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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Knowledge of athletics modalities by elementary school students

Diogo Dias de Souza[1]

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Abstract

School physical education is essential for the development of children and adolescents, and through daily activities, they begin to develop their motor and physical skills. The knowledge of athletics modalities by elementary school students became the object of this study due to the possibility of contributing to a better physical preparation of students. Through a transversal and exploratory design, in a convenience sample consisting of 30 students, a questionnaire prepared by the author was applied. It was observed that the preferred sport was running for 60% of respondents. Results regarding the other variables analyzed suggested that, even today, there is a need for physical education teachers to place a greater emphasis on athletics and its modalities, aware of the relevant benefits that regular practice can bring to growing and developing children and adolescents.

[1] Metropolitan school of São Paulo state, Graduate student in physical education and nutrition - Ribeirão Preto - São Paulo - Brazil.

Correspondence to:
Diogo Dias de Souza
Faculdade Metropolitana do Estado de São Paulo. Av. Pres. Kennedy, 1693 - Ribeirânia, Ribeirão Preto/SP, Brazil. CEP: 14095-220. E-mail: diogodiasdesouza@hotmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

The history of track and field goes back a long way. It begins with the very history of humanity, when primitive men practiced their natural activities for survival: walking, running, jumping and throwing various objects[1]. It even gets confused with mythology, when we observe the period of Classical Antiquity, with the Olympic Games that gave rise to the current Games of the Modern Era and, which bring as their most striking cultural memory the figure of Discobolus of Myron, who represents vigor, energy and vitality[2].

In Brazil, Physical Education at school had its official beginning in 1851, with the Couto Ferraz Reform, when the bases for the reform of primary and secondary education in the Municipality of the Court were presented to the Assembly. After three years, in 1854, its regulation was issued and among the subjects to be taught were, in primary, gymnastics, and in secondary, dance[3].

Later, in 1971, Physical Education became mandatory was extended to all levels and branches of schooling, but still with the primary intention of physical training of workers[3].

Physical Education at school is essential for the development of children and adolescents, and through the activities performed daily they begin to develop their motor and physical skills. In the modern definition, athletics encompasses the group of sports that includes "running, jumping and throwing". It is called base sport, because its practice corresponds to the natural movements of the human being[4].

It is one of the activities suggested in the National Curriculum Parameters of Physical Education[5] and is currently a sport on the rise, going beyond the perspective of simply training athletes[6]. Despite this, athletics is still a sport that is often neglected in Physical Education at school. The main reason would be the lack of infrastructure in the schools[7,8].

The theme "Knowledge of Athletics Modalities by Elementary School Students" became the object of interest of this study for the possibility of contributing to a better physical preparation of students, which ultimately will facilitate a more meaningful and interactive learning.

OBJECTIVE

To describe the knowledge of elementary level students about athletics and its modalities.

METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional, descriptive and exploratory study, with a convenience sample composed of students from the 8th and 9th grades of an Elementary School, enrolled in a private school in the city of Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. All students from the aforementioned years were invited to participate in the study. The adolescents answered a questionnaire (QES) containing 10 objective, multiple-choice and self-completed questions about athletics and its various modalities. The QES was prepared by the author himself. After data collection, the information was entered into a microcomputer and the analysis was performed using the Microsoft Excel™ application. Data were presented by relative and absolute frequencies.

This research was conducted in accordance with Resolution 196/96 of the National Health Council, which deals with studies involving human beings. The informed consent form signed by the parents was provided and the students' privacy and data confidentiality were guaranteed throughout the process.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 30 students, 19 (63.5%) of which were female. We found that 28 (93.7%) of them claimed to know the meaning of "athletics".

Regarding the practice of athletics during physical education classes, 18 (60%) students denied this practice (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

Despite the limitations of the present study, the exploratory study was appropriate, since it enabled a greater familiarity and understanding on the subject, as there are still few Brazilian studies on the subject.

We found that the majority (93.7%) of the students were aware of athletics as a sport, although 60% of them stated that athletics was not included in physical education classes. Not having athletics as the content of the classes can raise several assumptions, such as problems regarding the lack of adequate material and infrastructure, teacher demotivation or a sport practice administered in a playful way without the students having the perception of what they practiced.

When asked about the instrument used in the throwing modality, we noticed that half of the sample chose the tire as the object to be thrown. In general, teenagers are very familiar with games involving throwing, as is the case of the game called "queimada" dodgeball, quite common in schools. We can also mention handball that requires a power shot or basketball that uses a precision shot. In this way, it is possible that there was an incorrect interpretation of the meaning of the word throw and, consequently, this ended up inducing the choice of an erroneous option.

Table 1. Answers to the questionnaire applied to students in the 8th and 9th grades of the elementary course of a public educational institution according to athletics modalities. Niterói. Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

Variables classified according to the answers obtained in the questionnaire	N (%)
1. Track and field modality preferred should the student be an athlete:	
Running	18 (60%)
Jumping	6 (20%)
Throwing	6 (20%)
Walking	-
2. Instrument used in the throwing competition:	
Tire	15 (50%)
Ball	14 (46.7%)
Cone	1 (3.3%)
3. Play in which running predominate:	
Touch-and-run	29 (96.7%)
Leapfrog	-
Shooting ball at the basket	1 (3.3%)
4. Play associated with the jumping:	
Hopscotch	21 (70%)
Burned fuse	5 (16.7%)
American Touch-and-run	4 (13.3%)
5. 7-meter run (*Handball*)	
Throw	25 (60%)
Jump	3 (60%)
Run	2 (60%)
6. Main physical skill in the 100m dash run:	
Speed	(56.7%)
Endurance	(40%)
Strength	(3.3%)
7. Track and field similar to volleyball and basketball *jump*:	
Jump	24 (80%)
Relay run	3 (10%)
Throw	3 (10%)
8. Cone-related modalities:	
Runs and Jumps	24 (80%)
Launches and Throws	6 (20%)

The students knew the sports and the specificities that were highlighted in the questionnaire, since they answered correctly to the other questions formulated. This knowledge can also be partly attributed to technological advances in several areas, with special emphasis on the educational field. Today, young people get real-time, up-to-date information and are able to bring the world and its recent events into the classroom. Following the Olympic games, football championships, winter games, and many others, help to learn the different rules of the games and encourage the practice of exercises.

Sport socially integrates children and adolescents, teaches teamwork, contributes to overcoming difficulties, and most importantly, improves the quality of life and forms conscientious citizens.

In conclusion, we suggest that physical education teachers emphasize a little more, in classes, athletics and its modalities, aware of the benefits that the regular practice of physical exercise can bring to children and adolescents in terms of growth and development.

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