



Reflections on a Therapeutic Training Process from a Physical Education Perspective in Higher Education

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Abstract:

The current pedagogic trends in Physical Education offer an important theoretical referent in that teachers are facilitators of the process, whereas students must play an active role in their activities. This perspective must be assumed during the Physical Education lesson, especially in the process of professional therapeutic training of students to assist primary school learners with physical and motor disabilities. This activity requires a conscientious teacher who knows the importance of their involvement and direct responsibility in the progress of learners, as well as their levels of physical and social development. The teaching-learning process of Physical Education in Special Education demands therapeutical training based on therapeutic procedures that enable professionals to assume the inclusive character of the Cuban educational system, providing quality lessons, as a true and reachable right that considers the differences of contexts and



physical conditions, offering responses that foster the development of basic motor and sport capacities and abilities, in addition to personal development to those who benefit.

Keywords: therapeutic education, physical-motor limitations, therapeutic procedures

Introduction

In Physical Education practice at universities, staffs have played not so much creative roles, predominantly, during the class of this therapeutic education activity. There is little engagement in this process, where the assignment of passive spectator roles is common practice. These roles are far from contemporary trends of educational inclusion, one of the basic demands of teaching-learning included in Syllabus E, and the contemporary Physical Education lessons: the leading role of the students at different times of the learning activity.

The discipline Physical Education provides knowledge to the students on how to conduct their relations with special education learners, whether or not associated with disabilities, at school, such as interacting with the community hosting the school, using free time, participating in physical-recreational activities, the behavior of physical development of teachers and students, and participating in scout activities. This discipline teaches the students how to establish a balance between the physical and the intellectual sides.

Coincidentally, one of the general objectives of discipline Physical Education is that as part of their therapeutic education, the undergraduate students must master the utilization of procedures and general resources of therapeutic physical culture in order to identify the physical-motor deficiencies of learners, and acquire the university therapeutic procedures that can be implemented for customized attention, depending on the physical-motor limitations of learners with special educational needs associated with their disabilities or not.



The dynamic of the teaching-learning process in Physical Education at higher levels, particularly in the Bachelor Degree of Special Education, requires a more detailed work on the attention to diversity, from this discipline.

Diversity, from a pedagogic perspective, could be defined as the different (not the similar), the qualitative and quantitative distinction in the education of subjects in their material and spiritual levels. Physical Education comprises aspects like individual differences manifested in the levels of physical development, aptitudes and learning speed of students, the diversity of original sociocultural contexts where they have been raised, the special educational needs of some children, and gender differences. The individual differences are characterized by different factors. The most visible differences are size, weight, muscle strength, the level of skill or ability, which can be seen directly.

Therefore, the achievement of a comprehensive physical approach depends on the pedagogic attention to the diversity. Offering equality of opportunities, telling apart the demands, favoring co-education, and therefore, offering the same attention to either sex, not just conducting activities for the skilled and gifted that generate the rejection or mockery of the less able, are just some of the aspects that must be considered by all teachers in their lessons and activities.

From that perspective of attention to diversity, the children with special educational needs require a special mention. The integration or insertion of disabled children in general education schools is a gradual and dynamic process that depends on the particular needs of each student, which makes the process of integrality and differentiation in physical education even more complex, since it is based on the diversity of the students with a full reliability on their educators, and real access of all to education, which is a tangible aspect in the Cuban context.



Materials and Methods

Adapted Physical Education Arráez (1998), Maqueira, G. (2005) must comply with a group of highly significant premises, in order to meet the goal of providing proper education to children with special educational needs. These premises are shown below:

- It is fundamental to know the characteristics of the group of students to whom the activity is directed. It entails deep knowledge of diagnostic: clinical, psychomotor development, and the social-family environment.
- It is necessary to know how to use active and scientific methods in the teaching-learning process, to conceive the Physical Education lesson (López and González Maura 2003) as the pedagogical activity in which the instructive-educational purposes and methodological strategies foreseen in the program will be completed.
- Being ready to give a response through the general curriculum, and knowing how to customize it to the diversity of students within a class. This study has identified it as the main problematic, in many cases, the attention to individual differences, or diversity that may exist in the class, may become a serious difficulty for the teacher when these lack the theoretical and methodological knowledge to perform proper curricular adjustment, or are unable to act correspondingly in every case. The studies conducted by that author demonstrated that, as a general rule, the type of adaptation that the teachers in the research was only regarding the substitution of some contents by others, which did not favor the implementation of the principle of normalization.
- Another premise is that teachers can convey safety and confidence to students so that the latter are able to do all types of exercises without fearing damage or injuries.



- Lastly, this study deems it necessary to conceive Adapted Physical Education as an essential link within the system of pedagogic and social influences offered to the young learners. In other words, it means finding a more relevant role of this subject in the general preparedness received by these students.

A UNESCO report (UNESCO 2003), states that “Recognizing and being prepared for diversity means, among other aspects, seeing equality of opportunities, not only treating everyone equally, but offering them what they need to enhance their potentialities and identities fully.” In that sense, the response of Adapted Physical Education must come. Otherwise, the challenge of attending diversity from the lesson of Physical Education could remain unmet.

Results and Discussion

The process of therapeutic education in the Physical Education discipline given by the conditions of Syllabus E

To go further into this problematic, it is necessary to refer to this process from a psychological perspective, where the education process, as such, relies on the conception of the unity of the cognitive, the affective, and the behavioral sides. In that context, the contribution made by Bozhovich, L (1965) was noteworthy, as it emphasizes that this unity has an effect on the regulation of behavior, and that the affective-emotional sphere must follow the same path of development as that of cognitive processes.

Likewise, the contribution of Vigotsky, S (1979, 1984) was significant, in relation to the role of the affective side to provide experiences, as an expression of the environment in which individuals evolve, and the contribution to their development. Besides, the cognitive-affective relation explains the unity of the two processes and their significance in the regulation of the activity of personality. In his theory of development, Vigotsky, S (1984), stresses on the sociocultural conditions, especially the educational conditions, in the development of personality. It helps understand that the process of individual development is determined by the characteristics of the environment they live in, the interactive dynamic



established in that setting and its individual history, which cannot be ignored. It also includes the various origins and the multiplicity of socializing factors that influence on their development.

In Latin America, Ortega, R (1996); Repetto, E (1987); Schemelkes, S (1996); Valle, A (1997) have dealt with development, also based on the unity of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral sides, and offer a general assessment of the importance of encouraging the search of knowledge, create needs, and motivate the students to engage in different tasks.

In Cuba, the significant contribution of González Rey, F (1995), (112,49) is based on "... the unity of the cognitive and affective sides as a fundamental theoretical and methodological principle to understand personality as the higher regulating and most organized level of psyche". In turn, Bermúdez, R and Rodríguez, M (1996) explained the unity of the cognitive and affective sides as a premise and result of the concrete performance of subjects.

According to M (2003) (237,12), "... orienting the educational process with a perspective of understanding the importance of the affective behavior of the process, since the cognizant subject, while changing (construction of knowledge, development of capacities, acquisition of values), is influenced by the subjective burden of previous experience, the sense and the real and potential meaning that the object of knowledge has for this subject, modifying, facilitating, or hindering the process, whose results are expressed in the consciousness and behavior toward the object". This author refers to the importance of paying attention to the role of the affective component in education to achieve higher results in terms of student behavior.

The analysis of the criteria from several authors like Rico, M (1992); Fernández, M (1993); García, M (1996); Real, G (1998); Zaldívar, G (2004); Ramos, A (2005), in relation to the unity of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral sides in the pedagogic process of physical culture leads to the conclusion that it favors interpersonal and group relations between



learners and educators. It develops communication, experiences, and emotions, as it is based on the establishment of positive relations with the surrounding in which their physical activity develops. Besides, it enhances the essential human, providing a harmonious and comprehensive development of the personality, by stimulating acceptance, self-esteem, respect, and tolerance to others and the environment in which they develop.

Hence, the process of knowledge is based on the establishment of affective ties between the subject and the cognizant subject, thus conditioning the vision of this sui generis relation, with an ethical and esthetic character. This process is continuously enriched, and it causes that the increase of environmental knowledge changes the vision of the world and the attitudes toward it. Influenced by this relation, several changes associated with feelings and attitudes of the subject occur, expressing the environmental consciousness acquired.

Therapeutic Physical Culture is one of the most important methods of contemporary comprehensive therapeutics. As a functional therapy, it is based on the same principles used in the practice of physical exercises by healthy people, since their theoretical bases rely on the medical-biological and pedagogic sciences.

According to Negrín, R (2003) and a collaborative work (2006), among its advantages, physical exercising is an essential element to stimulate the vital functions of the body, healing, and prevention of illness and injuries, prophylaxis of complications, increased defenses, and the recovery of the working capacity.

Because of its pedagogic character, it is an important factor for environmental education looking for overall and specific therapeutics with the conscious application of knowledge, methods, and techniques based on appropriate ethics. Additionally, it demands the creation of hygienic-sanitary conditions, according to the settings and the therapeutical regimes people are exposed to. All these elements have a direct influence on life quality, from a physical and spiritual perspective, conferring a high human value.



From this standpoint, the process of therapeutic education as part of discipline Physical Education, syllabus E, comprises aspects associated with professional education delivered to students, as it promotes the construction of new knowledge and practice that help understand and solve the complex problems related to learners with special educational needs associated or not with disabilities; it stimulates the development of professional habits and skills that lead to competencies for effective engagement in their future professional work.

Considering the conception of the curricular design for higher education and the eminently pedagogical professional mode of actuation suggested in practice for the teaching-learning process of Physical Education, the author deems it necessary to define therapeutic education in the Bachelor Degree of Special Education in universities, as:

A process of knowledge, skill, and value construction that pertain to Therapeutic Physical Culture that Special Education students should acquire through physical education, with an eminently pedagogic character, in order to identify the different physical-motor deficiencies of students, and know the pertinent therapeutic procedures to deliver customized attention, depending on the physical-motor limitations of learners with special education needs associated or not to disabilities (Ramírez, R, 2019).

Possibilities and potentialities of discipline Physical Education in the Bachelor Degree of Special Education for therapeutic education

In Syllabus E, specifically in the Bachelor Degree of Special Education, Discipline Physical Education has a theoretical-conceptual body from which the components of the teaching-learning process are structured didactically and methodologically. One fundamental aspect is therapeutic education as part of the essential knowledge required by students, such as,

- Mastering general procedures and resources of Therapeutic Physical Culture.
- Contributing to the correction and/or compensation of alterations in the posture and other physical-motor disorders of students.
- Identifying the different physical-motor deficiencies of students.



- Learning about the pertinent therapeutic procedures for customized attention to physical-motor limitations of students.
- Applying alternatives to integrate all students into the activities of the teaching-learning process.
- Mastering simple massaging techniques that help increase the efficiency of the physical capacity, during the educational process.

Other theoretical-methodological aspects are the inclusion of the term physical condition as a distinctive element to increase physical and intellectual performance of students through the Physical Education class.

Physical-motor limitations

There are several definitions of people with special education needs (SEN) associated with physical-motor capacities, which correspond to the current historical moment, the development of science, the purpose and profile of the professional committed to this area.

Internationally, authors that study Adapted Physical Education, like Simard, Caron, and Skrotzky, (2003), Cumellas (2010), and Villalobos, (2012), see the term as an alteration of the locomotor apparatus caused by a deficient function of the central nervous or osteomuscular systems, or by an interrelation of the two that hinders or blocks functional motion of one or several parts of the body, reducing the capacity to perform activities within the normal boundaries of humans.

In their definitions, these authors emphasize on limitation, and show their affinity to the medical model to conceive disabilities, in which they do not consider the potentialities of these subjects.

In the Cuban context, several studies have dealt with the pedagogy of this topic, such as Puentes de Armas (2001), a Collaborative Work from the Felix Varela University of Pedagogic Sciences (UCP) (2003), Navarro (2006), Borges (2006), and Castro (2007).



Borges (2006) considers a subject with a physical-motor limitation as: *Those people who show transient or permanent deterioration of the osteomuscular and/or nervous system that limit the performance of heavy and light motor acts that generate a set of different educational needs, as they are disabled to perform activities that other peers can do without special assistance. (p. 27).*

Meanwhile, Castro (2007) notes that “The person suffers from a physical-motor disability when they undergo partial or total, transient or permanent loss of some of their motor functions and/or physical integrity.” (pages 158-159)

As a subject, Physical Education is the ideal way of educational intervention in children with physical-motor limitations, namely,

- Brain paralysis.
- Congenital malformations (agenesis, arthrogryposis, torticollis, myelomeningocele, and meningocele).
- Neuromuscular diseases (progressive, muscular dystrophy); bone alterations (osteochondritis, osteogenesis imperfecta, and osteomyelitis).
- Traumatism caused by accidents, obstetric brachial plexus paralysis, congenital hip luxation, amputation, and others.

On the emotional-volitive side, in face of a physical-motor limitation problems associated with interpersonal relations and making new friends, pose difficulties. Indiscreet looks and astonishment occur in the presence of an incomplete body, pity for being on a wheel chair, the amazed look of people around or a reaction of rejection by peers, make interpersonal relations between the disabled and the “able” difficult sometimes. The horrific feeling of “how will I be accepted because of my physical disability” generates uncertainty when a new relation is started. These physical-affective elements are clear barriers to communication with learners.

Therapeutic procedures



The topic of therapeutic procedures requires the assumption that the method is “the element that drives the process, it responds the questions How to teach? How to learn? It represents a system of actions by teachers and students, as ways and modes of organizing cognitive activities of students, or as regulators of the interrelated activity of teachers and students to achieve goals.” (Addine *et al.*, 2004).

Upon analyzing the method as a component of the teaching-learning process in Physical Education, it is necessary to refer to the **procedures** that complement it and can be used as strategies by teachers and students to teach and learn, respectively. This component, which is part of the process dynamics, must respond to the productive activity of students, being participants, problematical, promoters of teaching and learning curricular strategies, carriers of the integration between instruction and education and affection and cognition, able to promote learning in students through the search, investigation, and solution of problems they can come across during their research, pedagogic, and professional practice. The procedures are the operational structure, and the conditions in which it is developed are particularly important. A particular method could be developed through different procedures, according to the conditions in which it takes place.

The procedures are links of the method. Whereas the method is directly related to the objective, the procedure is associated with the conditions in which the teaching-learning process takes place. The method is made of procedures. The former depends on the interaction to form, while the latter depends on the context it is developed. The procedure is a detail of the method, and it has a transferable character, depending on the learning context it develops.

Specifically in the context of physical education for students in the Bachelor Degree in Special Education, the projection of therapeutic procedures by teachers is necessary to achieve a therapeutic education required for the professional training of students.

In this study, the **therapeutic procedure** is assumed as a system of personal resources or particular conditions of the subject (students) to respond to every learning task to be implemented in the therapeutic contents (Ramírez, R, 2019).



These procedures should deepen the internal side of teaching and learning; that is, promote the assimilation of the method to build knowledge through therapeutic contents that permit students to search for the essence among the important elements, which leads to a qualitatively higher thinking that allows them to recognize the intentionality of therapeutic education in the Physical Education lesson as the highest priority.



Conclusions

The requirements of Syllabus E in Physical Education, Bachelor Degree of Special Education, in terms of forming students that master the procedures and general resources of Therapeutic Physical Culture, knowledge about the pertinent therapeutic procedures for customized attention to physical-motor limitations of their future students, lie in the therapeutic educational process at universities, whose dynamics acknowledges the Physical Education lesson as a favorable space for this type of education, thus justifying the need of implementing therapeutic procedures that direct the teaching-learning process to achieve that goal.



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Conflict of interests:

The author declares there is no conflict of interests in relation to this manuscript.