage, buy a moisturizing cream that promises to reduce cellulite…" (Janete, 15 years old).* Cellulite has become a great torment to teenagers, which is constantly confirmed in their speeches, as in this other statement *"what I wanted most, regarding my body, was not having cellulite" (Laura, 17 years old).*

The collaborators' hard fight against the presence of cellulite, justifies itself because of the aesthetic standard of beauty industry, since cellulite can't be considered as a disease but a purely aesthetic question. All body shapes spread by means of communication and that, in many cases, are references to teenagers, are slim bodies with well defined shapes and, mainly, with no cellulite. That's why, the presence of cellulite on the teenager's body is a trace which marks its distancing from the beauty market. Goldenberg (2002, p.38) teaches us that "the body is a value that identifies the individual with a certain group and, simultaneously, distinguishes the others". This distinction of the teenager of what belongs or not to the world of beauty, occurs only through the astonishment with his or her body, since, to Soares (2001, p.2), "the body is the first form of human visibility".

3.2.3.3 Body Shape Preservation

All the teenagers' efforts against fatness and cellulite have as an aim in a general way, to keep a good body shape. Therefore, the practice of a sports activity is still the main resource in this search. This thought is noticeable in the words of an informant, who has chosen volleyball as sports activity because, according to her, the trainings were "*for defining the body, the musculature, because we do a lot of exercise to the legs and work to the arms" (Maria, 17 years old).* Another statement justified in the name of the maintenance of body shape is the one of a volleyball adherent, who has been practicing the sport for two years, and relates, thus, the objectives for the choice of this modality: *"volleyball is good because in the trainings there is much emphasis in working legs and thighs musculature and that's pretty good, because it helps to keep a nice body" (Fabiana, 16 years old).*

The choice of sport, in some situations, occurs because of the specific results that each participant obtains with it, as this statement reveals us: *"I chose handball because it demands much work for the legs, this is good because this way we work out the muscles in the legs a lot" (Margarete, 17 years old)*. Justifying the practice of a sport just because it works out certain muscular groups is reducing the sport to a purely biological resource and disregarding it as a social-cultural practice.

The concern with body shape and the anguish for the preservation or achievement of certain body shapes are enumerated by teenagers, since the body, in their opinion, is a valorized and relevant element in their daily activities. In this sense, it's relevant quoting Villaça and Goés (1998, p.23) when they state that: "Life imposes us the body every day, because is in it and through it that we feel, desire, act and create". In the teenager's view, it's through his or her body that he or she can express all their physical representation, many times reduced to the presence of certain body shapes. This posture, according to Sabino (2002, p.144), is present in great part of present society, which doesn't give up efforts to "transform the body in a store window which exhibits eternal youth, health, strength and beauty".

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The reflections presented here comprehend the investigated educational reality. We do not intend to elaborate generalizing formulations about the reasons that lead teenagers to practice sports activities at school. This study has tried to understand the reasons that lead teenagers to practice sports, more particularly, within a school context. Therefore, the considerations made from the description, analysis and interpretation of the information delimitate an investigation field and specific individuals, having as an aim to identify the local and regional singularities, which demand answers and proper interventions. The case study, in my understanding, is the kind of study appropriate to enter both the world of local singularities, and in the individuals' perspective and the meanings given by them to an investigated phenomenon, which, in this case, are teenagers and sport.

Analyzing the factors that generated the process of investigation, the necessity of presenting a summary of the information constructed through it has appeared. Regarding the investigated phenomenon it was established from the teenagers' statements, the choice of three objectives that lead them to the practice of a sport at school. One of the aims can be identified as a health concern, for the teenager practices sports with the idea that, by doing so, he or she will have a healthy body. The second objective is the search for free time occupation, that is, practicing sport as leisure, amusement and living with friends. And, at last, I point out the presence of a strong concern with the aesthetic values, this aim transforming itself in the major concern of teenagers in relation to body representations, which can be summarized in an aversion to fatness, in the cellulite nightmare and in their body shape preservation.

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MARCELO MARQUES SOARES
Centro Universitário Feevale
RS, 239, 2755 - cep93.352.000
Novo Hamburgo - RS - Brasil
E-mail: marcelodidi@feevale.br

THE TEENAGER AND SPORT AT SCHOOL

ABSTRACT

The aims which justify sports practice, at school, by teenagers, are various, considering that, the present study had as purpose to understand what are the actual objectives that lead teenagers to practice sports activities within the school universe. The methodology was designed according to the qualitative investigations paradigm, having as a reference the case study. The analysis and interpretation of information were made from Theme Units which emerged, mainly, from semi-structured interviews, performed with the teenagers, from records and notes resulting on the observations comprised in the field diaries and from theoretical reference concerning the aspects that constitute the research problem. The issues arisen from the construction of these Theme Units allowed for understanding what are the objectives that lead teenagers to practice sports in the school investigated. First of all, we observed three aims that lead these teenagers to sports practice. We found as first, health concern, the second is the search for free time occupation. And, at last, we point out the presence of a strong worry about aesthetic values, which can be summarized in aversion to fatness, the nightmare of presenting a body with cellulite and their body shape preservation. **Key words**: Teenagers, sports , school, objectives .

L'ADOLESCENT ET LE SPORT A L'ÉCOLE.

RÉSUMÉ

Divers sont les objectifs qui justifient la pratique du sport à l'école, pour les adolescents, devant celà, le présent étude a eu pour but comprendre quels sont les réels objectifs qui mènent les adolescents à pratiquer des activités sportives dans l'univers scolaire. La méthodologie a été dessinée selon le paradigme des investigations qualitatives, ayant comme référentiel l'étude de cas. L'analyse et l'interprétation des informations ont été construites à partir d'Unités Thématiques qui ont émergé, surtout, des entretiens semi-structurés, réalisés avec les adolescents, des registres et des anotations résultantes des observations contenues dans les journaux de camp et du référentiel théorique à propos des aspects qui constituent le problème de recherche. Les questions suscitées à partir de la construction de ces Unités Thématiques, ont permis de comprendre quels sont les objectifs qui mènent les adolescents à pratiquer des sports dans l'école investiguée. D'abbord, nous avons observé trois objectifs qui mènent ces adolescents à la pratique sportive. Nous avons trouvé comme premier objectif une préocupation avec la santé, le second objectif est la quête de l'occupation du temps libre. Et, à la fin, nous avons détaché la présence d'une forte préoccupation relative aux valeurs esthétiques, qui peut être résumée dans une aversion à la graisse, dans le cauchemar de présenter un corps avec la cellulite et dans l'effort de préservation de la forme physique.

Mots-Clés : Adolescent, sport, école, objectifs.

EL ADOLESCENTE Y EL DEPORTE EM LA ESCUELA

RESUMO

Diversos son los objetivos que justifican la practica del deporte, en la escuela por los adolescentes, delante esto, el presente estudio tuvo como intención comprender cuales los reales objetivos que levan los adolescentes a practicaren actividades deportivas en el universo escolar. La metodología fue dibujada segundo el paradigma de las investigaciones cualitativas, tiendo como referencial el estudio de caso. La analice y la interpretación de las informaciones fueran construidas a partir de Unidades Temáticas que fueran surgiendo, principalmente, de las entrevistas , realizadas con los adolescentes, y de los registros de las anotaciones resultantes de las observaciones contenidas en los diarios de campo y del referencial teórico acerca dos aspectos que constituyen el problema de la pesquisa. Las cuestiones suscitadas a partir de la construcción de estas Unidades Temáticas permitirán comprender cuales son los objetivos que levan los adolescentes a practicaren deportes en la escuela investigada. Primeramente, observamos tres objetivos que levan estos adolescentes a la práctica deportiva. Encontramos como primero objetivo una preocupación con la salud, el segundo objetivo es la busca pela ocupación del tiempo libre. Y, por fin, destacamos la presencia de una fuerte preocupación con los valores estéticos, que pueden ser resumidas en una aversión a la gordura, en el pesadillo de presentar un cuerpo con celulita y en la preservación de su forma corporal.

Palabras-Claves: Adolescente, deporte, escuela, objetivos.

O ADOLESCENTE E O ESPORTE NA ESCOLA

RESUMO

Diversos são os objetivos que justificam a prática do esporte, na escola, pelos adolescentes, diante disso, o presente estudo teve como propósito compreender quais os reais objetivos que levam os adolescentes a praticarem atividades esportivas dentro do universo escolar. A metodologia foi desenhada segundo o paradigma das investigações qualitativas, tendo como referencial o estudo de caso. A análise e a interpretação das informações foram construídas a partir de Unidades Temáticas que emergiram, principalmente, das entrevistas semi-estruturadas, realizadas com os adolescentes, dos registros e das anotações resultantes das observações contidas nos diários de campo e do referencial teórico acerca dos aspectos que constituem o problema de pesquisa. As questões suscitadas a partir da construção dessas Unidades Temáticas permitiram compreender quais são os objetivos que levam os adolescentes a praticarem esportes na escola investigada. Primeiramente, observamos três objetivos que levam estes adolescentes à prática esportiva. Encontramos como primeiro objetivo uma preocupação com a saúde, o segundo objetivo é a busca pela ocupação do tempo livre. E, por fim, destacamos a presença de uma forte preocupação com os valores estéticos, que podem ser resumidas em uma aversão à gordura, no pesadelo de apresentar um corpo com celulite e na preservação da sua forma corporal. **Palavras-Chave**: Adolescente, esporte, escola, objetivos.