

## Concerns in Physical Education today: perception of Latin American Specialist Teachers

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### Abstract

Objective: To identify the concerns expressed by physical education professionals regarding the professional field in Latin America. Methods: Quantitative, descriptive, non-experimental study with a cross-sectional design. The sampling was non-probabilistic, accidental, with a final sample of 157 informants from 15 Latin American countries. Results: the informants are all professionals trained in the disciplinary field, with 50% of them having postgraduate training; most consider themselves researchers; there are concerns about inadequate infrastructure; there are two groups, one working in schools, whose concerns focus on teaching methods, resources, and time allocated to the subject, while in the group working in the university sector, the issue of episteme seems to be more relevant, although it is not decisive either. Conclusion: The concerns of physical education professionals in Latin America depend much more on their field of work than on adherence to trends in physical education.

**Keywords:** *Physical Education, Epistemic Concern, Field Of Study, Training, Knowledge Problem.*

### Introduction

Probably never before has the identity of the field of Physical Education (hereinafter PE) been so hotly debated. Some denounce it [1], while others deny it [2]. On the one hand, there is debate regarding the subordination of PE to sport, recreation, or the fitness subculture, and on the other hand, there are those who limit the nature of PE to the biomedical field; but there are also those who advocate for the advancement of PE in favor of the so-called human motor sciences. The truth is that this discussion is quite recurrent.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in conjunction with other organizations, has proposed a model of quality PE, in terms of not only improving the practice of the profession, but also making the political, social, and community worlds responsible for the focus, coverage, and quality of PE globally [3],[4]

Thus, there appears to be a considerable epistemic mosaic that slows progress in epistemic-practical assumptions that reorient the field in order to have a greater impact on social transformation, or even on fundamental public health indicators that are as low as sedentary lifestyles, overweight, obesity, and even more worrying when combined with indicators of metabolic and cardiovascular diseases [5]; or, for example, the incidence of the progressive abandonment of physical exercise in children and adolescents; the decrease in time spent playing and socializing with family and peers. A

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recently published study specifically addresses the concerns expressed by 79 PE teachers in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil [6]. The results of this study show that the main concerns of the teachers surveyed are, first, the impact of homework on PE classes, and second, the social problems that arise in everyday school life and interfere with learning. On the other hand, there is also an association between the development of homework and public policies, and it is noteworthy that married teachers show a higher level of concern than unmarried teachers. The results of the study confirm what has already been stated, namely that the concerns of PE teachers in the area are associated with the contexts.

This work is based on the assumption that research in the field of PE reflects existing interests and concerns in the field. Under this idea, it is highlighted that scientific production associated with the field of PE is prolific and encompasses different methodologies, diversity in research topics, and disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. However, it cannot be said that this is the case because there is a guideline. As in any other field of knowledge, research efforts, interests, and concerns in the field of PE arise from the needs of the context, but they also point to a dialogical framework with trends that are taking shape over time, as is typical of the adherence of scientific communities and personal interests [7],[8]. However, we cannot ignore the complaints that have been raised on various occasions and from different contexts, warning of a certain disconnect between what is being researched and what occurs in everyday school life [9],[10], [11], [12].

That being the case, this study examines the concerns of PE professionals, their major questions about the discipline, and their concerns about where efforts in the professional field should be directed. Thus, the objective of this study is to identify the concerns that PE professionals have about the professional field in Latin America.

## **Method**

The study has a quantitative approach, with descriptive, non-experimental research and a cross-sectional design. The sampling was non-probabilistic and accidental. The population corresponds to physical education teachers in Latin America, and the sample consisted of 157 teachers representing the following 15 countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Cuba, and Panama. The inclusion criteria were: a) being a PE teacher; b) being active; c) being Latin American and working in a country in the region. The exclusion criteria were: a) working in a sector other than education; b) not signing the informed consent form.

The technique used to collect the information was a survey, with a questionnaire as the associated instrument. The questionnaire was self-administered and was designed ad hoc for the study with validation processes for such events. Validation was carried out using two techniques: content validation by experts external to the institutions in question, and, secondly, content and form review in a pilot test. External expert validation was performed using Lawshe's content validity index [13], [14], [15], considering the content validity ratio, with a result of +1 indicating the validity of the instrument's content. The questionnaire had 27 items (closed multi-choice and open-ended), considering three dimensions, namely: faculty influence, institutional influence, and predisposition.

The instrument was delivered via the Google Forms platform and shared on Facebook and LinkedIn. It was also shared through professional groups such as 'Innovación en Educación y Deporte AC' (Mexico), the 'American Network for Research in Human Movement Sciences' (RAICIMH), and universities such as: Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador (Venezuela), Universidad de Cundinamarca (Colombia), Universidad Adventista de Chile, Universidad Provincial de Córdoba (Argentina), and Universidad Peruana Unión (Peru).

## **Results and Discussion**

Firstly, it should be noted that 100% (n=157) of respondents have professional training in PE, with just over 50% having postgraduate studies. In addition, 87.9% (n=138) of those surveyed remain active, unlike the rest, who are inactive. The largest number of respondents was reported in Venezuela with 45.2% (n=71), followed by Ecuador with 11.5% (n=18), Brazil and Colombia with 8.3% (n=13) each, among other countries with lower proportions.

The highest concentration of the informants' professional performance is in university education, basic education, and secondary education, respectively (see Table 1).

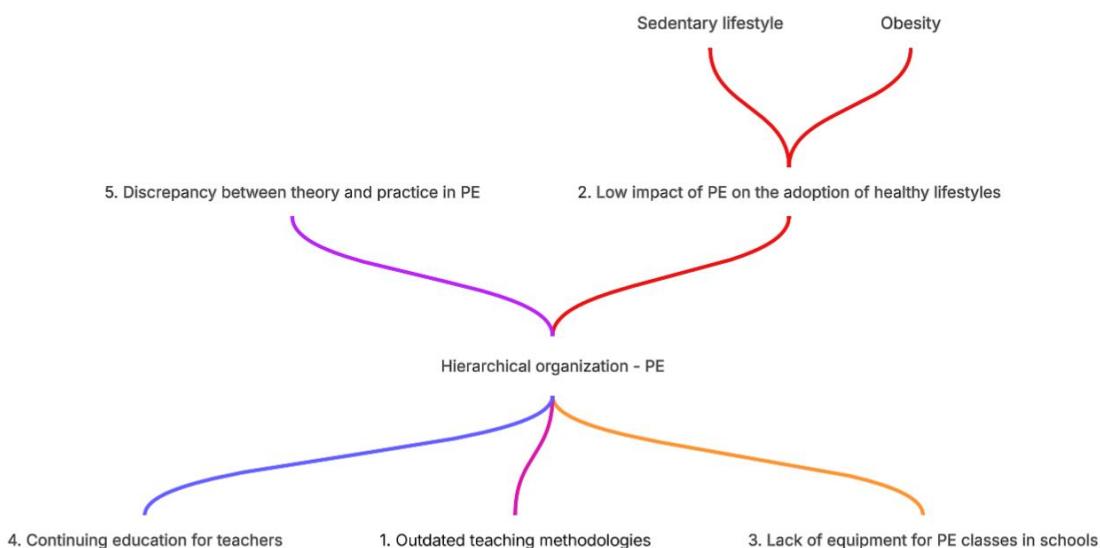
**Table 1. Professional Practice**

Leve ls	Preschool education		Basic education		Secondary education		University education (undergraduate)		University education (postgraduate)		Total s	
	FR	%	FR	%	FR	%	FR	%	FR	%	FR	%
Teac hers	5	3,2	42	26, 8	31	19,7	61	38,9	18	11,5	17	10

Source: Own elaboration (2025).

It should be noted that the proportion of university teaching and school teaching is practically the same. A total of n=138 (88.5%) respondents identified themselves as researchers, while the remainder (n=19; 11.5%) did not assume this role in their work.

When respondents were asked about the five concerns that they considered most relevant in the field of PE, the five options that received the most mentions can be seen in Figure 1 in hierarchical order:



**Figure 1. Concerns of PE Teachers.**

Source: Own work, generated with Lucidchart (2025).

Other options that received numerous mentions, without ranking among the top five, were: \*) the importance of PE; \*) the subject is no longer relevant to students; \*) lack of research in the field; \*) the sportification of PE; \*) insufficient time allocated to PE classes during the week; \*) lack of interest in PE on the part of the State; \*) low political recognition of PE; \*) low social value placed on PE professionals, among others; \*) lack of interest in adequate infrastructure; \*) uniform infrastructure that ignores cultural particularities.

When asked what questions should be asked in the field of PE, the most frequent responses were: a) what to teach? (n=74%); b) how to have a decisive impact on society? (n=57%); c) Is PE necessary today? Among other less frequent questions were: How can new technologies be integrated into PE teaching? How should PE be assessed? How can inequalities be addressed through PE? Why is it necessary to increase the frequency and number of hours of PE classes? How can inclusion in PE be promoted? Does current PE reflect social reality?

In response to the question, "Do you think the term 'physical education' accurately describes the field it refers to?", the results show that 68% of respondents answered yes, while the remaining 32% said no. Among those who believe that the term no longer reflects the field, the terminological proposals

they offer also show diversity, such as: human movement sciences, physical education, physical culture, physical activity and health, Physical Education and Comprehensive Health, among others.

Among those who consider that the term represents the field, there are responses that justify their selection, such as: "PE is fine, it is irrelevant, a pseudo-problem," "it encompasses the true interest of the field," "because it is a pedagogical process that educates the body".

Finally, when asked about the most significant challenge facing PE in their respective countries, respondents prioritized the following in hierarchical order: innovation and methodological diversification in PE teaching; physical practices from a critical perspective; reducing sedentary lifestyles and obesity rates; maintaining student interest in school; achieving consistency between theory and practice in PE; fostering a culture of physical activity among the population; establishing a Latin American approach to PE; improving facilities and equipment; increasing the number of weekly hours devoted to PE.

The study presented shows two distinct groups. One group of teachers works at the school level, and another group works at the university level (undergraduate and graduate). The responses given by teachers in the school environment point to concerns related to increased class hours, teaching improvements, and a lack of materials for PE classes, while the responses given by teachers working in the university environment point to concerns about issues such as the gap between theory and practice in PE, teacher training, the impact of PE in terms of public health, and debates about the episteme in PE. While the first group prioritizes attention to children and adolescents, given their target group, the second group focuses on issues related to research and professional training, probably for the same reason as the previous group. These results are consistent with findings obtained to date, which show progress in the debate, as reported in previous research [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. In other words, the concerns are quite broad and will be repositioned according to the teachers' field of work.

Along with the above, it should be noted that context is also a determining factor in defining the concerns that PE teachers have regarding the subject area, which is fully consistent with the results obtained in previous studies, highlighting that teachers' concerns are quite situational, at least in the school environment [6]. However, it highlights the need to generate dialogue between groups of teachers who are involved in the training of new and future teachers and those who work in schools. One of the most urgent challenges today is to recover the possibility of exploring, making mistakes, creating together with others and with the world in order to understand and develop situated teaching and learning processes [23].

## Conclusion

The concerns that exist in the field of PE are diverse and vary according to the scope or level of performance of professionals. While interest in teaching methods, time, and resources is necessary and important, the epistemic issue seems to take on a certain importance, although it is not decisive for the interests of the professional field. Therefore, concerns depend much more on the field of performance than on adherence to specific trends or currents in PE. Finally, it is worth noting that context emerges as a driver of PE teachers' concerns, which positions research as a driver for problem solving in the disciplinary area, especially since the vast majority of teachers surveyed identify themselves as researchers.

## Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Author 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Author 2					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

C : Conceptualization	I : Investigation	Vi : Visualization
M : Methodology	R : Resources	Su : Supervision
So : Software	D : Data Curation	P : Project
Va : Validation	O : Writing - Original	administration
Fo : Formal analysis	Draft	Fu : Funding
	E : Writing - Review & Editing	acquisition

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. This work did not receive funding.

### **Informed Consent**

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

### **Ethical Approval**

The study has followed national regulations, taking into account the “Guidelines for the Ethical Evaluation of Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities” [21] and Law 19.628 on the protection of privacy. In addition, the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki [22], for research involving human subjects have also been followed, and this study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Libertador Experimental Pedagogical University. Informants signed a digital informed consent form and were assured of confidentiality and the exclusive use of the information for research purposes.

### **Data Availability**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author [ADRR]. The data, which contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, are not publicly available due to certain restrictions.

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