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THE TRAINING OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS IN BRAZIL AND NEW ZEALAND: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF FOOTBALL AND RUGBY

A FORMAÇÃO DO PROFISSIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA NO BRASIL E NA NOVA ZELÂNDIA: UMA ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA SOB A INFLUÊNCIA DO FUTEBOL E DO RUGBY

LA FORMACIÓN DEL PROFESIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA EN BRASIL Y NUEVA ZELANDA: UN ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO BAJO LA INFLUENCIA DEL FÚTBOL Y EL RUGBY

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study examined the training of Physical Education professionals in Brazil and New Zealand, considering the cultural influence of the predominant sports: soccer and rugby, respectively. A documentary analysis of curricula, courses, and internship programs aimed to understand how these modalities shape technical, pedagogical, social, and ethical competencies in students. In Brazil, soccer permeates programs transversally, promoting creativity, improvisation, social inclusion, and cultural appreciation, while showing limitations in sports diversity and interdisciplinary integration. In New Zealand, rugby is incorporated institutionally, integrating theory, practice, leadership, and community values in dialogue with Mori knowledge. The comparison demonstrates that the cultural centrality of sport directly influences professional identity, academic motivation, and workforce preparation. The results highlight the importance of balancing specialization and formative diversity, providing insights for educational policies, curriculum development, and pedagogical practices in Physical Education within culturally distinct contexts.

KEYWORDS

Professional training; sports culture; academic curriculum.

RESUMO

Este estudo comparativo examinou a formação do profissional de Educação Física no Brasil e na Nova Zelândia, considerando a influência cultural dos esportes predominantes: futebol e rugby, respectivamente. A análise documental de currículos, disciplinas e programas de estágio buscou compreender como essas modalidades estruturam competências técnicas, pedagógicas, sociais e éticas nos graduandos. No Brasil, o futebol permeia os cursos de forma transversal, promovendo criatividade, improviso, inclusão social e valorização cultural, apresentando limitações quanto à diversidade esportiva e integração interdisciplinar. Na Nova Zelândia, o rugby é incorporado de maneira institucionalizada, articulando teoria, prática, liderança e valores comunitários, em diálogo com saberes Maori. A comparação evidencia que a centralidade cultural do esporte influencia identidade profissional, motivação acadêmica e preparação para o mercado de trabalho. Os resultados reforçam a importância de equilibrar especialização e diversidade formativa, oferecendo subsídios para políticas educacionais, desenvolvimento curricular e práticas pedagógicas em Educação Física em contextos culturalmente distintos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Formação profissional. Cultura esportiva. Currículo acadêmico.

RESUMEN

Este estudio comparativo examinó la formación de profesionales de Educación Física en Brasil y Nueva Zelanda, considerando la influencia cultural de los deportes predominantes: fútbol y rugby. El análisis documental de planes de estudio, asignaturas y programas de prácticas buscó comprender cómo estas modalidades estructuran competencias técnicas, pedagógicas y sociales en los estudiantes. En Brasil, el fútbol permea los programas de manera transversal, promoviendo creatividad, improvisación, inclusión social y valoración cultural, aunque presenta limitaciones en diversidad deportiva e integración interdisciplinaria. En Nueva Zelanda, el rugby se incorpora institucionalmente, integrando teoría, práctica, liderazgo y valores comunitarios, en diálogo con conocimientos Mori. La comparación evidencia que la centralidad cultural del deporte influye directamente en identidad profesional, motivación académica y preparación para el mercado laboral. Los resultados refuerzan la importancia de equilibrar especialización y diversidad formativa, ofreciendo insumos para políticas educativas, desarrollo curricular y prácticas pedagógicas en Educación Física en contextos culturalmente diversos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Formación profesional. Cultura deportiva. Currículo académico.

1 INTRODUCTION

Physical Education, as both a field of knowledge and a professional domain, is the result of a historical process shaped by social, political, cultural, and economic influences (Nunes; Lima, 2023). In Brazil and New Zealand, this trajectory presents particularities linked to the identity formation of each country and to the value attributed to specific sports disciplines. In the Brazilian context, soccer has been consolidated as a national symbol and as a catalyst for policies aimed at sports development and professional training, whereas in New Zealand, rugby has played a central role in building a collective identity and strengthening school and community physical education programs (Silva, 2016; Nelson; Jackson, 2023).

In Brazil, the first formal initiatives to establish Physical Education programs emerged in the 1930s, during the consolidation of the Estado Novo regime and its pursuit of national integration based on values such as discipline, civic responsibility, and public health. Although the initial goal was tied to training teachers for schools and to military physical preparation, the growing popularity of soccer served as a vector for the social and political legitimization of this training. Sports practice came to be understood not only as leisure, but also as a strategic tool for social cohesion and international projection (Lima; Lima; Silva, 2017).

In New Zealand, rugby has played a comparable role, albeit within a distinct cultural context. Introduced in the 19th century and rapidly incorporated into the national imagination, the sport became an expression of values such as teamwork, resilience, and community identity. This centrality influenced educational policies, particularly the mandatory inclusion of physical education in schools, and shaped a significant portion of curricula, preparing professionals capable of meeting the demands of both high-performance sports and community participation programs (Culpan; Bruce, 2007).

Academic literature notes that, in both countries, the development of Physical Education programs has been shaped by interactions between governmental interests, social movements, and pressures from the sports sector. Studies indicate that, in Brazil, the close relationship with professional soccer and with public policies on sports and leisure favored the creation of programs focused on sports training and management (Silva; Borges; Amaral, 2015). In New Zealand, the strong presence of rugby in the school system and within communities fostered an approach that combines competitive excellence and social inclusion, reflecting an educational model that prioritizes the integration of theory and practice (Slade; Martin; Watson, 2018).

Despite these advances, there remain significant gaps in the comparative literature regarding how dominant sports disciplines have shaped the genesis and evolution of Physical Education programs

in different countries. Research tends to analyze the Brazilian or New Zealand contexts in isolation, without establishing critical connections between their historical, sociocultural, and pedagogical processes (Araújo; Knijnik; Ovens, 2020). Therefore, there is a lack of analyses that contrast the two contexts, identifying convergences, divergences, and potential mutual lessons.

This study is justified by the relevance of understanding the role of culturally central sports in shaping training programs, contributing to the debate on the internationalization of teaching practices in Physical Education and to the formulation of public policies that are more sensitive to local specificities. The findings may benefit higher education institutions, educational policymakers, sports federations, and researchers interested in the intersection of culture, sport, and education.

In light of this scenario, the central question guiding this research is: In what ways have soccer in Brazil and rugby in New Zealand influenced the creation, development, and consolidation of Physical Education programs in their respective contexts? This question seeks to articulate historical, pedagogical, and sociopolitical dimensions, allowing for a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

The general objective of this study is to comparatively analyze the historical and sociocultural processes that have shaped the formation and evolution of Physical Education programs in Brazil and New Zealand, highlighting the role of soccer and rugby as structuring elements. The specific objectives are to: identify relevant historical milestones in each country; examine the influence of dominant sports disciplines on educational policies and curricula; and discuss the implications of these influences for contemporary professional practice.

This research is delimited to the period from the formal creation of the first Physical Education programs in each country to the present day, considering both the academic sphere and the social and political impact of these programs. The focus is on institutions and public policies of greater national representativeness, without excluding the analysis of community and cultural influences, in order to offer a comprehensive yet methodologically precise view of the subject under investigation.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative, comparative, and exploratory approach, aimed at analyzing the training of Physical Education professionals in Brazil and New Zealand. The focus was on the cultural influence of dominant sports – soccer in the Brazilian context and rugby in the New Zealand context – on curriculum design and on the historical development of these programs. The choice of this approach is justified by the need to interpret processes and content through multiple documentary and bibliographic sources, enabling an understanding of the historical, pedagogical, and sociocultural dimensions involved.

The comparative nature of the research was essential to identify both convergences and specificities of the two training systems, considering aspects such as curricular objectives, teaching methodologies, inclusion of specific sports-related content, and the integration of theory and practice. The analysis sought not only to describe the existing structures but also to understand how they reflect the cultural values and educational policies of each country.

For the selection of the institutions analyzed, the criteria adopted included academic relevance, tradition in the field of Physical Education, and the public availability of complete curricular information. In Brazil, priority was given to public and private universities recognized for their role in training both licentiate and bachelor graduates, with documentation accessible through institutional websites or official educational portals.

In New Zealand, the selection comprised higher education institutions offering undergraduate programs in Physical Education, Sport Sciences, or related fields, with emphasis on those incorporating rugby into required or elective courses, or maintaining sports development programs linked to this discipline. The selection aimed to include institutions with national reach, ensuring representativeness and diversity of approaches.

The documentary sources encompassed program syllabi, course outlines, teaching plans, internal regulations, institutional reports, internship manuals, and academic promotional materials. Variables examined included total workload and workload per curricular component, distribution between theoretical and practical courses, explicit mention of team sports, and integration between academic activities and formal sports contexts.

The literature review included books, scholarly articles, and governmental publications addressing the history of Physical Education, the sociocultural role of soccer and rugby, and public policies related to professional training. The databases consulted included national and international academic journals, as well as institutional repositories and documents from regulatory bodies.

Content analysis was employed as the primary technique for interpreting the information, using a thematic approach that allowed the categorization of data into axes such as the history of professional training, the influence of the dominant sport, and curricular and pedagogical strategies (Góis Júnior *et al.*, 2020). This process enabled the identification of recurring patterns and unique features in the material analyzed.

For the comparative stage, information extracted from Brazilian and New Zealand documents was organized into synoptic tables, facilitating the visualization of similarities and differences (Souza; Santos, 2020). This procedure made it possible to systematically assess the presence and relevance of content related to soccer and rugby, as well as its connection to professional training and national identity in each country.

The research was conducted in compliance with the principles of academic integrity and responsible use of sources, ensuring proper citation of all materials consulted. There was no interaction with human participants or collection of primary data, characterizing the study as a documentary and bibliographic investigation in accordance with the guidelines for this type of research.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Soccer in Brazil transcends the realm of mere sports practice, functioning as a structuring element in curricular organization and formative experiences within Physical Education. Documentary

analysis highlights its presence in both required and elective courses, serving as an integrating axis between theoretical and practical content. This centrality extends beyond the pedagogical dimension, assuming a significant cultural role: soccer is embedded in the Brazilian social imagination, reinforcing national identity, community belonging, and student engagement from the earliest years of training (Lima; Moraes; Lima, 2024; Lima; Piovani; Lima, 2018).

In the Brazilian training context, the sport is employed as a tool for developing cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional competencies. Courses focused on teaching methodology, performance assessment, and lesson planning use soccer to enhance motor coordination, decision-making, tactical reasoning, and teamwork. Furthermore, community outreach projects and internships in sports clubs allow these competencies to be applied in real-world settings, demonstrating the articulation between academic theory and socially relevant sports practice (Souza; Oliveira; Marques, 2023).

The cultural dimension of soccer also fosters the ethical and social development of future Physical Education professionals. Practical activities go beyond technical training, promoting solidarity, cooperation, respect, discipline, creativity, and improvisation – traits that reflect the historically valued playing style in the country. This approach shapes professionals who understand Physical Education as both a social and pedagogical practice, rather than exclusively a sporting one (Uehara *et al.*, 2018; Ribas, 2013).

In New Zealand, rugby is systematically structured as a formative axis, integrating technique, theory, and the student's holistic development. Curricula encompass sport fundamentals, game strategies, physical preparation, injury prevention, performance analysis, and leadership, aligning with national sports and education policies (New Zealand, 2017; Culpan; Bruce, 2007).

New Zealand rugby incorporates cultural and community dimensions, promoting inclusion and respect for diversity. Academic programs engage with traditional Mori knowledge, integrating spirituality, collective work, and community values into professional training. This approach highlights the sport's capacity to connect cultural identity with technical competence, shaping professionals who combine athletic excellence with social responsibility (Smith; Smith, 2024; Bennett; Fyall, 2018).

Comparing the two contexts reveals distinct approaches regarding the centrality of the dominant sport in training. While Brazilian soccer is primarily driven by cultural and social forces, New Zealand rugby is reinforced through public policies, institutional coordination, and planned curricular integration. This difference shapes academic organization and influences students' perception of their professional role and engagement in sports practice (Justen; O'Connor, 2015; Hill *et al.*, 2018).

Comparative studies of curricula from public universities in Minas Gerais indicate that soccer instruction accounts for between 0.93% and 2.56% of the total workload in Physical Education programs (Procópio; Procópio, 2016). In New Zealand, although there is no exclusive rugby course, the sport is integrated into the curriculum, allowing a comprehensive understanding of technical, pedagogical, and sociocultural aspects (Pope, 2014; New Zealand, 2017). This difference reflects a more continuous articulation between theory and practice in New Zealand, and greater flexibility – but lower standardization – in Brazil.

The competencies developed reflect distinct conceptions of professionalism. Brazilian soccer emphasizes creativity, improvisation, and adaptability, preparing professionals capable of operating in varied and culturally diverse contexts (Uehara *et al.*, 2018; Souza; Oliveira; Marques, 2023). New Zealand rugby prio-

ritizes discipline, leadership, structured cooperation, and resilience, producing professionals with skills applicable in school and community environments (Bennett; Fyall, 2018; Culpan; Bruce, 2007).

The centrality of the sport influences academic trajectories and professional choices. In Brazil, soccer directs the selection of internships, research projects, and final course assignments, favoring technical and pedagogical specialization but limiting exposure to other sports. In New Zealand, although rugby remains central, curricula incorporate greater sports diversity, fostering multi-sport training and enabling engagement in schools, clubs, community programs, and high-performance initiatives (Ovens, 2010; Smith; Philpot, 2011).

Interdisciplinarity and the integration of scientific knowledge are more systematic in New Zealand. Courses in exercise physiology, biomechanics, sports psychology, high-performance training, and injury prevention are coordinated with rugby practice from the first semesters (Philpot *et al.*, 2021; Justen; O'Connor, 2015). In Brazil, this integration occurs more fragmentarily; theoretical and practical courses do not always interact, and content from related fields, such as nutrition and psychology, is applied mainly within the dominant sport (Almeida, 2020; Lima; Lima; Silva, 2017).

An intense focus on a culturally dominant sport presents both pedagogical advantages and challenges. Specialization strengthens technical expertise and consolidates professional identity, but the lack of diversity can limit motor repertoire, innovation capacity, and adaptability. In Brazil, students focused on soccer may face difficulties in emerging sports or with populations that do not share the same sports culture, whereas in New Zealand, curricular integration across multiple sports and cultural values allows for greater flexibility (Culpan; Bruce, 2007; New Zealand, 2007).

Cultural context determines the construction of professional identity and the internalization of ethical and social values. Brazilian soccer fosters a sense of belonging, inclusion, and creativity, reinforcing connections with local communities. New Zealand rugby emphasizes ethics, leadership, discipline, and community cohesion, reflecting public sports policies and national identity (Smith; Smith, 2024; Bennett; Fyall, 2018).

The dominant sport also serves as a tool for internationalization and professional mobility. Brazilian students apply competencies in soccer in global contexts, while professionals trained in rugby in New Zealand find opportunities in schools, clubs, and international sports development programs (Smith; Smith, 2024).

The New Zealand model demonstrates standardization, institutional integration, and alignment with public policies. Coordination among universities, sports federations, and community programs creates continuity between academic instruction and social practice, promoting consistency and predictability in training. In Brazil, despite the cultural richness of soccer, standardization is limited, and reliance on extracurricular practices and clubs contributes to significant disparities between institutions (Lima; Moraes; Lima, 2024; Procópio; Procópio, 2016).

The centrality of the sport influences ethical and social practices both inside and outside the classroom. Rugby in New Zealand systematically integrates community and cultural values (Philpot *et al.*, 2021), whereas Brazilian soccer promotes socialization but lacks integration with Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous heritages. This gap highlights an opportunity to expand the ethical and cultural dimension of professional training, reinforcing critical competencies and intercultural sensitivity.

Student engagement is driven by the cultural relevance of the sport, impacting motivation and academic performance. Familiarity with and social valorization of soccer and rugby enhance identification, participation, and involvement, fostering the internalization of pedagogical, ethical, and technical competencies (Ribas, 2013; Souza; Oliveira; Marques, 2023).

Balancing specialized training and curricular diversity is essential for forming adaptable and well-rounded professionals. Specialization strengthens technical and cultural skills, while exposure to multiple sports promotes the development of transversal competencies, innovation capacity, and the ability to meet varied educational and sports-related demands (Almeida, 2020; Uehara *et al.*, 2018).

The dominant sport functions as a mediator of social, cultural, and identity values. In Brazil, soccer promotes citizenship and social inclusion; in New Zealand, rugby consolidates leadership, ethics, and community cohesion (Lima; Moraes; Lima, 2024; Smith; Smith, 2024).

Contemporary literature emphasizes the need for alignment between curriculum and sports culture to develop well-rounded professionals. Recent studies indicate that integrating culturally significant sports strengthens professional identity, engagement, socio-emotional development, ethics, and leadership (Hill *et al.*, 2018; Justen; O'Connor, 2015).

Brazil and New Zealand demonstrate distinct paths for integrating sport and professional training, yet converge in valuing sport as a pedagogical and cultural core. In Brazil, emphasis is placed on the social and cultural dimension of soccer; in New Zealand, rugby is institutionally and strategically structured. These models provide complementary lessons on how Physical Education can articulate practice, theory, cultural identity, and the development of professional and social competencies (New Zealand, 2017).

4 CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the training of Physical Education professionals in Brazil and New Zealand is strongly mediated by the culturally predominant sports, soccer and rugby, respectively. Documentary analysis showed that, although both countries integrate team sports into their curricula, the manner of incorporation differs substantially: in Brazil, soccer permeates theoretical and practical activities, often in a fragmented way and driven by cultural tradition; in New Zealand, rugby is incorporated in a standardized, institutionalized, and strategically coordinated manner with public policies, academic courses, and community programs. This distinction directly impacts curriculum organization, the development of technical, pedagogical, social, and ethical competencies, and the construction of professional identity among students.

The study also highlighted opportunities and challenges associated with the centrality of a single sport in academic training. In Brazil, the strong presence of soccer fosters student engagement, internalization of social and cultural values, and technical specialization, but it may limit formative diversity and exposure to other sports disciplines. In New Zealand, the institutionalized rugby model promotes continuous integration of theory and practice, leadership development, discipline, and social cohesion, while also offering greater sports versatility. These findings reinforce that sports

education should balance specific depth and broad formative exposure, ensuring that professionals are technically competent, culturally sensitive, and socially responsible.

The study's results indicate relevant implications for educational policies, pedagogical practices, and future research. Valuing culturally significant sports as a formative axis demonstrates the potential of Physical Education to promote professional identity, student engagement, citizenship, and social inclusion. It is recommended that Brazilian institutions consider strategies for curricular standardization and interdisciplinary integration, while preserving the cultural richness of soccer. In New Zealand, there is potential to further strengthen sports diversity and incorporate local cultural knowledge. Future research could explore longitudinal impacts, evaluating how these differences influence professional insertion, sports performance, and social development of graduates in both national and international contexts.

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