

Chapter 9

Enriching Circus Instruction in PE Through Motor Games

Teresa Ontañón Barragán

State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Marco Antonio Coelho Bortoleto

University of Campinas, Brazil

Rodrigo Mallet Duprat

Vocational School of Arts Basileu França (EFGABF), Brazil

ABSTRACT

The educational potential of circus instruction has been calling the attention of Physical Education teachers both in recreational and school fields. Different pedagogical approaches encourage the authors to discuss the fruitful dialog between body and art education. Based on several previous studies on the topic, this chapter presents a short review on circus instruction and specifies dozens of motor games developed to enrich circus activities teaching. Thus, they organize the “circus games” in five categories: acrobatic games, juggling games, funambulist or balance games, clowning (role-play) games, and other circus games. In fact, they aim to introduce the circus instruction based in a playful and artistic perspective, trying to promote it to the Physical Education teachers under an artistic-aesthetic education environment.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of arts for education is greatly resonant among worldwide specialists. Nonetheless, the institutionalization of education and its structuring in the schools produced distances that are still relevant when teaching arts (Read, 1958; Sickler-Voig, 2020).

Over the decades, robust evidence has been established that treating the arts as part of the educational process reveals to be fundamental, even more so in a society that seeks to promote creative thinking, innovation, individual autonomy and social emancipation (Freire, 1996).

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Physical Education (PE), Dance and, more recently, Circus, engendered a fruitful dialogue, contributing to rethink the body and the expressive/artistic dimension in education (Bortoleto, 2011). Consistently, our studies show that since the 1990s (Table 1), and, more intensely, in the last 10 years, the interest of PE teachers in circus instruction, has been increasing and strengthening substantially (Ontañón, Duprat & Bortoleto, 2012; Ontañón et al, 2016). It is even more impressive when observed circus instruction at school. An exponential growth was noted at the particular case of Brazil (Xavier Junior & Moura, 2020; Conceição Junior et al, 2020; Santos Rodrigues et al, 2021).

Table 1. Number of publications between 1980-2011

Period	Publications	Source
Before 1980	1	Ontañón, Bortoleto & Duprat (2013)
1980 - 1990	14	Ontañón, Bortoleto & Duprat (2013)
1991 - 2000	74	Ontañón, Bortoleto & Duprat (2013)
2001 - 2011	167	Ontañón, Bortoleto & Duprat (2013)
2016-2020	74	Santos Rodrigues et al (2021)

Source: Adapted by the authors

The increase in the quantity and qualities in publications shows that the teaching of circus in PE at schools promotes self-knowledge and physical expression, gradually increasing the development of communication skills, imagination, cooperation, self-esteem (Kriellaars et al, 2019), artistic appreciation and, consequently, creativity (Invernó, 2003); allowing a favorable environment for the beforementioned expressiveness, and contact with arts and cultural heritage (Duprat & Pérez Gallardo, 2010). Other studies have shown that circus instruction in PE classes or in recreational activities contributes to motor development (Kriellaars et al 2019), strengthening of active student participation, and gender equality (Bortoleto et al, 2020). In this sense, a positive dialogue between PE and Performing Art seems to be urgent and possible for regular teachers (Mateu & Bortoleto, 2011; Price, 2012).

However, a pedagogical approach is required in order to teach circus and produce positive impact as mentioned before. For this reason, Ontañón (2016) and Cardani et al (2017) based in several teacher's empirical experiences, indicated some guiding principles: map other pedagogical experiences on circus instruction; diversify circus disciplines taught; structure teaching in motor games; include a historical-cultural contextualization of circus; have safety as a priority; increment circus training; reinforce the art-dimension of circus; and use digital media as a pedagogical resource.

TEACHING CIRCUS AT SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Thinking about a space for circus teaching in PE classes has been an increasingly sought-after theme in the last years of research and studies in the field of PE. The culture and symbolism that permeates Circus Art are extremely rich and, for students to understand the importance and the internal logic of these activities, they also need to know the contexts that permeate this art.

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