



Writing in movement: movement-based performing arts for developing physical education teachers' identity

Escribir moviéndose: artes escénicas en movimiento para desarrollar la identidad de docentes de educación física

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Abstract

Introduction: This study highlights the relevance of surpassing Cartesian paradigms for a holistic development of Physical Education Teachers' identity through embodied pedagogies.

Objective: The objective is to analyze the impact of the pedagogical experience "Performance Devising and Teaching Identities of Physical Education Teachers," employing movement-based performing arts and somatic writing.

Methodology: An artistic and qualitative approach was used, integrating techniques of body expression, dramatization, and dance, assessed through reflective narratives and participant observation. The project involved 22 secondary school Physical Education teachers from various regions of Spain, participating in an intensive 12-hour training program.

Results: The results reveal that this training fostered empathy and promoted bodily awareness, supporting the identity development of teachers. Participants reported an increased capacity for critical reflection and proactive empathy, highlighting enhanced social skills. The integration of movement-based arts in teacher training facilitates a holistic and embodied professional identity development, addressing dimensions such as self-esteem, job motivation, and task perception.

Conclusions: This approach fosters creativity, empathy, and critical awareness in teachers' professional practices. education teachers' identity development in full, embodied, holistic, and authentic ways.

Keywords

Creative movement; movement-based performing arts; physical education; professional identity, secondary school teachers;

Resumen

Introducción: Este estudio destaca la relevancia de superar los paradigmas cartesianos para un desarrollo holístico de la identidad del profesorado de Educación Física a través de pedagogías corporales.

Objetivo: El objetivo es describir y analizar el impacto de la experiencia pedagógica "Creación escénica e Identidad Profesional de Profesorado de Educación Física", que emplea las artes escénicas basadas en el movimiento y la escritura somática.

Metodología: Se utilizó un enfoque artístico y cualitativo, integrando técnicas de expresión corporal, dramatización y danza, evaluadas a través de narrativas reflexivas y observación participante. El proyecto involucró a 22 docentes de Educación Física de escuelas secundarias de varias regiones de España, que participaron en un programa de formación intensiva de 12 horas.

Resultados: Los resultados revelan que esta capacitación fomentó la empatía y promovió la conciencia corporal, apoyando el desarrollo de la identidad del profesorado. Las participantes reportaron una mayor capacidad de reflexión crítica y empatía proactiva, destacando una mejora en las habilidades sociales. La integración de las artes escénicas basadas en el movimiento en la formación docente facilita un desarrollo holístico y corporizado de la identidad profesional, abordando dimensiones como la autoestima, la motivación laboral y la percepción de la tarea.

Conclusiones: Este enfoque fomenta la creatividad, la empatía y la conciencia crítica en las prácticas profesionales del profesorado, promoviendo el desarrollo de su identidad docente de manera plena, encarnada, holística y auténtica.

Palabras clave

Movimiento creativo; artes escénicas basadas en el movimiento; educación física; identidad profesional, profesores de secundaria.

Introduction

In physical education, traditional approaches are built on Cartesian principle which separates the body and the mind as learning functions (Águila & López, 2018; Macrine & Fugate, 2022). Such Cartesian views narrow down possibilities for authentic identity development for teachers, as they instill disembodied behaviors and responses, reproducing a normative power relationship in the construction of professional identity (Gamboa Jiménez et al., 2022; Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024). Cartesian approaches in physical education prevent the body-mind integration and the development of embodied awareness of teachers' bodies as a part of holistic teacher identities (Amorim and Ribeiro-Siva, 2022).

Parallely, they provoke distancing practice from theory, narrowing terrain for practical knowledge as a key factor of identity development (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024) as well as making more difficult the application of embodied pedagogies in the classroom (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2022; Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024; Nathan, 2022). With embodiment, embodied pedagogies and embodied knowledge we understand the active role of the body in producing awareness, learning, and knowledge (Macrine & Fugate, 2021, 2022; Nathan, 2022). Embodiment of intersubjective experience (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2021) sustains the construction of "communities of practice", as a key factor of professional identity of teachers (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024). In traditional physical education, physical action has no recognized epistemic value (Spatz, 2015), while disembodied conceptions of creativity are dominant (Griffith, 2021). Mechanist views of movement, informing Cartesian view, don't normally recognize spontaneity and agency as fundamental aspects of learning to move oneself (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011), considering this a crucial part of forming physical education teachers' professional identity (Bahamondes Acevedo et al., 2020, Cañabate et al. 2019). Such mechanist conceptions of physical education limit inquiry-based approach to teaching, recognized as an important element for strengthening teachers' roles and identities as teachers-researchers (Achilie-Valencia et al., 2021). In order to challenge traditional conceptions of physical education towards a holistic and embodied development of teacher students' professional identity, a concept of the body as soma (Hanna, 1995) as an integrate unity of body and mind, needs to be put at the center of teaching and learning (Águila and López 2018). In the perspective of somatic and embodied approaches to physical education, the emotions, sensations and feelings that arise from bodily movement have an epistemic value. Parallely, the action of moving oneself serve the cognitive processes of teaching and learning (Anttila, 2018; Cañabate et al., 2018a; Damasio, 2019).

In addition, socio-affective processes are fostered through the practice of creative movement (Armada-Crespo et al., 2024; Bisquerra, 2018; Monzó et al., 2021). Cognitive processes finally are improved, such as attention, through creative self-movement (Montávez Martín et al., 2022; Rodríguez-Negro, 2024). It is essential to learn to move oneself, intentional interruption of mechanized and unquestioned movement habits, by means of aware spontaneous and agential movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011).

Towards fostering a somatic and embodied approaches in the development of teacher student's professional identity, physical education can rely on techniques such as dramatization, bodily expression, and dance, which build upon creative movement, and highlight the bodily, sensorial, and emotional dimensions of learning (Cappello et al., 2024a). Such arts-based pedagogical strategies can support teachers in learning to move oneself by acknowledging movement as knowledge and self-knowledge principle (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011). Creative movement, consisting of movement, with or without music, to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings (Larsson et al., 2024), can offer prospective physical education teachers, opportunities to understand movement in open-ended, innovative forms, while appreciating movement's expressive aspects (Larsson et al., 2024). All this encourages spontaneity and agency in learning to move themselves (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011), and fosters creativity the development of their professional identities (Anttila & Svendler Nielsen, 2019; Cañabate et al., 2019). According to Engdahl & Ceder (2023) creative movement allows physical education teachers to explore how the physical environment—including space, objects, and other tangible elements—participates in the dynamics of movement during class activities. This perspective encourages teachers to incorporate material elements into their pedagogical practice, enriching their understanding of how students engage in movement exploration and broadening perceptions of moving creatively (Engdahl and Ceder, 2023), promoting a view of professional identity as a socio-material process (Fenwick, 2015).

Moreover, creative movement practices can support physical education teachers in developing embodied self-awareness and reflective skills, as they observe and articulate their own experiences of



movement (Standal et al., 2023), towards developing their professional identity in holistic, integral and embodied ways (Anttila 2018, Bassachs et al., 2020; Cañabate et al., 2024). Standal et al. (2023) suggest that this embodied awareness through dance can foster empathy, as well as situated critical reflection (Vázquez & Clavel-Vázquez, 2023), enabling teachers to resonate with both their own bodily experiences and those of their students, allowing the development of professional identity as a relational phenomenon (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2022; Enrile, 2016). Ultimately, integrating creative movement into teacher training can cultivate close, active interactions with others, promoting sensations of liberation, affirmation, and engagement with self-reflection, which together can foster a transformative self-awareness (Marx & Delport, 2017). As a consequence, creative movement offers a significant support for professional identity development in transformative ways (Cappello et al 2024a). Ng (2018) expands upon Gramsci's concept of common sense (Gramsci, 1977) as an ideological force in culture, which often manifests through verbal language, applying to movement language. Ng's (2018) analysis of Gramsci (1977) frames ideology as a kind of embodied common sense made of a protocol of embodied attitudes and physical actions perceived as senseful. In education, common sense about movement tends to reinforce Cartesian ideology, sidelining bodily experience in both self-reflection, learning and physical practice (Anttila, 2015; Spatz, 2015). The construction of teachers' professional identity is influenced by such Cartesian ideology, shaping the teachers' identities and bodies both from the outside through dominant teaching practices, and from the inside as Cartesian discourses inform and structure teachers' self-perception (Ng 2018, Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024). Such dualistic discourses vehiculated, produced and reproduced through verbal and gestural instances, form teaching habitus on a collective stance (Bourdieu, 1977), leaving little room to individual creativity and authenticity (Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024). Movement-based performing arts, through dance, dramatization, and corporal expression can counteract body-mind split in development of physical education teachers' identity, while supporting a holistic view of body and mind (Garre Rubio, 2003; Zarrilli, 2002). The objective of the present study is to present a proposal that uses creative movement, through Movement-based performing arts, dramatization and dance, in connection with verbal reflection activities, towards the development of teacher's professional identity in creative and holistic ways (Anttila et al., 2019), as this can foster the application of embodied pedagogies of physical education (Standhal 2023, Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024).

Method

This proposal integrates artistic methods with a qualitative research framework. Viewing the art educator as an artist-researcher (Borgdorff, 2012), the focus is on exploring the tacit knowledge embedded in the art educator's creative practice. The goal is to develop art-based educational tools that serve dual roles as both pedagogical resources and research outcomes, showcased through artistic (Lilja, 2015) and phenomenological means (Zarrilli, 2020). The "Performance Devising and Teaching Identities of Physical Education Teachers" project is an art-educational teacher training project that focused on the creation and presentation of a series of mini performance about professional identity, using Movement-based performing arts as a basis, and including dramatization, body expression and dance activities. For assessing the teaching intervention, a qualitative approach rooted in participant observation was utilized. This immersive methodology captured both the teachers' experiences and the reflective insights of the artist-educator who led the intervention.

Participants

The "Performance Devising and Teaching Identities of Physical Education Teachers" project was realized as a training program activated by Chair of Movement and Language of University of Girona during the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. The training lasted a total amount of 12,30 hours distributed in two intensive weekends. It involved 22 secondary school physical education teachers, coming from different part of Catalunya, in an intensive devising process of a series of performances about professional identity, through different movement-based performing arts activities. Teachers worked in teams of six couples and one trio based upon emerging common interests.

Procedure

It was articulated in four phases: Phase 1: “Movement based Textual Dramaturgy” dedicated at the elicitation of textual materials through creative movement activities (Saearani et al., 2024) for the composition of a short performance script for each of the teacher teams about their perspective on professional identity; Phase 2: “Gestural Dramaturgy” dedicated at the composition of a choreography and movement for the performances; Phase 3: “Assemblage”: this phase was dedicated at putting together the text and movement material into a final performance script. Phase 4: “Dramatized Reading”, was dedicated to presenting the resulting performances through the format of a reading. This article focuses on Phase 1: “Movement based Textual Dramaturgy” as it focuses of the interaction between verbal and non-verbal languages as fundamental process of embodied reflexivity pedagogies. Ethical protocols, including informed consent and confidentiality, were upheld, and the study received institutional approval (University of Girona, code: CQUdG2024/04EPS)

Instruments

The instruments used in this research were two: teachers’ reflective narratives assessed through a rubric designed for this (Table 1) and a field diary compiled by researcher who realized participant observation.

On one side, the narratives were produced at the end of each session, who realized at the end of each session (six sessions of 2 hours). 132 reflective narratives were obtained (six session x 22 students).

Table 1. Elements of the rubric for students’ identity construction assessment (Cañabate et al., 2019)

Dimension 1': Self-esteem
Specifies professional appreciation of job performance and received feedback. Specifies emotions, fulfilment, and job satisfaction.
Dimension 2': Task perception
Specifies, analyses, and elaborates on ideas, beliefs, and moral considerations regarding professional tasks and duties.
Dimension 3': Job motivation
Specifies, analyses, and elaborates on motivation or driving forces in the profession.
Dimension 4': Future perspective
Specifies, argues, and transfers expectations about future jobs.

On the other side, through the field diary, diary, the researcher and facilitator closely monitored teachers’ responses, actions, and changes in both verbal and nonverbal cues, aligning her observations with the study’s objectives. This method provided real-time insights into group dynamics and emotional interactions, enriching the depth of the narrative analysis.

All the members of the research team participated in the qualitative analysis both narrative reflective and field diary of participant researcher.

Didactic Approach-Experience

This pedagogical initiative reoriented artistic methods in dramatization, dance, and bodily expression to focus on fostering self-reflection regarding teaching identity in a physical education secondary teacher training context. Different kinds of activities were realized drawing from dance, bodily expression, and dramatization, parallelly with somatic writing practices. The aim of such activity was to develop bodily self-awareness by connecting pre-reflective elements—sensations, emotions, and imagery—with reflective thinking (Anttila, 2007, Standal et al., 2023). Through these approaches we aimed at developing creativity development, through a bodily process impelled by imagination. Imagination is redefined here not as merely a visual function but as a kinesthetic process that engages teachers’ psychophysical energies in response to various stimuli. By encouraging expressive movement, this approach bridges the gap between body and mind, fostering a more integrated form of creativity that is deeply embodied (Cappello et al., 2024a, Griffith, 2021). We adopted creative movement as a pedagogical strategy by involving teacher into movement problem-solving assignments (Laban, 2011; McCaw, 2011). Based on verbal tasks rather than demonstration (Tinning, 2010), we adopted a guided-discovery style (Torrents et al., 2021), through physical-cooperative challenges (Cañabate et al., 2018, Cañabate et al. 2021) with the aim of “improving the sensitivity of performers to the stimuli produced by the bodies” (Torrents et al. 2015, p. 66). This approach aimed at the development of learners’ personal movement language toward expanding their embodied reflexivity (Lyle et al., 2024) about

professional identity in creative (Anttila et al. 2019), meaningful (Cañabate et al. 2021, Bailey et al., 2009) and critical ways (Colomer et al., 2020). The experience of these kind of embodied activities in teacher education support teachers in being more empathetic and attentive toward student's embodied experience (Standhal 2023). By incorporating physical movement into the reflection process, creative movement challenges the traditional procedure of reflecting verbally about professional identity, avoiding professional identity to be defined by a mere sequence of words. Instead, by creating an intentional interruption in verbal expression through creative movement, activities allow bodily experience to influence conscious thought. In this way professional identity is approached as a performative process (Anttila et al., 2019; Butler, 1988), in which gestures and verbal language are interwoven. In this terms, creative movement can help physical education professionals formulate thoughts rooted in their bodily experience, highlight their implicit physical knowledge, and guide them toward more meaningful understanding and development of their professional identity. This approach invited teachers to explore their professional identities through movement and somatic writing, moving beyond the limitations of scripted methods. The process leveraged the artistic and technical expertise of the research team while probing the shifting landscape of what it means to be a teacher. Grounded in an embodied research framework (Chong Kwan, 2020; Spatz, 2017) and phenomenological analysis (Zarrilli, 2020), the team designed a series of creative exercises and movement practices. These exercises integrated physical theater techniques that the lead researcher had developed through extensive training in both arts and pedagogy, drawing on diverse practices in dance, drama, and expressive bodywork. The methodology was influenced by Lecoq's explorations of physical movement (Lecoq, 2009), Boal's techniques in participatory theater (Boal & Merlino, 2014), as well as practices in performance art (Porkola, 2017), and Schulze's approaches to storytelling (Schulze, 2017), as well as processual dramaturgy (Thygesen, 2024). To deepen self-reflection through embodied experience, movement sessions were coupled with somatic writing—a form of creative expression centered on personal, bodily awareness (Pentikäinen, 2022). This combination of expressive movement and somatic writing provided a performative pathway (Pelias, 1999) for teachers to connect with their identities from a first-person, embodied perspective, challenging external definitions (Ng, 2018) and preconceived ideas of "what a teacher should be" (Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024).

Pedagogical Approach

This section introduces the pedagogical approach informing the design of the performative tools paired with creative movement activities that aimed at helping teachers effectively explore and reflect on their professional identities. Framing teaching as a participatory (Pfeifer, 2020, Díaz & García, 2020), arts-based educational research project, teachers are encouraged to delve into their own practices, experiences, and personal insights through an inquiry-based approach (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024). The exercises are organized according to different stages of the movement-based devising and exploration process: defining the topic of professional identity, gathering information about it, analyzing the information, and presenting resulting reflection.

Phase 1: "Movement based Textual Dramaturgy":

- *"Body Storming: Exploring Professional Identity"*: This activity aims to explore the concept of professional identities in relation to emerging topics of interest. Participants agree on two or three keywords as broad related to their identity, (e.g., vocation, challenge, personal growth). Each teacher writes on sticky notes various aspects related to these themes, including terms linked to their professional experiences. By combining walking and standing activities as modifiers of their visual perception (Davidson et al., 2024), participants group notes into clusters for in-depth exploration, after which the most resonant themes are selected. The formed groups then discuss these themes in relation to their teaching practices, creating a representative title that encapsulates their reflections and show the title through a short gestural performance. This creative embodied activity supports the production of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) about the topic of teachers' identity, promoting the link between theory and practice in meaningful ways (Wells, 2023). The educational contents and ongoing reflections become grounded in teacher's interest and motivation as they emerge from their bodily experience, though danced dynamic and rhythmic movements. In this activity the outside-in perspective, made of the discourse that frame their professional identity, and the inside out-

perspectives, made by the lived experience of the teachers about those educational contents, meet in a situated way (Batacharya & Wong, 2018).

- *“Building Professional Identity as Physical Dialogue with an Object”* (Part A): In this stage, teachers in pairs design an experiential activity that invites their peers to engage with an object through sensory and bodily exploration. This exercise encourages improvisation, aiming to lower self-judgment and enhance embodied awareness. By focusing on detailed physical sensations and responses related to all the sensorial aspects of object by means of physical movement, participants gain insights into their own reflexivity and presence in the moment in connection to the moment. The activity serves as a tool to deepen self-awareness, fostering a non-judgmental space for personal exploration. This activity relies on the tactile, and affective aspects of kinesthesia (Sheets-Johnstone, 2018) for which each outward movement, such as touching an external object, elicits a corresponding internal movement, creating sensations and emotions within the body (Bieringa, personal communication, 2022). Since perception and kinesthesia are interconnected in a tactile and affective manner (Sheets-Johnstone, 2018), processes of sensing and perceiving, perceiving and feeling, feeling and sensing, and sensing and moving in this activity appear to teachers’ as related when they reflect about personal identity.
- *“Building Professional Identity as Physical Dialogue with an Object”* (Part B): In this phase, participants engage physically with an object related to their professional identity. Each participant chooses an object connected to their teaching practice and explores them through bodily and theatrical expression. Afterward, teachers reflect on the emotions and sensations experienced, responding to the activity through somatic writing. Physical dialogue emphasizes difference and diversity through bodily interaction, functioning as a tool for situated reflection (Haraway, 1988). This activity permits to access experiential, subjective and situated information about both theory and the concept of professional identity. Creative movement opens spaces for critical and situated knowledge co-creation (Haraway, 1988, 2016) affecting both theory and practice. Being situated involves mindfulness of the relationship between oneself and one’s context (D. Haraway, 1988), which is fundamental to critical thinking. Ng asserts that embodiment is an essential function for reflecting critically about educational matters (2018), such as professional identity as a matter of education and of continuous learning for teachers.
- *“Building Professional Identity as Physical Dialogue with a Memory”*: This activity consists of engaging kinesthetically with a relevant memory related to the development of professional identity. The activity is based upon Cavarero’s view (2011) about relational identity suggesting that our identity is shaped by the stories we tell others. According to Cavarero (2011), our identity is continuously constructed through the narratives we share, with each story prompting reflection on who we are. Memories aren’t static; they are constantly revised and reshaped by the present. When sharing a personal story, we reveal more about who we are now than who we once were. To craft a story from personal life, both imagination and reality are needed, with the balance of each at the storyteller’s discretion. Identity, then, is a shared story—a blend of changing fictions and realities we tell ourselves and others. Approaching memory as not fixed but a fluid phenomenon (Cavarero, 2011) this activity explores memories related to professional identity through the perspective of kinesthetic memory. Kinesthetic memory is a dynamic form of bodily memory, that involves a non-visual awareness of habitual movement patterns, or “kinetic melodies,” that are ingrained through learned motion (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012). This memory type, enriched by emotional content, enables the reproduction of familiar actions and can be more readily activated by affective arousal (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012). During this activity, kinetic melodies are recalled by self-movement affective exploration: gestures, appear as instruments of storytelling, and may show their performative effects on identity formation (Butler 1988) through expressed bodily memories.
- *“Building Professional Identity in Words, Action, and Emotion”*: This stage focuses on analyzing the textual and bodily information collected during prior activities. Participants highlight the most significant parts of their written reflections and create a textual collage that captures their experiences as educators. The goal is to assemble these reflections into a script, utilizing diverse styles like poetry, narrative, or dramaturgy. This script serves as the basis for a performance

that represents their exploration of professional identity. The editing work upon text generated through physical activity ignites a process in which pre-reflective materials such as emotions, sensations and images serve as a basis to reflective, symbolic cultural materials through verbal language (Anttila 2007). This process, highlights in the development of professional identity a constant dialogue between the reflective and pre-reflective levels, body and words. This activity sheds light on the mutual influence of words and movement in building the self- perception of one professional identity intended as a relational process built on a constant dialogue between the bodies and the minds, one's and of colleagues, teacher' and pupils' (Damasio, 2019; Enrile, 2016).

Presentation of the Proposal

This proposal leverages an artistic and performative research approach to examine and showcase the pedagogical possibilities of physical theater (Borgdorff et al., 2013). By using specific art-based methods like performative writing (Pelias, 1999) coupled with instructional scores (Hendricks, 1988), it offers not only creative techniques but also clear guidance to make these practices understandable and replicable in higher education and teacher training contexts. The objective is to make these methods accessible, enabling educators to incorporate them into their teaching (Cappello et al. 2024b). In this research, the use of instructional scores stands out for seamlessly integrating artistic practice with daily life, a key principle of action art (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). This format allows for exploring real-life issues, like professional identity development, within higher and professional educational environments. As a text-based guide typical of action art, it effectively communicates the experience by combining instructional clarity with an artistic approach, encouraging educators to interpret it both pedagogically and creatively.

Development of the Experience

Table 2 provides an overview of the presented activities including the activities names, learning objectives and procedures in order to facilitate their implementation in an educational context. The table contents focus on the activities included in Phase 1. "Movement-based Textual Dramaturgy" of the project "Performance Devising and Teaching Identities of Physical Education Teachers". The presented activities were introduced progressively and in a sequential manner. To each of the presented activity was dedicated a 2,30 hours session.

Table 2. Phase 1. "Movement-based Textual Dramaturgy"

Activity Title	Objective	Description	Techniques
Body Storming: Exploring Professional Identity	Defining or redefining key topics connected to teachers' experience of the concept of professional identity, through walking and standing activities, and gestural improvisations.	Participants identify key words linked to their teaching practice, group ideas, and discuss relevant topics regarding their professional identity, connecting them with their lived experiences and reflecting collectively.	Design Thinking in Arts (Feldstärke in Pact Zollverein, transdisciplinary student artists workshop, 2016); Walking as a performance practice (Eero Vuori, Spectator Oriented Performance lessons, UniArts Helsinki); Writing with Movement (Ferrari, corporal expression lessons, RESAD, 2013).
Building Professional Identity through Physical Dialogue with an Object. (Part A)	Encouraging reflection on professional identity through the sensorial interaction with an object.	Teachers in couples prepare an experiment for their peers to have a sensorial and bodily experience of an object. The activity fosters intuitive reflection, and the integration of pre-reflective elements into reflection, by documenting the experience in somatic writing.	Siren Kenneth (Art Educator as Researcher workshop at UniArts Helsinki 2023)
Building Professional Identity through Physical Dialogue with an Object. (Part B)	Exploring emotions and reflections on professional identity through physical and theatrical interaction with an object.	Teachers choose an object related to their professional identity. Through bodily exploration, they embody the object and reflect verbally on the emotions and sensations experienced, by documenting it through somatic writing.	Physical Dialogue with an Object (Thomas Stich, Acting lessons- Physical Dialogue module, 2016)
Building Professional Identity through Physical Dialogue with a Memory	Exploring emotions and reflections on professional identity through bodily and gestural interaction with a memory.	Teachers elicit movement related to their professional identity. Through bodily exploration, they embody the memory and reflect verbally on the emotions and sensations experienced, by documenting it in somatic writing.	Rainbow of Desire (Laura Presa and Fernando Gallego, Social Theatre Workshop, 2018) combined with Storytelling (Raphael Roldán, lessons at Mezrab Amsterdam, 2016)

Building Professional Identity in Words, Action, and Emotion	Analyze reflections through a textual collage representing professional identity.	Teachers select significant parts of their previous writings, create a text collage, and develop a script encapsulating their reflections on professional identity, using various styles like poetry or narration.	Processual Dramaturgy (Thygesen, 2024)
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Examples of Activities

These activities, developed from the “Performance Devising and Teaching Identities of Physical Education Teachers” educational experience, function as both artwork and educational resources. The following examples, and detailed instructions support the implementation and adaptation of these activities within educational settings.

Example 1. Activity: Building Professional Identity through Physical Dialogue with an Object (Part A and Part B)

Teacher’s introduction of the activity: If we look attentively to how we interact with objects that surround us, we can notice that bodily movement in relation to object can say a lot about ourselves and the habits that conform our identities (Siren, 2020), through the ways we use them, through the personal memories tied on them and through their material composition, provoking in us different sensations, that makes us uncover things about what we like or dislike, desire or fear, we are motivated by or turned down. An object that we are tied to affectively in our professional practice, can serve as an amulet and as a spirit guide in our self-discovery journey as teachers. We can ask it questions about ourselves, as if it was a lamp containing a genius that can give us answers about our professional pathways. In the following activity we will pick up an object, which is in an intuitive and personal way related to our identities as teachers, to ask the genius contained in it, some questions. We choose the object because we use it a lot while teaching, because it reminds ourself why we are teaching, because somebody has given it to us, because it came along accidentally to us in some moment, or because any other possible reason. All reasons are valid. All answers are possible. Here we go.

Part A. Instructions for the implementation of the activity: Choose an object related to your identity as a teacher and bring it the session. / Don’t show it to your partner and prepare an experiment that involves movement for them to discover sensorially the object, with all sensory channels except visual. / Don’t think about how to do the experiment more than 1 minute, keep it spontaneous and improvise. / Agree with your partner a strategy to ensure they don’t use their visual sense during the experiment. / Before starting the experiment, ask your partner if there is any kind of sensorial stimulation or interaction that it might do not want to undertake during the experiment. / Both remember that each of the parts of your experiment is an invitation, and that anybody needs to do anything they do not want to do. / When you both are ready, start the experiment / The person guiding the experiment, and having the use of their visual channel available, takes responsibility for partner’s physical safety in designing and conducting the experiment.

Part B. Instructions for the implementation of the activity: Choose an object (the same as part A or a different one) related to your identity as a teacher and bring it the session. / Take the object and place it in the work space. / Stay next to the object, but maintain certain distance. / Have a sensory experience of it, study it. Touch it. Observe carefully all the details of the object. / Now focus on the shape of the object. / Copy the object shape with your body. / I am going to ask you several questions, to which your body will answer. You are going to notice how your body reacts to these questions. You will answer not with words but with movement adjustments. / How is the object’s weight? Which relationship does it have with gravity? What material is it made of? Is it dense or rather filled with air? How is its shape? Symmetrical? Or not? Is it more curved or linear? Is it more elongated or flattened? Does it tend to be vertical or horizontal? Which internal forces animate it? Do they push it or pull it? Towards which directions? / As you respond with your body to these questions you are embodying the object. You are getting transformed into it. As you embody the object you can really feel as If you are the object. / In 3, 2, 1. You are get completely transformed into the object. / Take a selfie of yourself as the object, but don't get out of your shape. / You are still the object. / You notice how you breathe like the object. How you see the world like this object. You can feel the internal breathing rhythm of the object. / I'm going to interview you now. Please respond with words but in your mind, for yourself. / If you were not in this



classroom in which other place would you be? / Imagine that you are in that place. / Visualize yourself being there. / Can you see it? In which exact place of the space are you collocated? How is it there? How long have you been there? Who has put you there? Why? / If you could make a gesture, a movement, which gesture would you do? / Do the gesture. / Repeat it. / Again / Again / Again. / The next time you will do the gesture, you will say a sentence that begins with "I want". / If you could now change your position, which position would you reach? On the my 3, please just go to the new position. / 1, 2, 3. / Now return to your initial position. / Now go from position A to position B very slowly...as slowly as you can. / When you arrive at position B, you return to your human-teacher shape. / Write down in automatic writing the experience you just had being an object: while writing, record each feeling, emotion and image you experienced as an object during the activity, and link it to the topic of professional identity as it connects to the object.

Example 2. Activity: Professional Identity through Physical Dialogue with a Memory

Teacher's introduction of the activity: A famous philosopher, Adriana Cavarero, says that we build our identities through the stories that we tell ourselves and the others. Stories and memories are associated to physical movements in our body. Moving ourselves means to awaken the emotions we have felt in occasion of certain events that have occurred to us. At the same time moving ourself is a way to remember what our bodies did, in occasion of certain events that have occurred to us. Knowing what we felt and what our bodies did, by remembering the crucial events that had somehow led to build up the teachers we are today is in some way manipulating and looking at the distance to those narratives inscribed in our movement to change the story, if we need to, through other moves that are more consonant with who we want to be. Sometimes remembering difficult emotions of the past, linked to uneasy memories, give us an opportunity to rewrite them in our bodies toward finding easier or happier endings for them. Difficult emotions above all give us the opportunity to get into the nutshells of all good stories: conflict. Something goes well, then something turns wrong: conflict is there and drama runs over bringing characters toward a new development, an expanded situation, an updated version of themselves. In the following movement exploration, we will undertake a physical journey in the memories that are building our professional identity, in order to observe the gestures that tell our stories and in order to change -or reinforce- those gestures toward creating the stories we want tell, about ourselves as teachers.

Instructions for implementing the activity: Let's walk through space. / Now, stop wherever you are, close your eyes, and think of a pleasant or easy emotion that you experience in relation to the issue of teaching identity. / What is it? Name it. / Start walking again. / When I clap my hands, you are going to stop walking and you will make a statue of how you feel when you feel that pleasant emotion you just thought of. / (3 claps x 3 different statues for the same easy emotion). / Now you undo the statue and you start walking through the space again. / Stop, close your eyes, and think about teachers' identity, and what this means for you. Among all emotions arising while thinking of it, I just put your attention to any unpleasant or difficult emotion that might have arouse. If any difficult emotion arises you just think of an emotion that you think is the opposite to the easy or pleasant emotion you just thought of. / Which is this emotion? / Choose a name for it. / Did you get it? / Great. / Walk through space again. / When I clap my hands, you are going to make a statue of how you feel when you feel the unpleasant emotion. / (3 claps x 3 different statues for the same difficult emotion) /. Stay there, keep the third version of your difficult emotion statue. / What do you feel while being that statue? / Exaggerate your statue's posture a little bit, define it. / Be sure your statue is not empty but it accommodates to be a recipient for that emotion. / It seeks to feel that emotion even more through every posture adjustment. / Again, how do you feel in that position? When do you usually feel like that in your everyday as a teacher? / Or maybe you felt like this only once, because something occurred, and that that marked your feelings and your story as a teacher. / Do you have specific memories of those moments or moment in which you felt that emotion on a high degree? / Can you picture those memories in your mind? / Visualize those moment or moments as if they were part of a movie. / Now put freeze frame on your mental movie, and fix your attention on one single frame of the movie. / While you keep your attention fixed on that frame from the whole memory, only that image, I'm going to ask you some questions. You'll respond with no words, and you will let your body respond. Here we go / Where were you? / What kind of place was it? / Was it an open or an enclosed space? / Was it public or private? / Was it familiar or unfamiliar? / How was the light like? / And the temperature? / What time of year was it? / Which season? / Which month? / Which moment of the day? / What time of your life was it? / How did you look like? / What did you wear? /



How was your hair? / How was your body? / In which position where you in? / Take that position now. / Where were you in the room? / Where were you in the space? / Were you sitting? Standing? Lying down? / What tensions were there in your body? / How did your body look like from the outside? / How was your face? / How did your body feel from the inside? / Who was there with you? / Were you with somebody? / Were you alone? / Had somebody just left? / Was somebody coming soon or later? / Why were you there? / What had happened? / What happened next? / Next might mean the second after that frame, or few months after or a year. / Think what did you do next and do a gesture for it with your body. / Undo the gesture and just stay still as you are today. / No matter how much time has passed from that memory: time has passed. Even if it happened last week or this morning, you are different, you are no longer the same, your body is no longer the same, you are already doing something else. / Return to that scene or “frame” but now from today from a distance, a bird’s eye view. Look at yourselves from the outside, like a fly or an external eye. / Now go to your PC, or tablet, or take pen and sheets, and write down your memory in automatic writing. / While writing connect each emotion, image or sensation that you have experienced while submerging yourself in your personal memory about “teaching identity” / Finish your personal story about teaching identity with the following phrase: “And looking back at that moment I realize that...” and complete the phrase with a few words to describe a learning experience about teaching identity that you take with you from re-enacting your memory.

Results: Advantages and Problems

Narrative reflections provided insight about teachers, reflection about their professional identity, through the project as meaningful experience that encouraged them to face new professional experiences and expand their professional practice (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024). The approach to activities added to the their personal, social and professional dimension development, by strengthening their inter and intra-personal interaction skills, as well as their self-esteem (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2022; Armada-Crespo et al., 2024; Cañabate et al., 2019). On the others side they supported them in strengthening positive interdependence and individual responsibility as teachers (Colomer et al., 2021).

Through teachers’ reflection it was highlighted that taking part in the project helped them to increase their self-awareness as persons and teachers. In addition, this experience led them to identify and to strengthen the weak point, and eventual lacks in their training while thinking in new methods for teaching and learning (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024). It is said to formulate activities that draw on artistic bodily activities. Teachers also valued positively the proposed activities, judging that such an approach facilitates and promotes competencies for learning, as well as teacher self-efficacy and confidence, reflection and critical thinking, as part of their professional identity (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024).

Participant researcher perceived teachers to become progressively less judgemental with their emotions, and naming emotions beyond “good or bad”, giving room also to difficult emotions, which at the beginning they avoided to share. The attitude and the disposition was evolving during the sessions and teachers they acquired more expressive freedom (Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024) through their own bodies, in that they didn’t feel judged, instead they felt valued and challenged toward deepening into themes they didn’t approach before such as moving creatively and giving space to feelings. The participant researcher observed that the project provided the support of a community of practice including a professional art-educator, was essential for developing teachers’ identity in authentic way and for building artistic practical knowledge (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2022). All the dimension of professional identity construction (Table 1) emerged in the analysis of narratives (Dimension 1: Self-esteem, Dimension 2: Task perception, Dimension 3: Job motivation), except for (Dimension 4: Job expectations) as the sample was integrated by in service teachers.

The group of physical education teachers highlights the following learnings in relation to their teaching identity, through the art-educational process, showing some examples:

Awareness of embodied knowing as -an often overlooked- but relevant part of teachers’ knowledge. A teacher said: "I struggle to connect with my body, and this led me to specific memories and conflicts related to my professional identity—insights I might not have accessed otherwise." (Dimension 2: Task Perception)

Proactive integration of empathy in teacher-students interaction. A teacher reported: "I reflected on the concept of "apathy" in teaching and initially found myself considering others' apathy. Through the exercise, I remembered a difficult moment of my own adolescence, in which I felt that feeling all the time. From now on, I want to address my students' apathy with greater empathy and a proactive approach. (Dimension 3: Job Motivation)

More complex attitude toward professional identity as an ongoing process and result of lifelong learning. Another teacher commented: "It led me to something else—a distressing experience from another area. But it helped me remember how I overcame it and how I can overcome similar experiences I'm currently facing." (Dimension 1: Self-esteem)

Feeling of authenticity in their professional identity development as connected with pleasure, beyond productivity and defensiveness. A teacher declared: "I've allowed myself to relax into the experience without needing to 'armor up.' It's connected to pleasure rather than productivity." (Dimension 3: Job Motivation)

Practical approach to social skills development through bodily disposition and physical actions. A teacher said: "We've also learned how to interact with others. Using this medium, it's easier to learn how to connect. Often, we're told to be more approachable, but we don't know how." (Dimension 2: Task perception).

Acquisition of creative agency, by giving more space to creativity in their teachings and considering creativity as a part of their professional identity: A teacher said "I didn't know how to approach sensory experiences. I felt blocked because, in my daily routine, I rarely step out of my comfort zone. Getting stuck and then moving forward taught me I'm more creative than I thought." Another added, "Absolutely. We're more creative than we think. We can achieve more than we realize." (Dimension 1: Self-esteem)

Complex attitude toward curriculum contents and professional identity, as interrelated and materially entangled (Fenwick 2014) with the socio-material context. A teachers reported the experience with the object: "My objects were a pen and an eraser, one object for writing and the other for erasing. Thinking of those objects, I thought of the contradictions I feel sometimes: disappearing or reaffirm myself. I wished I could be like those objects, erasing what I don't want to go back to and rewriting another. I wished for colleagues to be like me, both pen and an eraser as well." (Dimension 3: Job motivation).

In summary teachers were satisfied by the process realized through the proposed methodologies, obtaining a strong sense of learning toward their own identity and teaching practice. By placing thought into action and action into thought, teachers manifested that they acquired awareness of teaching a performative knowledge (Anderson, 2015; Anderson & Cohen, 2015), in which specific knowledge as well as personal, sensorial, imaginative, emotional, artistic and social knowledge interact with each other as a unit in professional practice (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024). The project additionally provided of a key factor in physical education teachers' identity construction: a "community of practice" (Hinojosa-Torres et al., 2024) in embodied and artistic methodologies, through the experience of embodied intersubjectivity (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2021) as a dimension of being in the community and of practicing. The feeling of accompaniment, mutual support, affective involvement, tied to embodied intersubjective dimension of art-educational community of practice was crucial in building art educational knowledge. To this respect, teachers said: "I like our group and the space today, it is great"; "I felt I am gaining, growth as a human being by facing my fears of showing myself and working with my body in front of others. I have met great people and had a lot of fun"; "I improved my relationship with the course work-group. I had the opportunity of sharing with others, and learning about myself". Such a community made space for building body-based relationships, and leading them toward identity negotiation and transformation in bodily ways, enhancing their attitude toward embodied lifelong learning, toward a mutually supportive peer perception (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2022) in relationship to bodily practice. The participation of a professional art educator- in the community of practice as a facilitator, was fundamental, as the display of her professional knowledge in art pedagogy provided teachers with a feeling of pleasure in learning, coherence, meaning, and appropriateness of the process and delivered contents. This led the teachers to gain a sense of achieving solid learning outcomes and strengthened their motivation toward deepening their training in artistic methods, as well as putting in practice the acquired knowledge. Teachers expressed appreciation about being guided by a



professional artist and art educator (N.) in their learning process. “Thanks to the guide who accompanies us in the experience, thank you N. I am very grateful to the teacher”, said one teacher, while others added: “I am very comfortable with the group and with N.'s way of transmitting”; “I really liked the course, I learned a lot and I consider it an open window to continue advancing”; “It was short for me. Intense and pleasant” “I am very happy with everything we are learning”; “I like how everything is coming together.” Professional art-educational guidance was, according to teachers, a definitively key condition for art pedagogical knowledge acquisition, and highlights the importance of opening both spaces for pedagogical specialization of artists in higher education as well as for art-educational training of teachers so that they can find a community of practice for building about movement-based artistic methodologies (Cappello et al 2024c). Such methods are key for nourishing research-oriented approach toward embodied pedagogies toward strengthening the of professional identity of physical education teachers.

The main limitations encountered throughout the process were logistical and pertained to participants' habitual ways of understanding educational methodology. Some of the teachers initially struggled to integrate creative and embodied approaches due to their deep-rooted reliance on traditional, cognitively centered practices in education. Resistance to physical and movement-based tasks sometimes arose, as some participants found it challenging to see these activities as educational tools for professional identity development. Moreover, the poverty of previous exposure to arts-based methodologies in some occasion led to frustration or disengagement, as teachers faced unexpected difficulty in articulating their experiences through bodily expression. Additionally, time constraints posed a challenge in achieving a more in-depth exploration of movement-based pedagogies, as the intensive format limited the possibility of revisiting and reflecting on personal experiences. Finally, some teachers expressed discomfort when engaging with introspective activities, indicating a need for a more gradual introduction to body-centered practices in teacher education. Most teachers pointed at the number of hour of lessons as a restraint, expressing a desire of keep about the proposed methods on learning through more hours of training in greater deepness and detail.

Action decisions for the next implementation

To improve future implementations, several actions are proposed:

- Extending the duration of the program will allow for a more gradual introduction to creative and embodied methodologies, giving participants time to adapt to these approaches.
- Introducing preliminary sessions focused on familiarizing teachers with arts-based pedagogies and the value of embodied learning may reduce initial resistance and increase openness.
- Providing continuous support after the sessions with the researcher team throughout the process could aid participants in overcoming discomfort with movement-based tasks. This would imply scheduling a support session at the end of each session.
- Including reflection intervals between sessions may enhance teachers' ability to internalize their bodily experiences and relate them to their professional identity.

Conclusions

This study explored the use of physical theater and creative movement, as innovative tools to support the professional identity development of secondary school physical education teachers. By challenging traditional Cartesian dualism in education, which typically separates cognitive and physical learning processes, this approach highlights the potential of embodied, arts-based pedagogies. Such methodologies foster a holistic sense of self and professional identity, where the body is recognized as an essential site of knowledge and learning. The project, “Performance Devising and Teaching Identities of Physical Education Teachers” demonstrated that embodied practices like movement-based dramaturgy and sensory-based reflection activities can enable educators to explore complex aspects of identity through an integrative body-mind experience. The findings suggest that creative movement allows teachers to connect with their professional selves on a deeper level by engaging with emotions,



sensations, and bodily expressions that are often sidelined in traditional educational contexts. This approach supports teachers in understanding their identities as fluid and relational, shaped by interactions between their internal experiences and external educational environments. Despite initial resistance to these arts-based methods, participants reported significant insights into their professional identity, empathy, and authenticity in their teaching practice. The ability to connect with and reflect on their own emotions in non-judgmental, constructive ways emerged as key benefits. Participants noted the value of moving beyond verbal reflection to integrate physical awareness and embodied knowing as central components of their teaching practice. In conclusion, arts-based movement training can lead teachers to heightened bodily awareness and creative skills, experience of embodied intersubjectivity strengthening community of practices, expanded artistic knowledge through professional guidance, and integration of embodiment towards and as a part of inquiry-based teaching, all of these being key elements of teachers' identity development. Challenges encountered in this study, such as logistical constraints, limited time, and teachers' unfamiliarity with embodied methods, highlight the need for a more extended and gradual approach to integrating creative, body-centered practices into teacher training. Future implementations should provide additional time, scaffolding, and reflexive intervals to support participants' comfort and engagement with these methodologies. Structured peer collaboration and preliminary sessions introducing the concept of embodied learning may also facilitate greater openness to non-traditional pedagogies. Ultimately, the use of physical theater and creative movement in teacher training holds considerable promise for cultivating self-aware, empathetic, and authentic educators. Embracing a holistic model of professional identity that values both body and mind not only benefits teachers but also encourages a more inclusive and responsive educational environment. This embodied approach challenges teachers to rethink their professional roles in dynamic, innovative ways, fostering a transformative journey toward a holistic, embodied and relational teaching identity.

Lines of Research for the Future

Future research could explore the long-term impact of embodied and arts-based pedagogies on teachers' professional identity development over time. Tracking participants after their training to assess how these practices influence their teaching styles, student interactions, and professional growth could provide deeper insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of embodied learning methodologies. Research could examine the effects of teachers trained in embodied methodologies on their students' engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. This would involve studying how the integration of movement, empathy, and body-centered practices in teaching affects student well-being, cognitive development, and overall classroom dynamics. Given the influence of socio-material contexts on teacher identity, future research could investigate how different cultural or socio-economic settings impact the effectiveness of embodied practices. Understanding the interplay between embodied learning and cultural contexts could help educators tailor these methodologies to diverse classroom environments and explore the socio-material dynamics of professional identity. A significant challenge in adopting embodied learning is the lack of standardized tools to assess its impact on teacher development. Future research could focus on designing and validating assessment frameworks that capture changes in embodied awareness, empathy, creativity, and professional identity in teachers. Such tools could help educators and researchers evaluate the effectiveness of embodied methodologies in a structured way.

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