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The teaching work of physical education teachers in the context of educational reforms: a research overview

**ARTICLE** 

Mirela Moreira da Silva Montei

Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, Recife, PE, Brasil

Cibele Maria Lima Rodrigues<sup>ii</sup>

Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Recife, PE, Brasil

Rachel Costa de Azevedo Mello iii 🕩

Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, Recife, PE. Brasil

#### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the teaching work of physical education teachers, in the face of educational reforms in secondary education. To this end, the state of knowledge on the subject in the following digital databases was used as a research method: Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) and the Capes periodical portal. Research between dissertations and articles was analyzed. It was found in the analysis that educational reforms lead to changes in the routine of physical education teachers, requiring new organizations of teaching work, and most of the implementations of these reforms are not discussed with teachers and the school community.

Keywords: Physical Education. Teaching Work. Educational Reform. High School.

#### O trabalho docente do professor de educação física diante das reformas educacionais: estado do conhecimento

#### Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar o trabalho docente dos professores de Educação Física, diante das reformas educacionais no Ensino Médio. Para tal, utilizou-se como método de pesquisa o estado do conhecimento sobre a temática nas seguintes bases digitais: Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) e o Portal de Periódicos da Capes. Foram analisadas pesquisas entre dissertações e artigos. Constatou-se na análise que as reformas educacionais acarretam mudanças na rotina do professor de Educação Física, sendo necessárias novas organizações do trabalho docente, e, em sua maioria, as implementações dessas reformas não são dialogadas com os professores e a comunidade escolar.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física. Trabalho Docente. Reformas Educacionais. Ensino Médio.

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#### 1 Introduction

When researching teaching work in Physical Education in Secondary Education, we understand that there are still few studies on this topic. However, over the years, this line of research has been expanding, demonstrating the growing interest of researchers in the relationship between Physical Education, teaching work, and educational policies, especially in the context of Secondary Education reforms, marked by constant changes in this segment of basic education.

The objective of this article is to investigate the impacts of secondary education reforms on the work of school physical education teachers<sup>1</sup>. As a methodological approach, a survey of research on the topic will be conducted in the *Brazilian Digital Library of Theses* and *Dissertations* (BDTD – *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações*) and the *Capes Journals Portal* (*Portal Periódicos Capes*),.

Brazilian secondary education, formerly known as high school, has undergone constant changes as a result of recent educational reforms, creating uncertainty about the direction of teaching for the entire school community, especially among teachers and students. According to Tardif (2012, p.120), teachers' work consists of "[...] creating conditions that enable students to learn [...]," but educational reforms have had a direct impact on teachers' work, as they are assigned new ways of organizing and structuring their activities. According to Stephen Ball and colleagues, "the role and work of schools and teachers have been increasingly prescribed by the central government" (Marcondes *et al.*, 2016, p.22). In this sense, recent educational reforms in secondary education, influenced by business interests, have transformed schools into spaces at the service of the labor market.

According to Laval (2019), social, cultural, political, and economic trends are changing the school system, and this is directly impacting the work of physical education

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teachers, whose subject, although mandatory under the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) 9.394/96, has been devalued, as its space in the curriculum has been reduced with the impact of the recent reform of secondary education, through Law No. 13,415/17, revoked in 2024.

Law No. 13,415/2017, which introduced the High School Reform, restructured secondary education on a national level, alongside the approval of a curricular policy—the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC – Base Nacional Comum Curricular)—to complement the broader educational agenda. Prior to the enactment of Law No. 13,415/2017, Provisional Measure No. 746/2016 was published, proposing the removal of Physical Education from the curriculum. This proposal prompted mobilization and pressure from the school community. As a result, Physical Education remained in the curriculum but lost its status as a mandatory subject, becoming categorized as "studies and practices" with a reduced number of instructional hours. This change placed the subject at risk of being excluded from the high school curriculum altogether.

This measure weakened both the curricular component and the teaching profession. Teachers began to deliver content under a drastically reduced workload and were often required to supplement their teaching hours through elective learning tracks (*itinerários formativos*). These tracks, frequently based on random themes, tend to offer syllabi that are often disconnected from the teachers' specialized training. The restructuring of teaching work imposed by the High School Reform—known as the "New High School"—undermined the teaching profession, contributing to the dismantling of both the curricular subject and teacher identity. The reduction in instructional hours, combined with the need to serve a larger number of classes, led to professional overload and compromised the quality of education, directly affecting students' holistic learning.

In response to criticism and mobilization from civil society, the Federal Government launched a public consultation in 2023 to evaluate Law No. 13,415/2017, with broad participation from the school community. This process led to the drafting of a new bill, PL No. 5,230/2023, which was soon converted into Law No. 14,945/2024, sanctioned on July 31, 2024. This new legislation established revised guidelines for basic education at the

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secondary level. Aiming to respond to the demands of society and the school community, the law stipulates its gradual implementation by states and municipalities by 2026, with changes scheduled to take effect during the 2025 academic year.

The changes established by Law No. 14,945/2024 are limited in light of the many demands raised by the school community. Nevertheless, they represent a significant step forward for Physical Education, which, under the new legislation, has had its status as a curricular component formally recognized and guaranteed within the high school curriculum. However, the curriculum still bears a corporate-oriented framework, grounded in broad-based competencies at the expense of school-based knowledge. As Laval (2019, p. 37) notes, "the standardization of objectives and controls, decentralization, the mutation of 'educational management,' and teacher training are all reforms that are 'productivity-centred.'"

In this context, we will examine the existing academic literature that explores the relationship between these themes, focusing on how educational reforms have been shown to impact the teaching work of Physical Education teachers in high school.

#### 2 Methodology

To this end, we conducted a state-of-the-art review by consulting the databases of the *Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations* (BDTD – *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações*) and the *Capes Journals Portal (Portal Periódicos Capes*), using the descriptors "Physical Education," "teaching work," and "High School." The results obtained are presented in Box 1 below:

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Box 1 - Databases consulted and results

Databases consulted	Filters and results	Total number of surveys analyzed
Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD)	Period: 2014 to 2025 Results: 27 works Related to the topic: 4	4
Capes Journal Portal	Period: 2017 to 2025 Results:11 works Related to the topic: 5	5

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

The search yielded a total of 38 works, including theses, dissertations, and articles. After a preliminary analysis of the abstracts, studies that were directly related to the research theme were selected, resulting in a total of 11 studies, comprising dissertations and journal articles. These studies are listed in the tables below: the research retrieved from the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations is presented in Table 2, and the studies found in the Capes Journals Portal are shown in Table 3.

Box 2 - BDTD - Theses

TITLE	AUTHOR	TYPE	YEAR
The teaching work of physical education teachers during the implementation of polytechnic secondary education: a study in secondary schools in the state education network of Rio Grande do Sul	Maicon Felipe Pereira Pontes	Thesis	2015
Physical Education in the context of Full-Time Secondary Education at Temístocles de Araújo State School	Derick Herculano Paranhos de Carvalho	Thesis	2016
Teaching performance of physical education teachers in public high schools in Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul	Adriana Flávia Neu	Thesis	2018

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New secondary education or renewal of the conditions for maintaining the old educational duality?

Alex Kossak

Thesis 2020

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

These studies, selected from the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), were analyzed in depth and consist entirely of master's dissertations. The articles, in turn, were selected from the Capes Journals Portal and cover a more recent time frame. Although not all of them focused specifically on the High School Reform (Law No. 13,415/2017), most address educational reforms that have impacted the teaching work in Physical Education. The list of analyzed articles is presented in the table below:

**Box 3 - Capes Journal - Articles** 

TITLE	AUTHOR	TYPE	YEAR
Teaching Physical Education in polytechnic secondary schools: analysis of the micropolitical context	Jônatas da Costa Brasil de Borba; Maicon Felipe Pereira Pontes; Elisandro Schultz Wittizorecki	Article	2017
The state of the art on secondary education reform and its implications for school physical education	Natália Maria Duarte Mendes; Alisson Slider do Nascimento de Paula	Article	2024
The reform of secondary education in the state of Bahia and the teaching of physical education: the context of the text's production	Luanda Nogueira Souza; Benedito Eugenio; Sandra Márcia Campos Pereira	Article	2022
Teachers' perceptions and reactions to educational policies: a study with physical education teachers	Andre Osvaldo Furtado; Elisandro Schultz Wittizorecki; Natacha da Silva Tavares	Article	2020
Report on experience in the New Secondary Education System	Dilma Carmina da Silva Souza	Article	2024

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

The following sections analyze the selected studies on how Physical Education teachers have dealt with high school educational reforms and the implications of these reforms for their teaching practices. The objective is to synthesize the main reflections and

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understandings presented in these studies regarding the reconfiguration of teaching work in the field of Physical Education, as well as to provide a mapping of the current state of the debate.

#### 3 Results and Discussion

The dissertation by Pontes et al. (2012), titled The Teaching Work of Physical Education Teachers During the Implementation of Polytechnic High School Education: A Study in High Schools of the State Public System of Rio Grande do Sul, adopts a qualitative approach and aimed to understand how high school Physical Education teachers in Rio Grande do Sul have reconstructed their teaching work following the implementation of a polytechnic education policy. The research analyzed the context of secondary education in the state and the professional practice of these teachers. To this end, it was also necessary to investigate how teachers perceive educational reforms and whether they receive any training in light of the implemented changes.

An ethnographic study was conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the role of Physical Education teachers in the face of the reform. The research was carried out in two state high schools in the city of Porto Alegre. One of them, located in the southern region of the city, lacked proper school facilities and material resources necessary for teaching the subject. The other, located in the central area, was a large institution with eight Physical Education teachers on staff and adequate infrastructure and materials that allowed for better objective teaching conditions.

Among the four teachers who participated in the study, only one effectively planned his lessons, although the content was limited to health promotion, disregarding other important aspects of Physical Education. Two teachers reported not planning their lessons at all, and could be characterized as "roll-the-ball teachers." According to them, the reform discouraged lesson planning due to the frequent changes in the school timetable. Another demotivating factor mentioned was the lack of infrastructure and appropriate pedagogical materials to support the development of Physical Education content. In addition, the teachers did not feel supported in expressing how the reform affected their teaching work,

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as there were neither spaces for dialogue nor training initiatives to facilitate the transition. In this way, the polytechnic high school reform in Rio Grande do Sul significantly impacted teaching practices, leaving teachers confused and directionless, with no dialogue or professional development to support them.

Pontes et al. (2012) concluded that greater investment in education is necessary, including improvements to the physical and material conditions of schools and better working conditions for teachers. They also emphasized the need for improved teacher remuneration so that educators may be more valued and are not forced to work in multiple institutions to ensure financial stability.

The dissertation by Carvalho (2016), titled *The Subject of Physical Education in the Context of Full-Time High School at Temístocles de Araújo State School*, aimed to analyze the curriculum and the pedagogical organization of Physical Education within a full-time public high school (Escola Estadual de Ensino Fundamental e Médio – E.E.E.F.M) in the state of Pará. The reality observed was not substantially different. According to Carvalho (2016), the implementation of full-time education in Pará faced significant challenges in the area of Physical Education. The findings show that the lack of preparedness of schools—both in terms of infrastructure and teacher training—resulted in a limited range of specific activities and content related to the Physical Education curriculum component. This scenario hindered teachers' work and contributed to students' disinterest in the subject.

In the same vein, the dissertation by Neu (2018), titled *Teaching Practices of Physical Education Teachers in Public High Schools in Santa Maria/RS*, sought to characterize the professional practice of Physical Education teachers at the high school level. The study reveals that the teaching of the subject has been negatively affected in this educational segment, as the majority of teachers rely on other jobs to supplement their income and secure financial stability. This, in turn, compromises the time available for pedagogical planning. Moreover, the ongoing reforms in basic education have demotivated teachers, whose practices have been increasingly shaped by the need for constant adaptation to new guidelines.

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Faced with time constraints and difficulties in planning, many teachers began to simply replicate what was outlined in the school's Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP – Projeto Político-Pedagógico) and in state guiding documents. This resulted in limited and repetitive practices, with little creativity and an excessive focus on sports. Such an approach led to student dissatisfaction, as many expressed interest in a more diverse range of content beyond traditional sports.

In this regard, Kossak (2020), in a study aimed at explaining the relationship between the concept of high school education promoted by the "Educational Solution" partnership—established between the Ayrton Senna Institute and the State Department of Education of Rio de Janeiro—and the High School Reform introduced by Law No. 13,415/2017, highlights important elements for the discussion on teaching work. According to the findings, the drafting of guiding documents for Brazilian education, which affect teachers' work in general—and, more specifically, that of Physical Education teachers, who have long fought to demonstrate their contribution to the holistic education of Brazilian youth—has been heavily influenced by the involvement of private capital in the formulation and management of public education, particularly in matters related to the curriculum.

Following the analysis of the dissertations, we now turn to the examination of journal articles retrieved from the Capes Journals Portal, which address the work of Physical Education teachers in high school in the context of educational reforms.

Throughout the history of education in Brazil, Physical Education has undergone several transformations before being officially recognized as a mandatory curricular subject. With evolving perspectives, it has contributed to the development of critical and reflective citizens, aware of their rights and duties, by engaging with bodily culture in its multiple dimensions. However, even today, we still encounter teachers who maintain outdated practices and conceptions. Additionally, there remains a lack of research on Physical Education in high school, which may reflect broader questions about the social role and relevance of the discipline within this educational segment. Educational reforms continue to raise uncertainties and concerns among Physical Education teachers, as the reforms have led to a reduction in disciplinary content. Nevertheless, there remains a strong

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resistance among teachers to preserve Physical Education as part of the high school curriculum.

In the study titled *The State of the Question on the High School Reform and Its Implications for School-Based Physical Education*, Mendes and de Paula (2024) sought to analyze the current academic landscape regarding the impacts of the High School Reform on Physical Education. The authors argue that Law No. 13,415/2017 led to a deficit in the holistic human development of Brazilian youth. This is because subjects that lost both their curricular specificity and instructional time—such as Physical Education—are essential for students' critical development, one of the key competencies required for access to higher education.

Borba, Pontes, and Wittizorecki (2017), using Ball and colleagues' policy cycle as an analytical framework to examine the high school educational reform in the city of Camaquã, Rio Grande do Sul, concluded that projects designed at the macropolitical level often face resistance and undergo significant alterations when implemented at the micropolitical level. This dynamic has resulted in teacher dissatisfaction, as their routines are disrupted and professional relationships weakened due to the implementation of the new policies.

Similarly, Souza, Eugenio, and Pereira (2022), also employing Ball et al.'s policy cycle framework, analyzed the production context of the High School Reform in the state of Bahia. The authors found that managerialism and performativity—key mechanisms of neoliberalism—were already present in the educational agenda promoted by the governor of Bahia, a trend also observed by Kossak (2020) in the case of Rio de Janeiro. Even before the enactment of Law No. 13,415/2017, the governor had launched the "Educate to Transform" program, which emphasized performance and measurable outcomes.

With the implementation of the reform, these management technologies were further intensified. Teachers lost their professional autonomy and were required to adapt their planning strictly to official documents, such as the state curriculum of Bahia. They were denied the opportunity to question or contribute their perspectives, being expected merely to comply with imposed directives. This reveals a fundamental contradiction within

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the official documents themselves, which, despite advocating for a holistic and critical education, ultimately deprived the entire school community of the very critical capacity they claimed to promote.

The Curricular Reference Document of Bahia (DCRB – Documento Curricular Referencial da Bahia) adopted competencies and skills as the organizing principles of the curriculum, although it explicitly states a position contrary to neoliberal principles. As Ball points out, contradictions within educational policy texts are common and generate doubt and uncertainty. Souza, Eugênio, and Pereira (2022) found that, despite the document advocating a critical conception of Physical Education—recognizing bodily culture as essential knowledge for students—the presentation of content within this curricular component shows inconsistencies. For example, some pedagogical proposals in Physical Education neither engage with nor recognize bodily culture as a core object of study, highlighting disagreements among different approaches within the field.

Given these findings, the authors concluded that educational policy in the state of Bahia has been strongly influenced by business interests, reformulating education in a way that increasingly empties it of knowledge fundamental to holistic human development. Teaching work in Physical Education has undergone numerous changes due to the reform, resulting in loss of autonomy, increased accountability, and intensified workload. The reduction in instructional hours allocated to this curricular component—often reassigned to other subjects that, in many cases, have no relation to the field—has directly impacted the education of Brazilian youth.

Furtado, Wittizorecki, and Tavares (2020) also utilized Ball and colleagues' theoretical framework to analyze educational policies in Rio Grande do Sul, concluding that Physical Education teachers were devalued under these educational proposals. Lack of resources, salary instability, and work overload hinder the implementation of new guidelines, revealing a gap between policy discourse and practice. This situation supports Ball's analysis of the contradictions present in the texts and discourses of educational policies.

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The educational reform established by Law No. 13,415/2017 promoted the reduction of the general basic education component and a gradual increase in the workload of elective learning tracks, depriving students of historically constructed knowledge. These changes affected the development of critical thinking and the holistic human formation of Brazilian youth. Consequently, students are excluded from access to higher education, while teachers lose their professional identity.

Therefore, Souza (2024), in a reflective account aimed at analyzing the impacts of the New High School reform on the identity of Physical Education teachers based on her professional experience in the state public school system of Rio de Janeiro, concludes that the reform goes beyond mere educational alterations. It projects a new profile of high school students prepared for labor market flexibility, as well as a new profile of teaching work.

This transformation, by devaluing the teaching profession, generated feelings of powerlessness, insecurity, and loss of autonomy among teachers. Resistance to deprofessionalization and the defense of professional identity have thus been essential, since teacher identity "[...] is not something given, but a historical and cultural construction that passes from one individual to another within a community [...]" (Oliveira, 2023, p. 10).

The analyzed studies show that the High School reforms alter teachers' planning routines, requiring new organizations of teaching work, and that, in most cases, these reforms are implemented without dialogue with teachers and the school community. Furthermore, these educational reforms negatively impact the work of teachers, especially Physical Education teachers, who throughout the history of Brazilian education have continually sought to affirm the importance of Physical Education in the high school curriculum and integral education.

The transition to the new High School policy, established by Law No. 14,945/2024, resulted in the issuance of Opinion CNE/CEB No. 4, dated November 7, 2024, and the publication of Resolution CNE/CEB No. 2, dated November 13, 2024, which institute the new National Curricular Guidelines for High School (DCNEM – Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para o Ensino Médio). This resolution, published in December 2024, foresees

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the implementation of the changes starting in 2025 for education systems that have formulated transition schedules from the previous policy, governed by Law No. 13,415/2017 (repealed), to the new High School policy established by Law No. 14,945/2024.

There is an increase in instructional hours dedicated to general basic education and a reduction in elective learning tracks. Physical Education is once again recognized as a curricular component, with a progressive increase in its workload, as stated in the aforementioned Law 14,945/2024:

Art. 35-D. The National Common Core Curriculum for Secondary Education shall establish learning rights and objectives, in accordance with the guidelines of the National Education Council, in the following areas of knowledge: I - languages and their technologies, comprising Portuguese language and literature, English language, arts, and physical education (Brasil, 2024).

The state of Pernambuco has become a model for other Brazilian states regarding full-time education, with the creation of Reference Schools for High School through Complementary Law No. 125 of 2008. In alignment with the new High School policy, Pernambuco published Normative Instruction No. 009/2025 in the Official State Gazette on March 22, 2025, establishing guidelines for the implementation of transitional curricular matrices for high school in state network schools during 2025, in compliance with Law No. 14,945/2024. Shortly thereafter, the transitional high school curricular matrices for 2025 were published.

The new transitional matrices added one Physical Education class in the final year of high school, a subject that had been eliminated under the repealed Law No. 13,415/2017. This represents progress for the curricular component, which, by 2026, is expected to have two weekly Physical Education classes throughout all three years of the final stage of basic education.

These changes are occurring gradually, meaning that only limited modifications will take place in 2025. By 2026, the curricular organization should be fully updated in

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accordance with the new resolution, as stated in Resolution CNE/CEB No. 2, dated November 13, 2024:

Art. 13. In compliance with the mandatory minimum total workload of 3,000 (three thousand) hours in high school, the curriculum offered in Basic General Education must comply with the minimum workload of:

I - 2,400 (two thousand four hundred) hours, to be supplemented, coordinated, and integrated with the In-Depth Training Itineraries by areas of knowledge;

II - 2,100 (two thousand one hundred) hours, to be supplemented, coordinated, and integrated with Technical and Professional Training Programs in the form of technical courses lasting 1,000 (one thousand) or 1,200 (one thousand two hundred) hours; and

III - 2,200 (two thousand two hundred) hours, to be supplemented, coordinated, and integrated with Technical and Professional Training Programs in the form of technical courses lasting 800 (eight hundred) hours (Brasil, 2024).

These changes are taking place throughout Brazil, once again transforming teachers' routines, as they bear the responsibility of translating policies into practice (Ball, 2024).

#### 4 Final considerations

From the research overview, we observe that the High School reform established a new market-driven logic in education, transforming social relations and human activities through neoliberal subjectivities.

Teaching work has undergone reconfigurations within this new system, marked by the loss of teacher autonomy, increased workload, and devaluation. These issues ultimately lead to professional burnout, which negatively affects the quality of teaching and student learning.

These transformations diminish the social function of both schools and teaching work, as teachers are no longer trained to enable students' social transformation but are instead trained to meet the targets defined by the new educational logic. As Laval (2019, p. 29) states, "the 'flexible man' and 'autonomous worker' are the benchmarks of the new pedagogical ideal."

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All the studies, based on their theoretical frameworks, seek to highlight the existence of social classes as a way to interpret reality. This stance challenges neoliberal rationality, which denies the existence of classes, by demonstrating the presence of structural inequalities and social hierarchies. Thus, these studies confront the individualistic, utilitarian, and meritocratic logic that predominates in the neoliberal system.

Based on the research results related to school-based Physical Education, we conclude that this subject has been significantly harmed, mainly due to the reduction in its instructional hours and the downgrading of its status from a curricular component to the category of "studies and practices." The research also reveals teacher demotivation and burnout in the lesson planning process. Nevertheless, professionals continue to advocate for the maintenance of Physical Education in the high school curriculum.

With the transition to the new High School policy, established by Law No. 14,945/2024, the main features of the reform remain, such as the focus on skills and competencies. However, with changes beginning to be implemented in 2025, there is hope for positive—albeit modest—improvements, representing a significant achievement for teachers, students, and the school community.

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Mirela Moreira da Silva Monte, ORCID: ORCID:https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0942-600X.

Mestranda do Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação, Culturas e Identidades da Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco e Fundação Joaquim Nabuco- UFRPE/FUNDAJ, Linha de Pesquisa 3 - Políticas, Programas e Gestão de Processos Educacionais e Culturais.

Author contribution: Administração do Projeto, Análise Formal, Conceituação, Curadoria de Dados, Escrita – Primeira Redação.

Lattes: http://lattes.cnpq.br/7897802631143838

E-mail: mirela.moreira@ufrpe.br

ii Cibele Maria Lima Rodrigues, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4310-4216.

Doutorado em Sociologia pela Universidade Federal de Pernambuco/UFPE. Pesquisadora da Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/FUNDAJ. Professora do Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação, Culturas e Identidades da Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco e Fundação Joaquim Nabuco-UFRPE/FUNDAJ.

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Lattes: http://lattes.cnpq.br/7130114052014201

E-mail: cibele.rodrigues@fundaj.gov.br

iii Rachel Costa de Azevedo Mello, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5726-1557.
Doutorado em Educação em Ciências pela UFRGS. Professora Adjunta do Departamento de Educação da UFRPE, Professora do Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação, Culturas e Identidades e do Programa de Mestrado Profissional em Educação Física em Rede Nacional (ProEF).
Author contribution: Revisão e Edição do texto final.

Lattes:http://lattes.cnpq.br/8749101676171464.

E-mail: rachel.mello@ufrpe.br

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