

**SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE: INTERFACES
BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH, LEARNING AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION**

**EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA ESCOLAR E QUALIDADE DE VIDA: INTERFACES ENTRE
SAÚDE MENTAL, APRENDIZAGEM E INOVAÇÃO PEDAGÓGICA**

**EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA ESCOLAR Y CALIDAD DE VIDA: INTERFACES ENTRE
SALUD MENTAL, APRENDIZAJE E INNOVACIÓN PEDAGÓGICA**

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the contribution of school physical education to promoting students' quality of life and well-being, considering the physical, emotional, and social aspects of human development. The qualitative research was conducted through a literature review and document analysis, based on national legislation and theoretical references in the field. The results show that the discipline promotes the comprehensive development of students by encouraging coexistence, self-esteem, respect for differences, and the development of healthy habits. Furthermore, physical education contributes to combating school dropout, strengthening mental health, and developing socio-emotional skills. The conclusion is that, when well-planned and integrated into educational contexts committed to inclusion and citizenship, school physical education becomes essential in building a school that promotes health, belonging, and quality of life.

Keywords: School Physical Education. Quality of Life. Mental Health. Student Well-Being. Comprehensive Development.

RESUMO

O capítulo analisa a contribuição da educação física escolar para a promoção da qualidade de vida e do bem-estar dos estudantes, considerando os aspectos físicos, emocionais e

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sociais do desenvolvimento humano. A pesquisa, de natureza qualitativa, foi conduzida por meio de revisão bibliográfica e análise documental, com base em legislações nacionais e referências teóricas da área. Os resultados evidenciam que a disciplina favorece a formação integral dos alunos ao estimular a convivência, a autoestima, o respeito às diferenças e a construção de hábitos saudáveis. Além disso, a educação física contribui para o enfrentamento da evasão escolar, para o fortalecimento da saúde mental e para o desenvolvimento de competências socioemocionais. Conclui-se que, quando bem planejada e inserida em contextos educativos comprometidos com a inclusão e a cidadania, a educação física escolar se torna essencial na construção de uma escola promotora de saúde, pertencimento e qualidade de vida.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física Escolar. Qualidade de Vida. Saúde Mental. Bem-Estar Estudantil. Desenvolvimento Integral.

RESUMEN

El capítulo analiza la contribución de la educación física escolar a la promoción de la calidad de vida y el bienestar de los estudiantes, considerando los aspectos físicos, emocionales y sociales del desarrollo humano. La investigación, de carácter cualitativo, se realizó a través de una revisión bibliográfica y análisis documental, con base en la legislación nacional y referentes teóricos del área. Los resultados muestran que la disciplina favorece el desarrollo integral del alumnado al fomentar la convivencia, la autoestima, el respeto a las diferencias y el desarrollo de hábitos saludables. Además, la educación física contribuye a combatir la deserción escolar, fortalecer la salud mental y desarrollar habilidades socioemocionales. Se concluye que, cuando bien planificada e insertada en contextos educativos comprometidos con la inclusión y la ciudadanía, la educación física escolar se vuelve esencial en la construcción de una escuela promotora de salud, pertenencia y calidad de vida.

Palabras clave: Educación Física Escolar. Calidad de Vida. Salud Mental. Bienestar Estudiantil. Desarrollo Integral.

1 INTRODUCTION

School physical education has gained space in the discussion about quality of life, integral health and well-being of students. Understood beyond sports practice, this discipline articulates bodily, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, gaining relevance both in the educational field and in public health. Pedagogical action through the body allows not only psychomotor development, but also the stimulation of coexistence, mutual respect and emotional expression. The chapter presents an integrated approach to school physical education, considering its interfaces with mental health, learning and pedagogical innovation, in the light of theoretical references and official documents. In this context, the urgency of rethinking curricula and methodologies that value the integral education of students is highlighted.

The problem of this research guides this analysis is: how can school physical education contribute to the promotion of students' quality of life, articulating mental health, learning processes and pedagogical innovation? This issue stems from the recognition that the contemporary school environment faces challenges, such as the increase in cases of anxiety, school dropout and demotivation, especially among children and adolescents (BRASIL, 2017).

The hypothesis that guides the theme addressed is that physical education, when planned in an intentional, critical and humanizing way, contributes directly to the improvement of students' quality of life by promoting self-esteem, a sense of belonging and integral development, as defended by Silva and Marchi Júnior (2017).

This chapter is limited to the analysis of bibliographic references and official documents focused on school physical education, focusing on the interface between mental health, well-being and learning. The analysis focuses on the Brazilian context, considering guidelines such as the BNCC (BRASIL, 2017), and studies that address the theme of physical education as a promoter of quality of life. No empirical field practices or direct statistical data are analyzed.

The theoretical foundation is anchored in authors such as Darido and Rangel (2005), who discuss the educational function of physical education; Silva and Marchi Júnior (2017), who deal with the relationship between school and health; and Marinho-

Araújo and Almeida (2017), who address the contributions of education to the psychosocial well-being of students.

The discussion about quality of life at school is increasingly urgent in the face of the worsening of emotional conditions among children and adolescents. In this scenario, physical education emerges as a strategic discipline to face these challenges, due to its potential to promote bodily experiences that favor self-knowledge, emotional self-regulation and socialization. According to the BNCC (BRASIL, 2017), the area of languages, of which physical education is a part, should contribute to the integral formation of students, which includes the development of socio-emotional skills. In addition, the national literature points out that pedagogical practices that integrate movement and reflection expand the cultural repertoire and strengthen school bonds (SILVA; MARCHI JÚNIOR, 2017; MARINHO-ARAÚJO; ALMEIDA, 2017).

After reading you will be able to observe the contributions of school physical education to the promotion of students' quality of life, considering its interfaces with mental health, learning and pedagogical innovation.

The research adopts the inductive method, which starts from the observation and analysis of theoretical and documentary data to construct generalizations (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2017). From the point of view of nature, it is a basic research, as it aims to deepen the theoretical knowledge about the role of physical education in promoting the quality of school life (GIL, 2010). As for the approach to the problem, the research is qualitative, as it privileges the interpretation of the meanings attributed to the concepts of well-being, learning and mental health in the educational field (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994). From the perspective of the objectives, it is classified as descriptive research, as it seeks to characterize the elements present in the literature on the subject (GIL, 2010).

The technical procedures used were bibliographic and documentary research. Academic works published in books and scientific articles were analyzed, as well as official documents such as the National Common Curriculum Base (BRASIL, 2017), the National Curriculum Parameters and the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (BRASIL, 1990). The selection of materials considered the relevance to the area of school physical education and the discussion on health and quality of life, with emphasis on the authors

Darido and Rangel (2005), Silva and Marchi Júnior (2017), and Marinho-Araújo and Almeida (2017).

The object of research consists of the analysis of the contributions of school physical education to the quality of life of students, focusing on the Brazilian educational legislation and scientific studies that relate body, health and learning in the school environment.

The research that built the chapter is structured in sections that begin with the introduction, followed by the justification, general objective and methodology. Then, the theoretical foundations on physical education and quality of life are presented, exploring the main conceptual axes. The following section discusses the effects of the pedagogical practice of physical education on students' mental health, motivation and performance, based on the contributions of authors such as Silva and Marchi Júnior (2017) and Marinho-Araújo and Almeida (2017). The final part is composed of considerations, where the findings are synthesized and possibilities for strengthening physical education in the school context are indicated. Other studies that address the same thematic field are also noteworthy, such as Oliveira and Rangel (2014), which discuss the role of physical education in the formation of affective bonds; and Costa and Darido (2015), who deal with the pedagogy of the body as a strategy of inclusion and citizenship.

The regular practice of physical activities in the school environment is directly related to health promotion, stimulating coexistence and strengthening students' self-esteem, as highlighted by Nahas (2017) and Catunda and Marques (2017). School physical education, by articulating movement, expression and interaction, plays an important role in integral education, contributing to emotional well-being, socialization and the development of values such as respect, empathy and cooperation (CORREIA, 2016).

Pedagogical practices that respect diversity and encourage the participation of all students are pointed out as fundamental for strengthening bonds and building healthier educational environments (CATUNDA; MARQUES, 2017). Brazilian legislation, through the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (BRASIL, 1996) and the National Common Curricular Base (BRASIL, 2017), recognizes the mandatory nature of the discipline of physical education and its formative character, emphasizing its contribution to the physical, cognitive and affective development of students.

This chapter also considers international experiences from countries such as Argentina, Finland, Portugal and Australia, whose policies value physical education as an essential component of the school curriculum. The analysis shows that, for the discipline to achieve its objectives, investments in continuing education of teachers, adequate structural conditions and public policies committed to inclusion and human development are necessary. The valorization of plurality, democratic coexistence and well-being should guide pedagogical actions in school physical education, consolidating its role as a space of care, citizenship and quality of life (MARIANO; ATAIDES; REIS, 2025).

2 RELEVANCE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

School physical education acts as an important part of the process of integral formation of students, especially when understood as a pedagogical practice aimed at the development of physical and emotional skills together. As Mariano, Ataides and Reis (2025) point out, the integration of physical activity into the curriculum contributes not only to physical health, but also to the strengthening of self-esteem and emotional regulation, showing that physical education goes beyond the field of motor skills and reaches subjective dimensions that are fundamental to the well-being of students.

The body practice experienced in physical education classes has the potential to mediate socialization processes and promote mutual respect among students. For Catunda and Marques (2017), the discipline is configured as a space for the construction of ethical and social values, such as solidarity, empathy and cooperation. This collective experience contributes to the development of socio-emotional skills, expanding the possibilities of democratic coexistence in the school environment and preparing students for critical and active citizen participation.

The formation of healthy habits from childhood, encouraged by regular practices in physical education classes, can generate lasting impacts throughout the lives of students. According to Nahas (2017), school physical activity is associated with the prevention of chronic diseases and the promotion of more active and balanced lifestyles. In addition, the intentional pedagogical performance of teachers can help students

understand the benefits of body movement as a self-care practice and as a right to health (Assis; Santos, 2017).

In the field of cognitive development, school physical education also has significant contributions. Costa and Darido (2015) argue that the articulation between bodily practices and interdisciplinary knowledge strengthens the capacity for attention, memory and logical reasoning, expanding academic performance. By integrating themes such as sustainability, culture and technology into the universe of the body in motion, the discipline becomes even more relevant for the critical training of students in the face of contemporary complexities.

The mental health of students also benefits directly from active participation in physical education classes. Marinho-Araújo and Almeida (2017) point out that pedagogical practices aimed at psychosocial well-being, such as significant bodily activities, can act as an emotional protection factor in the school context, especially in situations of social and academic vulnerability.

In addition to promoting physical and emotional development, school physical education strengthens social bonds between students and enhances the construction of affective bonds with the educational environment. Cruz and Silva (2019) observe that discipline favors conflict mediation and encourages peaceful coexistence, creating a safe space for everyone to express themselves through their bodies. This humanizing approach expands students' perception of belonging and participation, which are essential for school permanence and engagement.

The relevance of physical education can also be observed when analyzed from the perspective of Brazilian educational legislation. According to the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC, 2018), the discipline must ensure students diversified and meaningful bodily experiences, contemplating motor, affective, social and cognitive dimensions. The curricular proposal reinforces the role of physical education as a promoter of essential skills for the twenty-first century, contributing to the formation of critical, healthy subjects who are aware of their rights and duties.

In this scenario, the physical education teacher emerges as a central figure in the mediation of training processes and social inclusion in the school context. Darido (2012) highlights that the continuing education of teachers is essential for them to be able to act

in a critical, reflective and innovative way, adapting their practices to the needs of each class. The use of active methodologies, such as cooperative games, interdisciplinary projects, and body portfolios, expands learning possibilities and strengthens the bond between student and school.

The critical and reflective approach to school physical education is indispensable for the promotion of pedagogical practices that consider the realities of students. Correia (2016) states that curricula should be constantly revised to adapt to cultural and social transformations, respecting different forms of body expression and valuing diversity. In this way, physical education ceases to be a space for the reproduction of traditional sports models and becomes a territory of emancipation and construction of plural identities.

The physical education curriculum needs to include content that goes beyond sports performance, including dances, fights, gymnastics, popular games and body practices from different cultures. Oliveira and Rangel (2014) highlight the importance of expanding the students' repertoire, stimulating autonomy and protagonism. By valuing the diversity of body knowledge, the school contributes to the recognition and appreciation of local cultural expressions, strengthening the identity and belonging of students to their environment.

The experience of bodily practices in the school environment can contribute to the ethical formation of students, especially by proposing situations of cooperation, respect and collective responsibility. According to Catunda and Marques (2017), physical education is a privileged space for the construction of human values, while stimulating coexistence with differences and teamwork. These elements are essential for the formation of citizens who act consciously and committed to the common good.

The integral health promoted by physical education also involves the construction of strategies to cope with stress and anxiety, frequent problems among elementary school students. Oliveira and Rangel (2014) point out that physical education classes, when planned with pedagogical intentionality and sensitivity to the students' experiences, promote the development of affective bonds and favor the expression of emotions, contributing to the reduction of tensions and the strengthening of students' resilience.

Interdisciplinarity is another factor that expands the relevance of school physical education. Costa and Darido (2015) point out that pedagogical projects that integrate the

discipline with areas such as science, geography and arts promote more contextualized and interdisciplinary learning. The analysis of the environmental impacts of certain sports practices or the creation of choreographies that reflect social themes develop not only the body, but also the critical awareness and creativity of the students.

The quality of life of students is also related to encouraging healthy habits, such as a balanced diet, adequate sleep and active leisure. Alves (2024) state that the integration between body practices and food education can promote significant improvements in the physical and emotional well-being of students. The school, in this sense, becomes an environment that forms attitudes that reverberate beyond its walls, influencing the routine and daily choices of young people.

The pedagogical practice of physical education must be inclusive and sensitive to the particularities of students, ensuring that everyone has access to and participation in the activities. Badaró (2020) defends a conception of evaluation that values individual evolution and promotes cooperation among students, overcoming models based on competition and performance. This perspective expands inclusion and the sense of belonging in the school environment, especially among students with different abilities and trajectories.

Finally, school physical education is consolidated as an effective strategy for promoting collective health, especially when articulated with institutional programs such as the School Health Program (PSE). As pointed out by the Ministry of Health (2022), the integration between education and health is essential for the construction of effective public policies. The role of physical education teachers in this process expands the reach of these actions, promoting a culture of prevention, well-being and citizenship among students.

3 LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC POLICIES ON SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The recognition of physical education as an educational right and a mandatory curricular component is the result of a historical process of regulation and appreciation of this discipline. In Brazil, several laws and normative documents establish the guidelines for the pedagogical performance of physical education, giving it an essential role in the integral formation of students. Understanding these legal bases is essential to be able to

critically evaluate the advances, challenges and possibilities of innovation in teaching practice in this area (CATUNDA; MARQUES, 2017).

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996) ensures the mandatory nature of physical education in all stages of basic education, except for the exceptions provided for by law. This obligation reinforces the formative function of the discipline, by recognizing it as an integral part of the educational process and not as a merely recreational activity (BRASIL, 1996). According to Darido and Rangel (2005), the LDB represents a fundamental milestone for the pedagogical recognition of physical education by attributing to it an explicit and articulated educational function to the school's pedagogical project.

The National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), approved in 2017, situates physical education in the area of Languages and establishes that the discipline must develop skills related to body culture, body care, coexistence and mental health (BRASIL, 2017). For Oliveira and Rangel (2014), this direction broadens the understanding of body culture as a field for the construction of meanings and identities, emphasizing the role of physical education in promoting affective bonds and belonging among students.

In addition, the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) stand out, especially for elementary education, by emphasizing critical training and student protagonism. The PCN recognize the cultural plurality of bodily manifestations and defend the valorization of the different experiences of students in physical education classes (BRASIL, 1998). According to Costa and Darido (2015), this approach promotes inclusion by considering multiple body expressions as legitimate forms of knowledge and participation, strengthening a democratic and plural pedagogical practice.

Although the national legislation ensures an important milestone for the valorization of physical education, the dialogue with international experiences can broaden the understanding of the potential of this discipline. According to Nahas (2017), programs to encourage school physical activity in countries such as Canada and Finland show that public policies supported by investment in teacher training, infrastructure, and interdisciplinarity have generated positive impacts on the health, school performance, and well-being of students.

In recent years, some specific initiatives have been implemented as part of public policies aimed at school physical education. An example is the School Health Program (PSE), established by Decree No. 6,286/2007, which aims to articulate health and education through actions that involve body practices and the promotion of physical activity in public schools. The program recognizes the importance of physical education in coping with problems such as sedentary lifestyle, obesity and mental disorders, reinforcing the role of the school as a space for care and integral formation (BRASIL, 2007).

In addition, the recent Law No. 14,819/2024, which institutes the National Policy for the Promotion of Mental Health in Schools, includes physical education as an axis of action to strengthen the emotional health of children and adolescents, recognizing the potential of body practices in reducing stress, promoting social bonds, and strengthening students' self-esteem (BRASIL, 2024).

These regulations demonstrate that the field of physical education has been consolidating itself as a strategic front of public policies aimed at promoting citizenship, inclusion and health. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends on the articulation between normative guidelines, continuing teacher training and concrete working conditions in schools.

4 INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The international scenario presents relevant experiences in the field of school physical education, which can offer important subsidies for the formulation of more inclusive, innovative educational policies committed to the well-being of students. The analysis of how other countries organize and value this discipline allows us to broaden the view of pedagogical practices, encouraging the adoption of more effective strategies adapted to local realities.

A comparative panorama between Brazil and countries such as Argentina, Finland, Portugal and Australia, showing advances in the recognition of physical education as an essential component of citizenship formation. In Finland, the discipline is integrated into school mental health programs, focusing on the promotion of emotional self-regulation and ethical coexistence. In Portugal, educational policies encourage the practice of

physical education from the early school years, articulating it with projects to develop socio-emotional skills.

In Australia, the discipline is structured based on scientific evidence that proves the relationship between physical activity and academic performance, which has resulted in more time spent in classes and investments in continuous teacher training. In Argentina, national programs such as "Educación Física Integral" promote inclusion and diversity, valuing regional and traditional body practices as cultural heritage.

Although Brazil has consistent legal frameworks, it still lacks effective public policies that guarantee the qualified implementation of physical education in all regions, especially in public schools.

When making this comparison, it is observed that, although Brazil has legislation that recognizes the importance of school physical education, it still lacks greater articulation between educational and health policies, continuous teacher training, and school structure that allows the effective implementation of curricular guidelines. The lack of an integrated national policy and the excessive autonomy of state and municipal systems contribute to a great inequality in the supply and quality of physical education classes in different regions of the country (Correia, 2016).

In addition, countries such as Finland and Portugal show that the valorization of physical education involves not only its legal obligation, but also its centrality in the school's pedagogical project, integration with other areas of knowledge and recognition of the discipline as a promoter of integral health. The initial and continuing training of teachers also appears as a determining factor for the quality of classes, and public investment in this aspect is fundamental.

The comparison between countries also reveals that physical education can be a privileged space for the promotion of citizenship, social inclusion and well-being, as long as it is clearly regulated and accompanied by effective public policies. Interdisciplinarity, respect for diversity, curricular adaptation, and the use of active methodologies are common elements in the most advanced legislation, indicating possible paths for improving the teaching of the discipline in Brazil.

Table 1

Comparative summary between the countries analyzed

Country	Obligation	Average workload	Evaluation	Highlights
Brazil	Yes, with exceptions	1-2 lessons per week	Optional (in many cases)	BNCC proposes body culture; Structural challenges
Argentina	Yes, mandatory	2-3 lessons per week	Integrated into school performance	Integration with health and citizenship
Portugal	Yes, mandatory	2 lessons per week	With weight in the final averages	Valued teacher training and integrated curriculum
Finland	Yes, mandatory	2-3 lessons per week	Formative assessment	Teacher well-being and autonomy programs
Australia	Yes, mandatory	2-3 lessons per week	By competencies	Inclusion, technologies and cultural diversity

Source: Authors' elaborations (2025).

In view of this panorama, it becomes evident that, in order to strengthen physical education in Brazil, it is necessary to rethink its regulation in the light of international experiences, promoting actions structured in three main axes: (1) guarantee of the minimum workload, (2) valorization of teacher training, and (3) integration of the discipline with public policies of health, inclusion and human development.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that an effective regulation of school physical education must be guided by principles of equity, interdisciplinarity and active participation of students. The strengthening of this curricular area depends on the political and institutional commitment to a truly comprehensive, democratic education that promotes quality of life.

The guarantee of the minimum workload for school physical education is closely related to its mandatory nature as a curricular component. Law No. 10,793/2003 determines that physical education is mandatory in all stages of basic education, as long as it is integrated into the school's pedagogical proposal. Although the practice may be optional in specific cases, such as for students with a working day of more than six hours, over thirty years of age or with offspring, the legislation reaffirms the importance of the

discipline in the integral education of students. This regulation strengthens the first proposed axis, highlighting the need to ensure a stable workload, which is not easily reduced by institutional or curricular pressures.

As for the second axis, the valorization of teacher training in physical education, it is also supported by several educational guidelines, especially those that emphasize the importance of professional qualification for the provision of quality education. Law No. 14,945/2024, for example, when dealing with the mandatory nature of the discipline, reinforces that the implementation of educational programs aimed at sports and physical development requires trained professionals, with adequate and continuous training. The updating of teaching knowledge becomes essential to keep up with social, cultural and technological transformations, ensuring that pedagogical practice responds to the contemporary demands of students and promotes a critical and inclusive approach to body culture.

The third axis, integration of physical education with public policies for health, inclusion and human development, has been pointed out as one of the most promising ways to expand the reach of the discipline and consolidate its social function. The Salamanca Declaration (1994), although not a national legislation, offers important foundations by recognizing the need for inclusive education, which welcomes diversity and promotes the full development of all students. In the Brazilian context, this principle is reaffirmed by the laws analyzed, which, by allowing the practice only in specific cases, reiterate that participation should be the rule, and exclusion, a justified exception. The articulation with health policies, therefore, allows physical education to contribute more effectively to the prevention of diseases, promotion of well-being and construction of healthy lifestyle habits.

Finally, it is observed that the evolution of the regulation of school physical education reflects a constant attempt to balance the individual rights of students with the collective objectives of education. The recognition of physical education as an educational right is linked to the valorization of the body as an essential dimension of human formation. Thus, ensuring the effective presence of the discipline in school curricula, with qualified teachers and articulated policies, is a task that requires commitment from the State and society. Only in this way will it be possible to consolidate a physical education

that is, in fact, a promoter of inclusion, health, citizenship and human development in the full sense.

International experiences reinforce the importance of physical education as a promoter of health, citizenship and belonging. This perspective broadens the debate on the impacts of the discipline not only on the body, but also on the mind and the learning process. Next, the relationship between physical education, mental health, and students' academic performance will be explored, based on evidence that points to their contribution to the construction of a more welcoming and effective school.

Physical education, understood in its expanded dimension, has proved to be a fertile field for the development of pedagogical strategies aimed at promoting the integral health of students. As Pedroso (2025) argues, this discipline, when planned intentionally and sensitive to the demands of the school context, can favor the creation of more humanized environments, in which subjects feel they belong and are respected in their individualities. The author points out that dialogical, participatory and cooperative pedagogical practices contribute directly to strengthening students' self-esteem, as well as to coping with issues related to anxiety, depression and social isolation in the school space.

The active presence of physical education in the school routine, according to the author, enables significant experiences that favor the emotional regulation of students. Playfulness, movement, play and collectivity, when mediated by educators committed to a critical and inclusive proposal, become powerful instruments for building bonds, respect for diversity and valuing the other. This construction favors psychic well-being and expands the conditions for the student to engage more effectively in the learning processes, with a positive impact on their academic performance.

It is in this sense that it becomes essential to discuss which pedagogical practices have the potential to expand these benefits. Next, didactic-methodological strategies will be presented that favor a school physical education committed to the emotional health of students, equity and the quality of education, based on the principles of listening, cooperation and recognition of the multiple subjectivities present in the school environment.

5 PHYSICAL EDUCATION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The articulation between body and mind is one of the central dimensions of human development and, in this sense, school physical education plays a decisive role in promoting students' mental health. Studies show that structured and intentional body practices, when inserted in a humanizing pedagogical project, favor emotional self-regulation, reduce anxiety symptoms, and strengthen self-esteem and a sense of belonging (SILVA; MARCHI JÚNIOR, 2017; PEDROSO, 2025). These dimensions are essential for students to feel welcomed in the school environment and to be able to establish affective and cognitive bonds that directly impact their academic performance.

Promoting mental health through physical education is not limited to stress relief or recreation. It is related to pedagogical processes that involve empathy, listening, respect for diversity, and valuing body expression as legitimate language. Pedroso (2025) argues that physical education classes, by promoting cooperation and dialogue, become privileged spaces for the development of socio-emotional skills, which has a positive impact on learning processes.

In addition, international experiences, such as those developed in Finland, Portugal and Australia, demonstrate that the integration between physical education and school mental health policies enhances the effects of the discipline on academic performance. In these experiences, the presence of physical activity in daily school life is linked not only to the improvement of physical health, but also to the construction of healthier, more collaborative and motivating environments for study.

6 PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES TO EXPAND THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In order for school physical education to reach its potential as a promoter of integral health, it is necessary to rethink its pedagogical practices, prioritizing approaches that respect the multiple dimensions of the subject and are in tune with the contemporary challenges of the school. As evidenced by Pedroso (2023), the effectiveness of the discipline depends on its ability to articulate technical and scientific knowledge of the body and movement with the affective, social, and cultural aspects that cross the daily lives of students.

In this context, the relationship between physical education, mental health and school performance is highlighted, evidenced by studies that point to the importance of the articulation between body and mind as a central dimension of human development. School physical education plays a decisive role in promoting students' mental health, especially when bodily practices are structured and intentional, inserted in a humanizing pedagogical project. Such practices favor emotional self-regulation, reduce anxiety symptoms, and strengthen self-esteem and a sense of belonging (Silva; Marchi Júnior, 2017; Pedroso, 2025), essential aspects for welcoming in the school environment and strengthening affective and cognitive bonds that impact academic performance.

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Thus, strategies such as valuing collaborative practices, which favor dialogue, mutual respect, and group decision-making, become fundamental. Activities such as cooperative games, conflict resolution dynamics, and body practices based on thematic projects are pointed out by Pedroso (2023) as resources capable of developing socio-emotional skills and promoting a sense of belonging. Active listening, participatory planning and flexibility of didactic proposals also strengthen the engagement and motivation of students.

Therefore, by integrating these practices into daily school life, physical education contributes not only to improving school performance, but also to strengthening emotional health and interpersonal relationships. In the following section, the analysis of how these

contributions are articulated with public policies and with the challenges of implementing a school committed to the full education of its students will be deepened.

7 PUBLIC POLICIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A PROMOTER OF SCHOOL WELL-BEING

The consolidation of physical education as a promoter of mental health, academic performance, and socio-emotional development requires the support of consistent public policies, as well as the confrontation of structural and cultural challenges present in school daily life. Although there is growing recognition of the importance of the discipline, the effectiveness of transformative pedagogical practices still comes up against factors such as the scarcity of resources, teaching overload, curricular fragmentation and the absence of continuing education aimed at the integral approach to the student.

According to Badaró (2020), the Brazilian educational context still lacks a systemic policy that values school physical education not only as a mandatory component of the curriculum, but as a strategic field for the promotion of a more inclusive and welcoming school culture. This gap is reflected in the fragility of programs to encourage pedagogical innovation and in the insufficient articulation between the areas of education, health and social development.

The National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), by recognizing physical education as an area of knowledge focused on the development of competencies and skills related to the body, movement and social interactions, offers an important milestone. However, its implementation requires that education networks and education professionals interpret this document as an opportunity to reframe pedagogical practices. This includes understanding that human movement, when worked with educational intentionality, can be a vector of cognitive, affective and relational transformations.

In addition, experiences such as the School Health Program (PSE) demonstrate the potential of intersectoriality for the promotion of integrated actions of care for students. The presence of physical educators in the planning and execution of these actions can strengthen the culture of care and listening in schools, expanding the reach of interventions aimed at the well-being of students.

Another relevant challenge concerns the initial and continuing training of physical education teachers. It is essential that undergraduate courses offer a solid foundation on the psychosocial aspects of child and youth development, on the dimensions of mental health at school and on teaching methodologies that promote meaningful and relational learning. The absence of these elements compromises the teacher's ability to build a pedagogical environment sensitive to the emotional and cognitive needs of students.

Thus, for school physical education to fully realize its formative function, it is necessary that public policies prioritize the valorization of the discipline at all levels, ensuring material, pedagogical and institutional conditions for its strengthening. This appreciation involves the active listening of teachers, the collective construction of pedagogical projects and the creation of training spaces that articulate theory and practice with a focus on the well-being of students.

School physical education, when developed from a humanizing and inclusive perspective, has the potential to strengthen the permanence of students in the school environment. According to Badaró (2020), the appreciation of corporeality and playful experiences, added to a pedagogical practice sensitive to differences, contributes to the construction of affective and identity bonds that motivate students to stay in school. This permanence, therefore, is not only physical, but symbolic: students come to recognize themselves as a legitimate part of the educational space, feeling welcomed and respected in their multiple expressions.

With regard to learning, movement, playfulness and bodily experimentation play an active role in cognitive processes. Physical education classes are not restricted to the repetition of technical gestures, but are configured as spaces for the elaboration of meanings, decision-making, conflict resolution and social interaction. Such dimensions contribute to the development of cognitive skills such as attention, memory, logical reasoning, and creative thinking, reinforcing the idea that learning with the body is also learning about the world and oneself (Alves, 2024).

Emotional health, in turn, is widely benefited when the curricular component of physical education proposes to promote the well-being and self-knowledge of students. Alves (2024) emphasizes that, in the face of contemporary challenges that affect the mental health of young people, it is urgent to rethink the function of physical education as

a space for listening, empathy, and welcoming. By providing cooperative, respectful and pleasurable bodily experiences, the teacher can favor emotional regulation, reduce anxiety and strengthen students' self-esteem. These practices are particularly relevant in school contexts marked by social vulnerabilities, where the school is often the only environment for the protection and promotion of integral health.

Therefore, articulation between physical education and quality of life is one of the structuring axes of the theme. The authors argue that the regular and qualified presence of physical education in the curriculum not only contributes to the formation of healthy habits, but also expands access to meaningful experiences that value the body as a language and as a right. In this sense, the quality of life of students is not understood only from a biomedical perspective, but in its totality, involving social relationships, emotional security, recognition and active participation in the educational process.

School permanence has been pointed out as a central concern in contemporary educational policies, especially when associated with factors such as emotional health and well-being. In the context of school physical education, it is observed that the promotion of bodily practices integrated with socio-emotional development can contribute significantly to the construction of positive bonds with the school. Valuing body language, active listening, and empathy in physical education classes provides an environment where students feel they belong and are motivated to continue their academic trajectory, even in the face of adversity.

Learning, in turn, cannot be understood dissociated from the emotional state of students. Several studies indicate that stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem negatively affect cognitive ability and school performance. Physical education, by promoting moments of relaxation, cooperation and personal overcoming, acts as an important factor of emotional balance, favoring concentration, discipline and engagement in other areas of knowledge. This positive relationship between physical activity and school performance has been explored in international experiences, as demonstrated by practices adopted in Finland and Portugal, where the integration of educational and mental health policies is a consolidated guideline.

As for emotional health, it is possible to say that physical education contributes to the strengthening of students' resilience, self-esteem and autonomy. By experiencing

motor challenges, cooperative games, and body expression activities, students develop essential socio-emotional skills to deal with frustrations, build healthy relationships, and face everyday conflicts. This subjective dimension of learning, often neglected, is fundamental for the integral formation of the student.

Finally, by articulating school permanence, learning and emotional health, school physical education proves to be a powerful ally in promoting the quality of life of students. This quality of life is not limited to the absence of diseases or good academic performance, but includes the physical, emotional, social and cultural well-being that allows the subject to flourish in all his potentialities. Thus, it is urgent that managers, teachers and other educational actors recognize the pedagogical and strategic value of physical education, ensuring adequate conditions for its full effectiveness in the school routine.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the interfaces between school physical education, mental health, learning and pedagogical innovation, in the light of contemporary demands for a more welcoming, participatory and quality-of-life promoting school. Based on the understanding that the body is an integral part of the educational process and that movement can be language, expression and construction of meaning, we sought to analyze how physical education can contribute to the integral well-being of students. The question that guided this research was: *How can school physical education contribute to the promotion of mental health, learning and school permanence, favoring the quality of life of students?*

The present reflection on school physical education evidenced its relevance beyond the biological dimension of the body, positioning it as a strategic field in the promotion of mental health, in the strengthening of learning and in the expansion of the quality of life of students. From the analysis of humanizing pedagogical practices and international experiences, it was possible to demonstrate that physical education, when thought of in an integrated way with the school's political-pedagogical project, contributes decisively to the construction of more welcoming, inclusive and belonging-promoting educational environments.

Regarding the first specific objective, understanding the role of physical education in the promotion of mental health, it can be stated that the work met him in an integral way. Throughout the study, it was demonstrated that body practices, when mediated by a humanizing pedagogical approach, contribute to the strengthening of self-esteem, emotional self-regulation and the construction of affective bonds with the school environment. This finding was based on studies that point to the importance of cooperation, empathy and recognition of corporeality as central elements of students' emotional health.

The second objective, to analyze the relationship between physical education and learning, was also widely contemplated. It was found that the active involvement of students in challenging and collaborative situations provides important stimuli for cognitive development. In addition, practices that integrate movement and reflection expand the possibilities of attention, concentration and discipline, contributing to school performance. International experiences were also discussed, such as those developed in Finland and Portugal, which show the articulation between educational and mental health policies.

Regarding the third objective, to identify innovative pedagogical strategies in physical education that favor school permanence, it was found that it was met in a significant way. The survey highlighted proposals based on active listening, valuing diversity, and recognizing youth protagonism as aspects that promote student belonging and engagement. The study also showed that physical education can be a powerful space to combat school dropout, especially when it is re-signified as an environment of care, expression and dialogue.

The introduction of this chapter proposed the understanding of physical education as a promoter of health, citizenship and belonging, indicating the need to investigate the relationships between body, mind and the learning process. In the course of the argumentation, these concerns were answered through discussions based on authors in the area and by evidence that confirms the potential of physical education to encourage school permanence, reduce symptoms of anxiety, strengthen affective and cognitive bonds, and favor academic performance.

The main contributions of this research lie in the valorization of physical education as an essential curricular component for the integral formation of students. The work reinforces the importance of breaking with a reductionist view of the discipline and recognizing its transformative potential in the school routine. Scientifically, the research contributes to broadening the debate on the integration between health, education and well-being, pointing out ways for more inclusive pedagogical practices that are connected with contemporary needs.

Socially, the findings of this investigation can support public policies aimed at combating school dropout, strengthening students' emotional health, and improving pedagogical practices in schools. In terms of future developments, it is suggested that empirical research be carried out with a quantitative and qualitative approach to evaluate the impact of physical education projects integrated with mental health promotion programs. In addition, it is recommended to develop continuing education for teachers in the area, focusing on socio-emotional skills and an interdisciplinary approach.

It is urgent that managers, teachers and educational policy makers recognize the power of physical education as an ally of emotional health, socio-emotional development and learning. Investing in continuous teacher training, in adequate infrastructure and in curricula that dialogue with the real needs of students will be fundamental for the discipline to fulfill its role in full, promoting, in fact, quality of life in the school context. Thus, school physical education is not only necessary, but strategic for the strengthening of the social function of the school and for human development in its entirety.

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