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# Social and personal skills in Physical Education: teachers and students' preception about an intervention program

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## ABSTRACT

The development of social and personal skills in schools, specifically in Physical Education classes, is fundamental to face the mission of Education and the demands of today's society. In this context, we tried to assess how students and teachers perceived such competences through an intervention program carried out in Physical Education classes. For this purpose, a qualitative study was developed in which 15 focus groups were created, between 4 and 6 students of both genders and aged between 14 and 16 years old ( $14,83 \pm 0,59$ ). Six physical education teachers were also interviewed. The focus group and interviews were conducted on the basis of a semi-structured script and were guided by trained researchers. The students were submitted to a 20-hour intervention program, based on the Model of Sports Education, with guidance and supervision of teachers, who had training and support of the research team, through weekly meetings and class follow-up. Firstly, the groups and the interviews were transcribed by trained investigators, being that, the transcription of the interviews was fully made (verbatim). The NVivo10 software was used to organize and categorize the transcribed data. The collected data show that both students and teachers manifested a high perception regarding the development of several social and personal skills in the implemented program, which allowed us to conclude that the Physical Education classes could contribute, effectively, to the improvement of social competences and personal needs of the students. **Keywords:** Social and personal skills; Intervention; Physical education; Teachers; Students.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The work of personal and social skills - fundamental for the formation and development of capable, productive, autonomous and happy citizens - finds, in Physical Education classes, a potential ally in the sense of concretizing such transformations.

In this context, it was intended, with the present work, to characterize the perception of students and teachers about the development of social and personal skills through an intervention program in Physical Education classes.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### ***Participants***

Fifteen focus groups, consisting of 4 to 6 students of both genders and between the ages of 14 and 16 ( $14.83 \pm 0.59$ ), participated in this study. Six physical education teachers (5 males and 1 female), aged between 22 and 55 years ( $33.83 \pm 13.98$ ) were also interviewed.

### ***Measures***

The qualitative research paid particular attention on the realization of focus groups for the students and interviews to the teachers that stimulated the intervention program. The focus group and the interviews were based on a semi-structured guide, which was tested in a pilot study, where adjustments were made in aspects considered ambiguous. The design and development of the script were made in order to enable the students and teachers to know about the development of social skills. The focus groups and the interviews were conducted by trained researchers and recorded through an audio-visual record, ranging from 15 to 30 minutes. The qualitative research was only carried out in a single moment and at the end of the application of the intervention program.

### ***Procedures***

This study is part of a wide project called EFERAM-CIT (Physical Education in the Schools of the Autonomous Region of Madeira - Understanding, Intervening, Transforming) developed through a partnership between the University of Madeira and the Regional Secretary of Education. The participation of the subjects was authorized through the informed consent of the students' caregivers and the teachers themselves. The students took part of an intervention program with a duration of 20 hours, with theoretical support in the Sports Education Model (Siedentop, 1994), being promoted situations of collaborative and cooperative work, with orientation and supervision of the teacher. The teachers were trained and supported by the research team, through weekly meetings and class follow-up. At the same time, documentation was provided to support the development of the sessions. At the end of the intervention program, the evaluations were developed through a focus group (students) and interview (teachers).

### ***Analysis***

Firstly, the focus group and the interviews were transcribed by trained researchers, being made the total transcription of all of the interviews (verbatim). Subsequently the same transcription was verified by another member of the team. In order to organize and categorize the data of the transcriptions the software NVivo10 was used. Based on the purpose of the study, focus group guide and transcription content, a topic of deductive analysis (contributions from the intervention program for the development of social skills) was created.

## RESULTS

When asked about the social and personal skills developed with the intervention program, the students reported a high number of competences, such as a sense of responsibility (60%; n = 9), "I think we gained more responsibility, in other words, we had to make decisions as a team and they were not always approved by everyone, but we also had to know how to change so that they reached the whole group." (Focus Group B). The capacity to develop cooperative work (53.3%, n = 8), communication capacity (33.3%, n = 5), critical attitude (33.3%, n = 5), (26.7%, n = 4), organizational skills (26.7%, n = 4), self-confidence (26.7%, n = 4) and interpersonal relations (26,7%; n=4).

Just like the students, teachers reported a high number of competences, but cooperation work is the most highlighted competence (100%, n = 6), followed by interpersonal relations (66.7%, n = 4), communication capacity (50%, n = 3), autonomy and responsibility (33.3%, n = 2). In this context a teacher states: "At the skill levels I felt that they developed competences such as autonomy, - because they had to work, they had to be autonomous, they had to do; creativity, because they were forced to construct equipment, emblems and all this promoted the creativity; but also teamwork; the organization competence itself, because there were even groups that spoke in budgets, discussed among themselves, in other words, they had the need to discuss, to speak in budgets, to ponder how much it would be, that is, part of this work was also developed by the students; responsibility too. These were more: autonomy, responsibility, team spirit, cooperation."

## DISCUSSION

The collected data show that both students and teachers manifested a high perception, regarding the intervention program used, in the development of various social and personal skills. This high perception evidences the recognition and potential that Physical Education classes can have for the students' personal formation and social development.

Cooperation was strongly enriched, both by students and teachers, which highlights the importance of this type of interventions in student classes inserted in a society where individualism is evident.

## CONCLUSIONS

Physical Education classes can contribute, in an effective way, to the improvement of the social and personal competences of the students. This potential is recognized by both students and teachers and can be concretized through the dynamization of approaches that focus on these components.

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