

## **The fights in the school: historic aspects**

**EDMUNDO DE DRUMMOND ALVES JUNIOR**

*Federal University of Rio de Janeiro State*

*Doctor of Physical Education*

---

### Summary

It has not been frequent the inclusion of the attack and defense physical activities, also called combat sports or martial arts, in physical education classes at the Brazilian schools, though they are always present in the faculties for physical education teachers, existing a great number of followers and practitioners of these activities in Brazil. As an expression of physical culture its practice has been justified in many ways: as a discipline forming the character, as an auxiliary way in the education process and forming the youth; as a way to control the aggressiveness; and also for its characteristics of personal defense. When questioned, the schoolteachers say they do not fill safe in working with the fight contents because of the wariness in promoting violence. It is possible that this be in relation with the great spread in Brazil of the “catch-as-catch-can”, a mixture of very violent fights. Considering this discussion, our objective in this investigation is the story study of the ways the modes related to the fights have been worked in the schools forming the teachers for physical education in Brazil, taking in consideration that in the year of 1939 began these courses in Brazilian Universities. Though the fights in Brazil existed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its happening inside the Brazil University, at the National School for Physical Education and Sport, is an important mark for a better understanding of the institution and its presence in Brazil’s sports history.

### Introduction

The year of 2005 is very important for the Physical Education Department of the Federal University of the Rio de Janeiro State, because in its 30th year of existence only now this department set up a pedagogic project dedicated to the initial formation of those dedicated to physical education<sup>1</sup>, which in Brazil since the year of 1939<sup>2</sup> is a course of university level<sup>3</sup>.

Along these three decades the Department gave priority to manage the sport activities available for the students from the many different classes at the university, besides acting in the continuous formation, where physical education teachers licensed by other universities are prepared to act into which have been called school physical education<sup>4</sup>.

Many were the reasons, which enforced the options adopted, and also the present one, that is only now to submit a pedagogical proposition for creation of a course for initial formation in physical education<sup>5</sup>. In this article we aim to develop a discussion regarding one of the disciplines or a group of disciplines that always have been included in the formation of physical education, the fights. We understand that its inclusion as a discipline that is part of the mix of the curriculum of the main courses for formation of teachers in Brazil should be to attend the society educational demands. We made a question on why this practice is not regularly presented to Brazilian students<sup>6</sup>. Looking at the programs set up in the last years in one of the leading Brazilian

Universities<sup>7</sup> we may understand the professional profile that was being proposed to the community.

Our proposal is that some of the answers presented in this work shall subsidize the preparation of the Fights as a discipline to be included into the formation course from the Physical Education Department.

### The fights in Brazilian society

Since the times Brazil was a colony from Portugal, we understand that the existing forms of fights like the “Capoeira” and the traditional “Uka Uka” from the Indians, though they were the main manifestations, they were not by that moment taken into consideration by the society.

The swordplay seems to be the first form of physical education in Brazil. It was performed mainly inside the military barracks and was part of the formation of the firsts physical education instructors<sup>8</sup> that also were acting at the schools. The boxing shows up in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning from the challenges or exhibitions, in the professional way, introduced into the country by sailors from abroad. For some time the social practice of the fights in Brazil were the boxing and the swordplay, after a while the judo and other activities from the far east were introduced through the strong Japanese immigration, beginning in the twenty years of the past century.

At present the Jiu jitsu<sup>9</sup> has a strong popular acceptance because of the many fighters present in the professional roman fight<sup>10</sup> tourneys. Other types of fight usually seen in the country are: Capoeira, normally not presented in a competitive form, the Karatê, and the Tai Boxing, together with sport fights considered as Olympics.

We know that there are many types of fight, and many of them are part of the curriculum from the formation centers of physical education teachers. In other countries there are other types of fight, besides the ones already mentioned, like kendô, sumô, Britain fight, savate, sambo, to be considered beginning from the importance of the aspects they have as a cultural manifestation, and the process that changed them in sports.

### The origin of the fights at the human being history and its change into sports physical activity

There are many records found in the human being history and their genesis in the urban stage, beginning in the 3000 BC years, with the images left by the Sumerian people of three fighting couples showing sundry phases of a fight, whose characteristics are considered as one of the oldest proves of fight activity, as understood today, following an elaborated system of body practice. Other indications of fight practices also were found in several cultures, through the drawings found inside the Egyptian tombs, in India and also in Crete, dated about 2000 BC<sup>11</sup>.

It seems that beginning in the Crete island the fights in the boxing style, went into Peloponnesus, beginning in 688 BC to be included in the Olympic Games. Regarding the types of fight played in the games, we see more than one way<sup>12</sup>, being the Pancrace one of them. Through the Greek soldiers the Pancrace arrives in the East, a style of fight which mix fist blows with continuous fight laid down in the soil. It was found that the basis upon which was originated the martial arts of Asia, was the mixing of some local practices in India with the Pancrase.

The fights happened in the many different cultures, whether as a physical training for the wars or as part of the ceremonies and funerals for the dead. We also may refer ourselves to the

fights in the meaning of a diversion of the human development, as a specific way of activity, like a significant form, as a social function<sup>13</sup>. The physical activities are culture phenomenon, not subject to separation from the other civilization phenomenon<sup>14</sup>, once all the body technique is fundamental cultural, therefore the importance to understand the phenomenon as a cultural expression.

The fights evolution up to the point to become a sport activity in the more elaborated way we know today, with their own ethics and their body esthetic, may be understood as part of the civilization process<sup>15</sup>. The fight as a sport activity it is considered as an evolutionary institution and as an important component of the human development. Through its variety of methods and styles, they have been appointed as an excellent physical activity, aiming between other, the whole person formation. The transformation they have passed to, from one activity which origin was almost always an instrument for attack and defense, up to a sportive physical activity with high degree of codification, followed the canons that historically were introduced to them.

The reasons why some of them became disciplines at a physical education faculty, are questions that deserve reflection, since the inclusion occurred. Our proposal is to discuss the whole mix of the fights through the main components that are present in all of them, instead of looking at them in a separated way, aiming to provide conditions for the future physical education teachers to have one more tool that help them in the process of forming students.

The fights as an institution happening in the course for formation of physical education teachers

Looking in the many programs introduced at the University of Brazil, we can see that the firsts records dated from 1941, show that the fights were included in the curriculum of the institution as a Department named Defense and Attack Sports, comprising Boxing, Jiu-jitsu, Fight and Swordplay. The objectives were as follow:

Correct execution of all personal defense blows. Capacity to provide teaching of Personal Defense, Jiu Jitsu, International Boxing, Catch-as-Catch-Can, and Basic Swordplay. Capacity to act as a referee, member of the jury or substitute in sport tournaments of Boxing, Jiu Jitsu, Catch-as-Catch-Can and Swordplay. Moderate practice of the Defense and Attack sports<sup>16</sup>.

It is possible to notice that the school is not presented as a place where the contents would be used to reach the objectives. We see that importance was given to the practice mainly when we continue to analyze the subjects listed by the Head of the discipline, Professor Alberto Latorre de Faria, which we consider as a tendency of that time. Years later, still under the responsibility of same professor, we see a new proposal for a program where is discussed which would be the most adequate name for the discipline. According the responsible, the course of Defense and Attack Sports includes the sports that provide the triple objective: hygiene, moral and utility. They represent the topping of a complete physical education, strong and well oriented.

For him the more adequate name would be Personal Defense Sports or Combat Sports instead of Defense and Attack Sports, this would be vague, confuse and imprecise. The chosen sports to be presented do not changed the previous program, being the Boxing and the Jiu Jitsu, and secondarily the Judo, for the male practitioners, and the Swordplay and Jiu Jitsu for female practitioners, and secondarily the Judo. Observing the contents to be worked with we notice the importance given to the competition rules of the matching, but there is reference regarding the

school, with focus on teaching of an instrumental physical education where the technique was fundamental

Years later the types of fight were presented in the university as independent disciplines, and after the decade of seventy are included the Capoeira and Karate, the Jiu Jitsu is no longer mentioned as a main type, but the Judo instead. The programs for these disciplines were not changed almost with any suggestions regarding the contents different from the formal activities, with no opportunity for discussion of fights in the school.

#### Looking for a proposal

Some factors indicate the difficulties for inclusion of fights in school physical education: lack of specific means like an adequate room; sportswear requirement; requirement for a more deep knowledge regarding specific techniques of some type; the myth of the black stripe and the capoeira master; the stigma of being a violent activity that could stimulate the aggressiveness, driving the violence into other environments; great diversity of models that do not look for a common point; the heterogeneity of the knowledge at the school, where many students arrive with knowledge acquired in no formal environments; diversity of interests between male and female students; the teacher concern in using an activity that would suffer criticism regarding the academic practices.

By listing the above factors it does not mean that we agree with this type of reasoning. Our aim in this work is the discussion of the relationships between the sports and physical education, proposing the inclusion into the school physical education of the fight activities as a body education.

According some authors we would be from one side between the physical aptitude paradigm, and the over-evaluation of the competition represented in the excessive graduation of the sports contents, and by the other side located into the paradigm of the pedagogic sciences.

The past of the physical education considered as preparation for the war or the emphasis in its hygiene and technique character, is a ponderous factor for not take into consideration the values of the school physical education. In addition, beginning in the years from 1960 and on, the sports became a must inside the school. The physical education changed into a school discipline almost totally absorbed by the sport, and became Sportive Physical Education.

By the exposed above we are in favor of considering the fights as a content of the school physical education, based theoretically “in a teaching practice dedicated to the process of social transformation”<sup>17</sup>. This way the Physical Education is a discipline dealing with a knowledge area named body culture comprising subjects or body activities.

Beginning, we should be conscious that the fight physical activity is neither bad nor virtuous by itself, but it changes according the context. The fight at the school or in any other place becomes what we make out of it. In general the fights are sportive activities with a present opposition, prompt, which is the action subject, there is a confrontation codified with the body of the opponent. While in the soccer the target is the ball that is outside of the opponent in the fight it is possible to have the opponent body as the target<sup>18</sup>. This way, more than to fight against the other, stimulating the students to learn through the problem’s content and the student’s curiosity.

### Using new methodological conceptions

To make possible the fights to become a physical activity to be developed in the schools we must stress the difference regarding what is normally shown in clubs and gyms (gymnasiums). In the last ones, the objectives, though humanistic as they pretend to be, receive a strong influence of the interests present in the competition practices, moving aside in some way those that would like to practice it as an entertainment activity, or yet as a health improvement. With the classes based in the repetition of the movements made by the teachers, it is difficult to believe that the physical education whether in the formal or in the informal process may be able to exercise an influence in the handling of the physical life for the adult, a physical education to be a permanent practice, being a paradox the relation autonomy/dependence that should guide school physical education.

The concern of the Physical Education professional that uses the fight as a physical activity, should not be restricted to what the student makes in the school, but what he will be doing after the school period, what will remain from the acquired habits. Regarding this the data available shows the great emptiness of the physical activities after the school period. Starting from a socio-genesis of the fights we will be in condition to discuss some subjects that a more attentive teacher should not to let out of his school physical education classes. The introduction of this activity in the school may generate the discussion of the class relations and the resistance that punctuate the birth of some fights, as is the case of the traditional fights developed in the orient countries though also of the Brazilian Capoeira. Working with the history of the fights the physical education may stress the cultural manifestation side that many times has their origin not mentioned. Going beyond the practice by the practice, the teacher that uses the fights in the school should not leave the opportunity to discuss the violence that is attributed to it and the stereotypes generated around the fight practitioners.

In this proposal which name is Fights, the Judo is considered a supporting practice, not the main objective of the discipline. We will use some of its elements that are common in many types of fights, as a basis for discussion, like the concern with dampening the falls, the projections in categories according the main lever used, the development of the fight on the floor and its coded form that suppressed the techniques that are a risk for the fighters integrity, making possible its sportive practice by youngsters and adults and by men and women.

The main elements forming the Physical Education teaching<sup>19</sup>, are present whether in physical activities as in students, teachers, school, and society. This explains why we understand the fight activity with its many systems, as one of the propositions that will attend to the society demands, and its practice will give a contribution for the global development of the person. The physical education of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should substitute the concept of man-machine by another where “happen the meeting of the biological, psychological and social aspects around one global idea and the human body regarded as an unity”<sup>20</sup>. At present in Brazil we have included a proposal for use of fights in the school physical education presented into the National Curriculum Parameters. These parameters are born from the necessity of making a national curriculum reference for the fundamental school. Between the guided lines for the Physical Education it is proposed the inclusion of the student through:

“body culture of movement, forming the citizen that will generate it, reproduce it and transform it, providing an instrument for enjoying the usufruct of the

games, sports, dances, fights and gymnastics providing the benefit of the critic exercise of citizenship and improvement of life quality”<sup>21</sup>.

The discipline should not have the purpose of making a little of each type of fight, what would be impossible and a nonsense. What we want to teach for our students is the importance of working with the models of social practices, brought up as well experimented contents or research made by the discipline students. To make this possible it is necessary no longer give emphasis to the technique, the details, the competition rules that for many years were a part of the pedagogical proposition from those responsible for the discipline. On our proposal these contents became secondary, the one from the specialist should deserve privileges in other academic areas, to those that will act with the sportive models that among other aims the performance as measured through the competitions. There the specialist should go deep into the knowledge of specific techniques, tactics and updated rules.

What we dare to propose is to look for dealing in a cultural way with the fights phenomenon, as a body culture that happen by millenniums into the human history. This way and if we will have success in our purpose, we may use the fights in the contents of our classes of school physical education, without great investments in materials and specific technical knowledge. To end this reflection we present another very interesting example in preserving the cultural traditions of the Brazilian people and its relation with the fights: little teachers know and use the uka uka<sup>22</sup>, which is a fight in use in the high Xingu river.

To implement our teaching strategies we will use a critic didactic, for which the act of being educated is not limited in attending school environments considered academic islands<sup>23</sup>. A more modern teaching concept for the Physical Education comprises that the practitioners should not be instructed as simple repeaters of gestures, copying mechanically movements or exercises that the teacher makes. The teacher should be primarily a helper, and when intermediates, he should choose educative situations that start in the students an active participation.

We should be always ready to dare, suggesting curriculums that are reflecting the fast changes of our society, however it is noticed that there is some slowness in the way the teaching institutions make their changes. It is expected that these reflections may give a contribution to overcome what was once called the old demon of one formation based only on the contents of the taught discipline.

It is expected that the fights discipline at the physical education faculty give a contribution for the completion of one physical education professional that in his pedagogical practice knows how to use carefully the pedagogical fundamentals learned in his formation, in integration with the several curriculum components made available for his use. The objective is to make the students to realize starting from the fights the importance of the physical activities as a body culture of the movements, a contribution for the formation of a whole man able to act into concrete reality of the physical education whether in the school environment as outside the school. Promoting yet the research practice with scientific fundamentals aiming to adjust its results to the pedagogical practice.

---

1 Alves Junior, Edmundo de Drummond: Apresentação, in: Ribeiro, Tomaz Leite (ed): “A formação de professores: a licenciatura em foco”: *Anais do IX Encontro Fluminense de Educação Física Escolar, Niterói 29 julho a 31 julho de 2005*. Niterói 2005, I-V, p. II.

---

2 Melo, Victor Andrade de: *Escola Nacional de Educação Física e Desportos uma Possível História*. Campinas 1996, p.12.

3 The Brazil University located in the City of Rio de Janeiro is the place where was set up the first faculty named Sports and Physical Education National School.

4 Besides this course specifically dedicated to school physical education, the Department sponsor a School Physical Education Meeting , which in this year of 2005, the Meeting, developed as a central subject the physical education initial formation.

5 According the curriculum directions newly approved this formation may happen in the courses for licensing and bachelorship, being the first to form those that will teach in the schools, and the bachelorship for those that will teach in the non formal teaching, like clubs and other associative places.

<sup>6</sup> The Physical Education in Brazil is mandatory in the fundamental and intermediate schools.

7 The present Federal University of Rio de Janeiro was named in the past Brazil University, and it was issuing the guided lines for the Brazilian university courses.

8 Melo: *Escola*, p. 21.

9 The Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is also a competitive model divulged by a family. The Gracies developed a method of their own preserving this old fight originated in Japan.

10 Named ultimate fight and other. These tourneys with a minimum of rules confront fighters of many different models. Quite violent, for many it could not be considered a sport, similar many time to a street fight where everything is allowed looking for one's give up.

11 Blanchard Kendall & Cheska Alyce: *Antropologia del deporte*, Barcelona 1986, p. 67.

12 Le Floc'hmoan, J: *La Genèse des Sports*, Paris 1962, p. 17.

13 Huizinga Johan: *Homo Ludens*, São Paulo 1980, p. 22.

14 Ullman, Jacques: *De la Gymnastique aux sports modernes*, Paris 1997, p. 432.

15 Elias, Norbert: *O Processo Civilizador, Uma História dos Costumes*, Rio de Janeiro 1990, p. 68.

16 Faria, Alberto Latorre: *Programa da cátedra, Desportes de Ataque e Defesa*, Rio de Janeiro 1941, p. 3.

17 Soares, Carmem Lúcia: *Metodologia do ensino de educação física*, São Paulo 1992, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Parlebas, P: *Activités Physiques et education motrice*, Paris 1990.

19 Hebrard, Alain: *l'Education physique et sportive*, Paris 1986.

20 Jordán, Onofre Ricardo Contreras: *Didáctica de la educacon física, un enfoque constructivista*, Barcelona 1998, p. 25

21 Brasil: *Parâmetros Curriculares, Educação Física*, Brasília 1998, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> This fight is part of the Indian yearly celebrations of Kuarup, that celebrates and pay homage to the Indians that passed away in the previous year in the many Indian tribes located in the Xingu national park.

23 Rojo, Martin Rodrigues: *Hacia una didáctica crítica*, Madrid 1997, p. 130.