

STUDENTS AS ACTIVE LEARNERS ON THEIR ASSESSMENT PROCESS IN AN ACROBATIC GYMNASTICS UNIT: STUDY IN PRESERVICE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' SCHOOL PLACEMENT

Alunos como construtores ativos do seu processo de avaliação numa unidade de ginástica acrobática: estudo no contexto de estágio em Educação Física

Alumnos como constructores activos de su proceso de evaluación en una unidad didáctica de gimnastica acrobática: estudio en el contexto de prácticum en la Educación Física

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Abstract

This study intends to analyse how students' involvement in their assessment process contributes to their learning in a gymnastics acrobatic unit. It took place during the school placement of two physical education preservice teachers. Their classes had 43 students (23 girls and 20 boys) with ages between 15-17 years old. Students were challenged to build a choreography, according to the dossier delivered at the first class that contains objectives, contents, assessment criteria, and assessment forms. Data were collected from assessment forms, fulfilled by students at the end of each class and analysed by the preservice teachers before the next class; assessment of the choreography built by students and a written test. Students showed active involvement along all the process, taking advantage of their self-assessment to improve their performance. Sharing assessment criteria and learning objectives with the students contributed to improving their learning about acrobatic gymnastics.

Keywords: *School placement; Physical Education; socio constructivist learners; formative and shared assessment; self-assessment*

Resumo

Este estudo pretende analisar como é que o envolvimento dos alunos no seu processo de avaliação contribui para a sua aprendizagem numa unidade de ginástica acrobática. O estudo decorreu durante o estágio profissional de duas estudantes-estagiárias de Educação Física. As turmas tinham 43 alunos (23 raparigas, 20 rapazes) com idades entre os 15-17 anos. Os alunos foram desafiados a construir uma coreografia, tendo por base o dossiê entregue na primeira aula que continha objetivos, conteúdos, critérios de avaliação e fichas de autoavaliação. Os dados foram recolhidos através das fichas de autoavaliação, preenchidas pelos alunos no final de cada aula e analisadas pelas estudantes-estagiárias antes da aula seguinte; avaliação das coreografias construídas pelos alunos e teste escrito. Os alunos envolveram-se ativamente ao longo do processo, tendo utilizando a autoavaliação para melhorarem o seu desempenho. Partilhar os critérios de avaliação e objetivos de aprendizagem com os alunos contribuiu para melhorar a sua aprendizagem na ginástica acrobática.

Palavras-chave: *Estágio profissional; Educação Física; aprendizes sócio construtivistas; avaliação formativa e partilhada; autoavaliação*

Resumen

Este estudio pretende analizar cómo la implicación de los alumnos en su proceso de evaluación contribuye en su aprendizaje en una unidad de gimnasia acrobática. Este estudio se llevó a cabo durante las prácticas de dos estudiantes de formación inicial del profesorado en Educación Física. Estas clases tenían 43 alumnos (23 mujeres, 20 hombres) con edades entre 15-17 años. Los alumnos han sido desafiados a hacer una coreografía, de acuerdo con el dossier recibido en primera clase. Este contiene objetivos, contenidos, criterios de evaluación y fichas de autoevaluación. Para recoger los datos se recurrió a las fichas de autoevaluación, llenadas por los alumnos al final de cada clase y analizadas por las estudiantes antes de la clase siguiente, evaluación de las coreografías construidas por los alumnos y prueba escrita. Los alumnos se involucraron activamente al largo del proceso, utilizando la autoevaluación para mejorar su

desempeño. Compartir los criterios de evaluación y objetivos de aprendizaje con los alumnos contribuyó para mejorar el aprendizaje en gimnasia acrobática.

Palabras clave: Prácticas; Educación Física; aprendices socioconstructivismo; evaluación formativa y compartida; autoevaluación

1. Introduction

Despite the several efforts to use assessment as a mean of promoting learning (e. g. Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hay & Penney, 2009; Leirhaug & Annerstedt, 2016), assessment tends to remain as a tool to determine grades. In the context of Physical Education, some authors (e. g. Baird, Andrich, Hopfenbeck, & Stobart, 2017; Penney, Brooker, Hay, & Gillespie, 2009) referred that assessment practices have been misaligned with the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, Swaffield (2011) emphasizes the importance of the learner, because he is the one who learns and for that reason, the importance of involving students in assessment processes to increase their motivation and learning is emphasized by several authors (e. g. Falchikov, 2005; López-Pastor, 2009; MacPhail & Halbert, 2010).

Attending to this scenario, this study intends to analyse how students' involvement in their assessment process contributes to their learning in an acrobatic gymnastics unit.

2. Design and procedures

The present study took place in the school placement of two preservice teachers (PSTs) of the Master of Teaching in Physical Education on Basic and Secondary Education from Faculty of Sport of the University of Porto; the pre-service teachers were purposively selected according to their characteristics and interest in joining this exploratory study. The participants were 43 pupils of two classes of the secondary level with ages between 15-17 years old from a school situated in the Porto area.

The study took place during an acrobatic gymnastics unit (one class each week along six weeks) where PSTs were challenged to apply formative and shared assessment in their practices. They created a dossier with the most relevant information about the unit, namely the choreography structure, objectives and assessment criteria that was fulfilled by their students along the unit.

The diagnostic assessment was a brief synthesis carried out by students during the first class and took into consideration their knowledge about their problems and difficulties

in previous years in acrobatic gymnastics. Self-assessment form (about the subject, about me, and others) was fulfilled by students at the end of each class to help PSTs identify some problems that could be unnoticed during the class. Students' choreography was fulfilled in their dossier only in the last class of the unit when students were very certain about their choreography. The choreography of each group had to respect the guidelines provided by the PSTs which refer that each choreography had to have two figures with two and three elements, one figure with four and other with five/six elements and three elements of balance, strength or flexibility.

Every class each group present their choreography to their colleagues and PSTs, and on the last class, students had to present their final version of choreography. The final grade of students took into consideration three domains: technical (50%), artistic (30%) and process of building/evolution of the choreography (20%). In each, one of these domains' students could be classified between 0-20 values. Technical elements were assessed according to three performance levels according to the difficulty of the figures (e.g. 1st level two points; 2nd level two points and a half; 3rd level three points). Artistic component assessed aspects from the choreography as expression, creativity, and sequence of movements. On the third domain were considered students' dossier, self-assessment forms, and progression of the choreography. Each group was responsible to divide the final score gave by PSTs. They could divide it into equal parts or attribute different grades considering the different contributions of each element.

Students' knowledge was formally assessed through a written test at the end of the unit. On this written test students could obtain a classification between 0-20 values. Data from self-assessment forms were analysed by PSTs after each class so the next class can beneficiate. These data were also compared with the ones PSTs obtained during the class through observation.

The ethics committee of the University of Porto and school authorities approved the study. All students and parents signed informed consent forms to allow participation in this study.

3. Results

Students had difficult to assess themselves because they were not used to participate in assessment processes. They were able to assign a note to their performance but had difficulty to explain it.

The information that the students put at the self-assessment form showed that they can identify and understand assessment criteria, classes' goals and content, however they found it more difficult to identify the best grip, mount/dismount to each figure, because the information provided by PSTs was not enough. To know the contents of each class, the objectives of the teaching unit and what is more valued were fundamental elements that predispose students to learn. In fact, the students stay more aware of the learning process when they know what is expected of them.

Regards the open question: “what was the most important thing that you learned today”, students referred aspects from the three domains of acquisitions: skills, knowledge, and values.

Students exhibited a great commitment to Physical Education classes because they were accountable for their choreography. This involvement helps them to achieve high levels of performance on the final choreography with an overall mean of 17,4 values in a maximum of 20 values. Concerning to knowledge, the written test reveal that most of the students had good results (an average of 14,8). Students identified the dossier as a valuable resource to guide them throughout the process.

4. Final considerations

Students are not used to participate in the assessment process and assess themselves is a hard task. Students' lack of content knowledge in acrobatic gymnastic also difficult the assessment of their own performance. Despite the problems that students faced with self-assessment, they were totally committed to their work of creating choreography. Furthermore, their involvement along the entire unit affected positively their learning, which could be observed on their relevant levels of performance and knowledge.

Dossier information allowed students to follow the process and to improve their knowledge about acrobatic gymnastics.

The follow up provided by PSTs were of great importance to students feel confident and guided in their challenges.

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