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*Facilitation as an Act of Love: A Self-Study of How a Facilitator's Pedagogy Changed Over Time in the Process of Supporting a Community of Learners*

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## Abstract

1  
2 **Purpose:** This study aims to understand how a facilitator's pedagogy changed over  
3 time in the process of supporting a community of learners to teach using an activist  
4 sport approach. **Methods:** Self-study framed this 4-semester research project.  
5 Participants included the lead author, two critical friends, 10 pre-service teachers and  
6 110 youth. Data collected included lead researcher's field notes and debriefing  
7 meetings between the lead author and the two critical friends. **Results:** Findings  
8 identified the facilitator's: (a) struggles to create a democratic learning space in a  
9 university context; (b) discomfort with giving up control and allowing for various  
10 degrees of pre-service teachers' engagement; and (c) negotiation of feeling of  
11 '*saudade*' [the love that remains after someone is gone] while creating a group identity.  
12 **Discussion/Conclusion:** A pedagogy of facilitation as an act of love offers genuine  
13 possibilities for decolonizing and reinventing reality by naming, critiquing, and  
14 challenging/negotiating forms of oppression.  
15 **Keywords:** facilitator; activist approaches; community of practice; PETE

16 Facilitation as an act of love: a self-study of how a facilitator's pedagogy changed over time  
17 in the process of supporting a community of learners

18 In teacher education research, several studies demonstrate the benefits of cultivating  
19 learning communities that empower teachers to direct their own learning (Parker, Patton,  
20 Madden, & Sinclair, 2010; Patton, Parker, & Pratt, 2013; Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017).  
21 Learning communities provide teachers with opportunities to learn from and with one  
22 another, creating an intentional, dynamic, social, and active process (Goodyear & Casey,  
23 2015; Makopoulou & Armour, 2011; Patton & Parker, 2017). When teachers collaborate in  
24 learning communities, they are more willing to take risks, reflect on their failures, and share  
25 successful practices (O'Sullivan, 2007). Learning communities help teachers focus on student  
26 learning, rather than on themselves (Patton & Parker, 2014).

27 Learning communities are one specific strategy in a pedagogy of teacher education  
28 (Korthagen, 2016). According to Korthagen, reflection is strong when participants engage in  
29 a process of co-learning from practice. For him, strong reflection is created in learning  
30 communities because it takes place on common experiences in practice. The role of a teacher  
31 or a teacher educator in a learning community is known as 'facilitator' (Hunuk, 2017; Patton,  
32 Parker, & Neutzling, 2012; Poekert, 2011). There is an accumulating body of evidence that  
33 highlights the significant role of an effective facilitator in helping teachers make changes to  
34 deeply held beliefs about teaching practices, knowledge about how to teach, and habits of  
35 practice (Patton & Parker, 2014; Patton et al., 2013). It is recognized that facilitators should  
36 guide rather than direct, question rather than show the way, and listen rather than tell (Patton,  
37 Parker, & Tannehill, 2015). Facilitators should empower teachers to learn independently and  
38 thus decrease involvement over time (Hunuk, Ince, & Tannehill, 2013).

39 Research, in both general education and physical education, examining facilitators'  
40 role has focused on professional development opportunities (Parker, Patton, & Tannehill,

41 2012; Patton et al., 2013; Poekert, 2011), the role of facilitating (Patton et al., 2012), and the  
42 journey to become a facilitator (Hunuk, 2017). Most of the studies cited investigate  
43 facilitators' knowledge and perspectives about successful facilitation. However, there is a  
44 dearth of knowledge on how to educate facilitators about learning communities (Hunuk,  
45 2017) and how the facilitator's role changes over time in order to scaffold teacher's learning.

46 Poekert (2011) refers to the skills of the facilitator as the 'pedagogy of facilitation.'  
47 The pedagogy of facilitation should encourage respectful relationships among participants,  
48 build trust and confidence, provide a balance of autonomy and external direction, and issues  
49 of power involved in shared teacher leadership (Patton & Parker, 2014). A variety of  
50 pedagogical strategies are used by facilitators to support teachers in becoming independent  
51 and life-long learners (Patton et al., 2015). Although the importance of the 'pedagogy of  
52 facilitation' in cultivating learning communities is recognized (Patton & Parker, 2014), little  
53 is known about how a facilitator's pedagogy develops over time in the process of scaffolding  
54 teachers' learning.

55 We introduce Paulo Freire's pedagogy of love (Darder 2017; Freire 1987, 1998, 2005)  
56 as a concept for understanding how the facilitator's role changed over time in cultivating  
57 learning communities. In addition to this, the pedagogy of love and Freire's critical pedagogy  
58 was used as a philosophy for approaching the facilitator's own pedagogy. In a recent paper,  
59 we explored both pre-service teachers' and youth's experiences of an activist sport approach  
60 and how a pedagogy of love emerged (Luguetti, Kirk, & Oliver, 2019). In the present paper,  
61 we extend the previous study by focusing on the pedagogy of facilitation as an act of love.  
62 We believe this gives insights into innovative ways of rethinking the pedagogy of facilitation  
63 embedded in social justice concepts. This can translate to Physical Education Teacher  
64 Education (PETE) in order to provide more meaningful learning opportunities for student

65 teachers, creating spaces for dialogue aimed at naming, critiquing and repeatedly  
66 challenging/negotiating various forms of oppression.

### 67 **Pedagogy of Facilitation as a Freirean Act of Love**

68 We must dare in full sense of the world, to speak of love without the fear of being  
69 called ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific, if not antiscientific. We must dare in order  
70 to say scientifically, and not as mere blah-blah-blah, that we study, we learn, we  
71 teach, we know with our entire body. We do all these things with feeling, with  
72 emotions, with wishes, with fear, with doubts, with passion, and also with critical  
73 reasoning (Freire, 2005, p.5).

74 Based on the pedagogy of love, the facilitator assumes a role of social agent when cultivating  
75 learning communities. In that sense, love emerges viscerally in the facilitator role as an act of  
76 daring, of courage, of critical reflection in the process of social transformation (Freire, 1987,  
77 2005). For Freire, “it is impossible to teach without the courage to love, without the courage  
78 to try a thousand times before giving up” (Freire, 2005, p.5). This love is not a checklist of  
79 methods or a pedagogy of cordial relations, it is a love that requires ongoing, conscious  
80 reflection, and action for the cause of liberation (Freire, 1987, 2005). It is necessary that this  
81 love is “an armed love, the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight,  
82 to denounce, and to announce” (Freire, 2005, p.41). This love is not toward the teacher or the  
83 student, but toward the very process of education/transformation (Freire, 2005). This love is  
84 an act of bravery, courage, faith, hope, humility, patience, respect, and trust (Freire, 1987,  
85 2005), essential in order to cultivate learning communities and to create spaces for teachers’  
86 empowerment.

87 A pedagogy of facilitation as an act of love is intimately linked to a deep personal  
88 commitments to care for and enter into relationships of solidarity that support humanity and  
89 dialogue (Darder, 2017; Freire, 1987). In that sense, facilitators must abandon educational

90 goals of deposit-making, or Freire's banking concept of education, and replace with the  
91 posing of problems and developing dialogue. Facilitators, teachers, and students work  
92 together to develop greater consciousness of oppression through their efforts to name their  
93 issues, and critique and change their world together (Darder, 2002). Solidarity in this sense is  
94 to share the struggle of transforming various forms of oppression. This is a solidarity  
95 grounded in local neighborhoods, which creates new possibilities of experience, while  
96 inspiring dreams of hope.

97         A pedagogy of facilitation with love should stimulate creativity and imagination in  
98 their participants (facilitators, teachers, and youth), and the capacity to critique their  
99 surroundings, and thus, to challenge inequity and injustice (Freire, 1987). The more  
100 facilitators are willing to struggle for emancipatory dreams, the more apt they are to know  
101 intimately the experience of fear, and finally, how to control and educate their fear and,  
102 finally, how to transform that fear into courage (Darder, 2017). Thus, the facilitators break  
103 from the passive role of observer, and through active collaboration, reduce the power  
104 disparities. In that sense, knowledge is created in the context of genuine human relationships  
105 where groups of teachers and students act as subjects rather than objects of their own  
106 development (Cammara & Fine, 2008). Although Paulo Freire's conceptions of love have  
107 been widely studied in education (Darder, 2017), authors have described limitations in this  
108 theory such as the lack of clarity of how education constitutes an act of love (Schoder, 2010;  
109 Zembylas, 2018). For example, Zembylas argued that there is a tendency to assume that  
110 affects such as love, hope, and empathy are naturally occurring in all human beings and that  
111 conscientization will automatically lead to empowerment for change.

112         Discussion of the pedagogy of facilitation is less prominent in the literature (Parker et  
113 al., 2012; Patton & Parker, 2014; Patton et al., 2013; Poekert, 2011). Building on Paulo  
114 Freire's conception of pedagogy of love (Darder, 2017; Freire, 1987, 2005), this study aims

115 to understand how a facilitator's pedagogy changed over time in the process of supporting a  
116 community of learners to teach using an activist sport approach.

117

## 118 **Methodology**

119 This was a 20-month self-study (LaBoskey, 2004; Ovens & Fletcher, 2014) conducted  
120 in 2017/2018. We adopted a self-study framework to capture how the facilitator's role  
121 changes over time while supporting a community of learners. Self-study has been  
122 increasingly adopted in physical education area as a way to improve physical education  
123 teachers and teacher educators understanding and action in practice (Casey & Fletcher, 2016;  
124 Fletcher & Casey, 2014; Hordvik, MacPhail, & Ronglan, 2017; Richards & Ressler, 2015).

125 Oven and Fletcher's (2014) features of self-study were used because they are  
126 connected to Freire's notion of a pedagogy of love. According to Oven and Fletcher, there are  
127 three features to help frame the broad nature of self-study research: community, stance, and  
128 desire. 'Community' means the professional network of practitioners who share, research,  
129 and develop their own practice as teachers and teacher educators. 'Stance' represents the idea  
130 that self-study is an inquiry-oriented stance towards researching one's own practice. 'Desire'  
131 means the 'self' reflects a desire to be more, to improve, to better understand. In this study  
132 the lead author conducted systematic research of the self-in-practice in order to consider and  
133 articulate the complexities and challenges of teaching and learning to teach. It is aligned with  
134 the pedagogy of love in the sense of developing critical reflection, dialogue, and collective  
135 social change (Freire, 1987, 2005).

## 136 **Setting and Participants**

137 This research project took place in a community engagement sport program at a  
138 University in Guarujá, Brazil. Guarujá is an urban, coastal, and tourist city that has high rates  
139 of income inequality. The facilitator in this project [lead author], a lecturer at the University,

140 contacted the manager of the community engagement sport program to explain the objectives,  
141 and methodology of the research. In 2017, the manager agreed to open a ‘Sport and  
142 Empowerment’ class for local young people, to teach a variety of sports such as invasion  
143 games, net/wall/racket games, fielding/striking games, athletics, combat sports, and  
144 gymnastics using an activist sport approach. We invited young people from two schools in  
145 the University’s neighborhood to participate in this project. this project. After school the  
146 young people came to the University for this class taught by preservice teachers (PSTs) from  
147 the University who volunteered to participate in the project. This ‘Sport and Empowerment’  
148 course was not linked to any unit in the PSTs’ university training program. The youth and  
149 their parents gave assent, and parents signed an informed consent form. Ethical approval for  
150 this study was received from the Ethics Committee of the first authors’ university (protocol  
151 number 2.258.880). All PSTs signed informed consent forms.

152         The facilitator and lead author (Carla) was a 35-year-old middle class Brazilian  
153 teacher educator with six years of experience using activist teaching approaches in a variety  
154 of physical activity settings in and out of schools in both Brazil and the U.S. This study of  
155 young people’s participation in a sport program involved 110 participants over a four  
156 semester period of time: semester one, 16 youth ages 9-13 (9 boys and 7 girls); semester two,  
157 35 youth ages 7-13 (20 boys and 15 girls); semester three, 64 youth ages 7-13 (36 boys and  
158 28 girls); and semester four, 74 youth ages 7-13 (41 boys and 33 girls). The youth  
159 participated in more than one semester (e.g., twelve young people participated in all  
160 semesters).

161         In addition, 10 PSTs in total (6, 5, and 10 in the first, second, and third/fourth  
162 semester, respectively) were part of the study, with five PSTs teaching across the last three  
163 semesters of the program. Five PSTs participated in the project during one semester only. The  
164 PSTs (five women and five men) were in the third or fourth semester of their eight semester



165 Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program. Their ages ranged from 18-35 years  
166 and they had no previous experience with activist teaching approaches.

167 The second and third authors were not participants in this study; rather they acted as  
168 critical friends. Carr and Kemmis (1986) affirmed that the critical friend is an outsider of the  
169 group that helps people to act more prudently and critically during the research toward  
170 transforming reality. The second author (Kim), an expert in activist approaches for more than  
171 24 years, served in a peer debriefing role and assisted with progressive data analysis. The  
172 third author (Missy), an expert in learning communities for more than 20 years, served in a  
173 peer debriefing role and was involved with the conceptual work and the general design of the  
174 study.

### 175 **An Activist Sport Approach**

176 In this study we implemented an activist sport approach that has been developed over  
177 the last seven years with and for youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds (Luguetti et al,  
178 2017a, 2017b; Luguetti, Kirk, & Oliver, 2019). The approach was designed as a means of  
179 listening and responding to youth while using sport as a vehicle for assisting them in  
180 becoming critical analysts of their communities and developing strategies to manage the risks  
181 they face. The activist sport approach combines student centered pedagogy, inquiry-based  
182 learning centered on action, an ethic of care, attentiveness to the community, and a  
183 community of sport as key critical elements (Luguetti et al, 2017a, 2017b). The key theme of  
184 this pedagogical model is to co-construct empowering learning possibilities through sport  
185 with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. In that sense, youth become change agents  
186 in the process of transformative learning, who seek opportunities to reframe and re-imagine  
187 their sports experiences.

188 The implementation of the activist sport approach lasted 20 months across four  
189 academic semesters. Youth participated in sport sessions twice a week for one hour each day

190 (total of 112 classes). The lead author was responsible for teaching the learning activities  
191 with the youth in the first semester (23 classes) while the PSTs were observing and  
192 participating with the young people. In the second, third and fourth semesters (33, 30 and 26  
193 classes, respectively), the lead author observed and offered feedback to the PSTs as they  
194 taught learning activities to the youth.

195 A Student-Centered Inquiry as Curriculum (Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013) approach  
196 was used both as a process of working with the PSTs and youth as well as serving as a  
197 framework for data collection. This process includes *Building the Foundation Phase* followed  
198 by a four-phase cyclical process of *Planning, Responding to Students, Listening to Respond,*  
199 and *Analyzing Responses (Activist Phase)* as the basis of all content and pedagogical  
200 decisions. The *Building the Foundation Phase* took place over six weeks and was designed to  
201 identify the factors that facilitated and hindered the youth sport engagement. Carla and the  
202 PSTs started the classes by inquiring into what the youth liked/disliked, their perceptions of  
203 school and family, their opinions about the training sessions, and the barriers to sport  
204 participation that they encountered in both the program and their community as a whole. In  
205 this phase the instructors also broadened their perspective about sport. For example, the youth  
206 experienced different types of sports and games, such as invasion games, net/wall/racket  
207 games, fielding/striking games, athletics, combat sports, gymnastic, and others.

208 Given what was learned during *Building the Foundation Phase*, Carla, the PSTs, and  
209 the youth co-created and implemented the *Activist Phase*. This 8-week *Activist Phase* started  
210 from challenges that the youth saw as important to developing strategies for negotiating  
211 barriers. In each semester a different action phase was developed based on the barriers the  
212 youth identified. *Planning* involved weekly meetings between the PSTs and Carla. *Listening*  
213 *to Respond* involved the strategies Carla and the PSTs used to inquire about the youths'  
214 perceptions of the sport sessions and the barriers they experienced in sport contexts.

215 *Responding to Students* involved the creation of training sessions that bridged what Carla and  
216 the PSTs were learning from the youth. *Analyzing the Responses* involved the debriefing and  
217 analysis of data between Carla and the PSTs.

## 218 **Data Sources**

219 Multiple sources of data were collected across 20 months, including lead researcher  
220 field notes, debriefing meetings between the lead author and the two critical friends,  
221 collaborative PST group meetings (75 meetings) and two individual PST interviews (#18)  
222 and two focus group interviews (#6). For this study, the main data sources were the field  
223 notes and debriefing meetings with the critical friends.

224 **Lead researcher field notes.** Carla wrote field notes (98 pages) to determine the  
225 kinds of teaching decisions she made throughout two years of classes. She wanted to explore  
226 and categorize the nature of her judgments to develop a deeper understanding of her teaching  
227 practices. Carla's hope was that by seeing her teaching through a self-study lens, she might  
228 discover some facts that would not only improve her own teaching practice, but also offer  
229 insights into how facilitators learn.

230 **Debriefing meetings.** Because self-study requires interaction with others to move  
231 beyond reflection, Carla had two critical friends during this study. The two critical friends  
232 and Carla met several times over the four semesters through Skype. Their discussions moved  
233 between Carla's experiences as a facilitator learner and her developing understanding of the  
234 processes involved in being a facilitator.

235 In order to increase data interactivity, the PST data were considered alongside the  
236 facilitator's data, as suggested by Ní Chróinín, O'Sullivan and Fletcher (2016). These data  
237 were represented by the collaborative PST group meetings and the PST individual and focus  
238 group interviews. We also achieved interactivity through the critical friendship process where  
239 two professors collaborated with the lead investigator to explore the problem of practice.

240 According to LaBoskey (2004), interactivity is crucial because incorporating multiple  
241 perspectives in research practices challenges assumptions and biases, reveals inconsistencies,  
242 expands potential interpretations, and triangulates findings.

### 243 **Data Analysis**

244 Data analysis involved four steps that embraced both inductive and deductive  
245 processes. Inductive process was applied first in the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the  
246 first step of the analysis, Carla read and coded all of the lead researcher field notes and the  
247 debriefing meeting notes taken during the meetings between the lead researcher and two  
248 critical friends to capture how the facilitator's role changed over time during her support of  
249 PSTs learning an activist sport approach. Through this inductive analysis, statements and  
250 ideas were developed as data were read and re-read, and this led to the identification of key  
251 moments of insight, confusion, or uncertainty in her practices. The second step involved  
252 constant comparison, where data from the collaborative PST group meetings and PST  
253 individual and focus group interviews were mapped onto the existing data. The PSTs' data  
254 were examined to identify moments when they confirmed the researchers' interpretations of  
255 their practice. The third step of the analysis involved the two critical friends and Carla  
256 discussing the codes Carla had identified during the first and second steps of the analysis in  
257 relation to the research question, how did a facilitator's pedagogy change over in the process  
258 of supporting a community of learners to teach using an activist sport approach? Kim and  
259 Missy challenged the interpretation of coded data and the construction of themes. In this third  
260 step, data were moved between the different themes (key moments of insight, confusion, or  
261 uncertainty) until a level of agreement was reached. The fourth and final step involved  
262 'thinking with' Freire's Pedagogy of Love (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Pseudonyms are used  
263 throughout to refer to the PSTs. For the presentation of results, direct quotes have been  
264 translated into English by the first author.

265

## Findings

266 In this self-study, I explored how my pedagogy changed over time in the process of  
267 supporting a community of learners to teach using an activist sport approach. In the results  
268 section, I use first-person voice to allow you, the reader, to get closer to my views,  
269 experiences, and – in line with the aim of the investigation – how my role changed over time.  
270 The first involved my struggles to create a democratic space within a community of learners  
271 in a university setting. The second involved my discomfort of giving up control and allowing  
272 allowing for various degrees of PST engagement. The third involved negotiating my feelings  
273 of *saudade* [the love that remains after someone is gone] in cultivating a learning community.  
274 I represent the findings through vignettes because I want to express my thoughts,  
275 associations, feelings, and memories during the processes of supporting PSTs learning an  
276 activist sport approach.

### 277 **Vignette 1: “I will not come here to teach you.” My Struggles to Create a Democratic** 278 **Learning Space within a Community of Learners in a University Setting**

279 I came to this project hoping that the PSTs would become better learners and  
280 empowered PSTs (Freire, 2005). In that sense, the project had a dual purpose for me: (a) to  
281 teach my PSTs to use an activist approach when working with youth, and (b) to help my  
282 PSTs acquire the skills that enable them to commit to their ongoing learning. I hoped for the  
283 same outcomes for my PSTs that I hoped for in the youth. However, my lack of experience in  
284 creating democratic spaces within learning communities in university settings resulted in  
285 tensions.

286 Although I had 10 years of experience as a teacher educator, I started this project as a  
287 beginner in knowing how I was supposed to create democratic spaces in a learning  
288 community. I was feeling lost, and it made me uncomfortable. How could I figure out the  
289 balance between freedom and control necessary to create a democratic space? I knew I should

290 share power with the PSTs, but I didn't have any idea of how to do it. The PSTs were not  
291 formally enrolled in my classes. They didn't receive grades for being in this learning  
292 community. They were volunteers and my experience as a teacher educator was not helping  
293 me to negotiate power relations with my PSTs such as the balance between freedom and  
294 control. In addition to this, my professional identity developed within a teacher-centred  
295 pedagogy. For example, it was related to delivering lectures, developing teaching programs,  
296 designing learning guides, and preparing assessment tasks. I knew I would have to create a  
297 democratic space, but my previous experiences with PSTs were not helping my pedagogical  
298 decisions.

299 I experienced democratic learning spaces during my doctoral studies, when I worked  
300 with youth and coaches in a Non-governmental Organization (NGO) to co-create a sport  
301 program that would address the needs of the youth. Through that project, I learned to become  
302 more comfortable with a democratic space that was open-ended, messy, and risky (Luguetti  
303 et al, 2017a). So, I decided to work with my PSTs in the same way that I had worked during  
304 my doctoral studies: using inquiry and student-centered pedagogy. However, I did not  
305 anticipate that a learning community in a university setting would be so different from my  
306 experiences in the NGO.

307 I said to the PSTs in the beginning, "what we're going to experience here is not a  
308 class. I will not come here to teach you." I struggled to understand that in order to create a  
309 democratic space, it would be necessary for the PSTs to consider the experience as a class  
310 and for me to formally teach the PSTs. I believe my lack of experience creating democratic  
311 learning spaces in the university setting made me disbelieve that indeed this could be a class  
312 where I was teaching them something valuable. It wasn't a traditional class, but it was most  
313 certainly space to learn. I didn't know what it would look like. I didn't know if it would  
314 work. I just wanted to do something that would help the PSTs and the kids.

315 I also struggled to create a democratic learning space due to the university culture,  
316 which lacked democratic spaces. I was working with a diverse group of PSTs, therefore, I  
317 believed that the University should create spaces so that these students could become  
318 autonomous and empowered. However, I felt as if the university disempowered the PSTs, and  
319 this culture was represented in their attitudes. For example, I realized how the final tests and  
320 lectures were valued by the PSTs more than the democratic space where people's voices were  
321 sought and collective decisions were made. The PSTs commented, "I could not come to the  
322 project because I had to study for an important test," or "passing this test is the most  
323 important thing for me this semester." At the same time, the PSTs didn't access the resources  
324 I offered to them, such as examples of lesson plans, summary of meetings, and material  
325 produced by the youth. Furthermore, I had to give PSTs direction about their learning most of  
326 the time. This lack of engagement can be attributed in part to the fact that I initially defined  
327 the project thus, "what we're going to experience here is not a class." Additionally, the PSTs  
328 lacked experience in democratic spaces, and they were not accustomed to the culture of social  
329 learning spaces. They believed in a top-down way of learning where the lecturer would tell  
330 them what they should do. The democratic space challenged the culture of learning found in  
331 their university, and challenged the culture of students within the educational system.

332 I learned the importance of negotiating these challenges over the course of the  
333 semesters. I was honest with the PSTs about my intentions and my lack of experience in  
334 cultivating learning communities in the university context. I explained "why I was doing  
335 what I was doing" and reflected *with* them about the challenges we faced in the project and  
336 collaborated over solutions to barriers we encountered. I invited them to be co-responsible for  
337 this democratic space. I had to push them to value each other's knowledge and see the  
338 benefits of learning as a social space. As I changed, so too did the PSTs. I asked for their  
339 help. We learned together.

340 **Vignette 2: “Am I too technical?” Giving up Control and Allowing for Various Degrees**  
341 **of Engagement**

342 It is the first lesson in the second semester and I was observing the PSTs in their first  
343 lesson leading the activities. They were divided into two groups; one group was working with  
344 a group of youth ages 7-9 and the other group was working with youth ages 10-13. At the end  
345 of the lesson I concluded: “it seemed they haven’t seen me teaching for the last six months. I  
346 swore they would understand what had to be done this semester, but they were completely  
347 lost in class today’ Have they forgotten the 23 classes in which I was leading the classes?  
348 What happened?” Janaina and Carina spent half of the class time organizing the youth, while  
349 Roberta and Rodrigo taught an activity in which the kids were waiting in a huge line. Jose  
350 arrived five minutes late for the class, and he was wearing flip flops. The PSTs finished the  
351 class exhausted, and I recognized in their eyes the feeling of “we survived!” At that moment I  
352 realized that not only would I need to help them to understand an activist approach, but also I  
353 would need to help them discover themselves as teachers. How would I do that? Furthermore,  
354 I would need to relinquish some control and help them learn to negotiate the challenges that  
355 emerged.

356 Relinquishing total control was a challenge for me as a facilitator. And as much as we  
357 planned together in their weekly meetings, what happened in class was typically  
358 unpredictable and chaotic. I learned to understand that errors were great learning  
359 opportunities and should be used as such. During our post-teaching meetings, we reflected on  
360 our teaching, and sought to improve for the next class. Additionally, the PSTs taught me that  
361 I should be patient with them through learning to see themselves as teachers, although this  
362 process was not linear or on my time. I learned that it was useless pushing them to learn a  
363 student-centered pedagogy. I needed to first help them to organize routines, to talk to the



364 youth, to use hand signals and other non-verbal communication methods. The PSTs also  
365 taught me that I needed to be patient with their engagement.

366 I talked to my critical friends about the challenges of working with PSTs. I said that  
367 one day I got a message that a PST could not attend the project because he had to finish  
368 writing a paper for a class. I was questioning his lack of commitment to the project. The  
369 weekly meetings were essential to us and some of the PSTs have been missing them. Another  
370 example, last week I left the class for few minutes and when I came back, Jose was on one  
371 side and Rodrigo on the other side kicking the ball with the boys. I know I made a mistake  
372 because I did not prepare the PSTs to be alone and teaching.

373 I was asking the PSTs to teach something that they did not understand fully. They saw  
374 me doing it, but it was not enough for them to learn how to do it themselves; I had to teach  
375 them how to do it. I understood that working with PSTs was quite different from working  
376 with coaches. On the one hand, the coaches I worked for during my doctoral studies were  
377 extremely committed while on the other hand, the PSTs needed time to engage with the  
378 project. So, allowing different levels of engagement was essential for their continuation and  
379 growth in the project. In the third semester new PSTs joined the group and they divided  
380 themselves into three groups. In the semester, I observed that the PSTs improved their  
381 engagement with the youth. They created WhatsApp groups for communication. This was  
382 something that I did not suggest or control. Each group negotiated their lesson plans before  
383 sharing with the whole group. The PSTs began to realize that they learned more from each  
384 other when they actively sought each other's input. Janaina said, "I think the new PSTs  
385 helped our learning... When we were the new PSTs, Carla transmitted the knowledge in a  
386 very technical way. Now the new PSTs can understand in a simpler way because we are  
387 teaching them."

388           At that time, I was no longer the one responsible to control the situation since the  
389 more experienced PSTs were taking on more of the leadership responsibilities in the group.  
390 In the fourth semester, the PSTs sent me pictures and videos on WhatsApp and asked me  
391 questions when they needed me. The PSTs were in control and I was just being advised of  
392 lesson plans or asked for my input when they needed help.

393 **Vignette 3: “They taught me the value of the word saudade.” Creating a Group Identify**  
394 **and Negotiating My Feelings of Saudade**

395           It is the beginning of the fourth semester and my last day in the project. I ride my bike  
396 to the university, thinking how painful it will be to say goodbye to the PSTs. The weekly  
397 meeting started, but this time the PSTs were not talking about the challenges they faced in  
398 previous classes. Instead, the PSTs wanted to thank me and tell me how the project had been  
399 important to their lives. Rodrigo began by saying that he learned that it is possible to dream:  
400 “I used to complain about everything and here I realized that small changes can make a  
401 difference in everybody’s lives.” While each PST was speaking of what was learned, I  
402 thought that if I had not got a job outside of Brazil, I would have never left the project. I was  
403 thinking how this project transformed *me* and how I became part of these PSTs’ lives.  
404 Thrilled, I told the PSTs: “it is hard to say goodbye to my new family.” In that moment, my  
405 feeling of longing, Melancholy, and nostalgia could be represented by the word *saudade*.

406           *Saudade* is a Portuguese word that means ‘the love that remains’ after someone is  
407 gone. It is the recollection of feelings, experiences, places, and events that once brought  
408 excitement, pleasure, wellbeing, and that now triggers the senses and makes one live again.  
409 With this feeling, I remembered the first semester, when I first met them. We barely knew  
410 each other, and we were not committed to each other. We worked pretty much in an  
411 individualistic way. In the second semester, we started to know each other better, but the  
412 PSTs still planned most of the lesson individually.

413 In the third semester, we agreed to invite new PSTs to be part of the project. They  
414 discussed that they would like to spend more time together in order to help the newcomers.  
415 We decided to hold a one-hour meeting on Monday instead of two, 30-minute meetings. We  
416 wanted to have more time to plan with the new PSTs. We organized two barbecues and most  
417 of the PSTs described the importance of the interpersonal relationship to their learning. From  
418 these parties I too could know each PST better. I understood the challenges they faced to pay  
419 the university fees, and how proud their communities were because they were attending a  
420 university. They showed me that they were PSTs who wanted to struggle for social justice  
421 and who imagined other possible futures.

422 We have created an identity as a group. The university started to see us in a different  
423 way. They became my family. In my last day on the project, I kept thinking that the PSTs do  
424 not need me anymore. I was leaving, but the group stays, a strong group, an empowered  
425 group, and a group that values moments together. I felt as if a part of me stays with them. I  
426 don't want to leave this group. I want to stay, not because they need me, but because they  
427 teach me, they transform me, and they make me a better person. By remembering them, I am  
428 always feeling *saudade*. I realized that love emerged in our pedagogy.

## 429 Discussion

430 The aim of this study was to capture how a facilitator's pedagogy changes over time in the  
431 process of supporting a community of learners to teach using an activist sport approach. This  
432 study extends our understanding in the area by exploring how to educate facilitators about  
433 social justice within learning communities. In this study, a pedagogy of facilitation cultivated  
434 a learning community that was situated, and demonstrated the benefits of learning  
435 communities as described in previous studies (Parker et al., 2010; Patton & Parker, 2014;  
436 Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017). However, considering a pedagogy of facilitation as an act of  
437 love allowed for the enhancement of situated learning that prioritize social justice (Freire,

438 1987, 2005). The PSTs learned to become activist teachers and the facilitator learned to  
439 scaffold their learning. In this section, we discuss: (a) learning communities and pedagogy of  
440 teacher educator; (b) solidarity and humility as expressions of love in a facilitator's  
441 characteristics; and (c) future studies.

#### 442 **Learning Communities and Pedagogy of Teacher Educator**

443 We argue that cultivating learning communities with PSTs might provide learning  
444 more meaningful, creating spaces for dialogue aimed to name, critique, and repeatedly  
445 challenge inequities. Carla created a democratic space with the PSTs that creates  
446 opportunities for meaningful, worthwhile, and frequent discussions, which in turn facilitated  
447 the development of their pedagogy. Although this learning community was cultivated in a  
448 space outside the formal curriculum, we believe that the results could help us to rethink  
449 teaching and learning pedagogy for teacher education (Korthagen, 2016). It would give  
450 insights of a pedagogy of teacher education that would be largely different from the  
451 traditional mainstream lecturing approach.

452 In a learning community, teachers come together to inquire into their respective  
453 practices and to develop their understanding of how to use new pedagogical approaches  
454 (Patton & Parker, 2014). By facilitating a learning community and reflecting through self-  
455 study, Carla changed her pedagogy. In addition, the learning community impacted Carla's  
456 journey of becoming a teacher educator. For example, Carla learned to negotiate her  
457 discomfort with giving up control and allowing for various degrees of PSTs' engagement.  
458 Carla understood that across time the PSTs were learning more from each other. In addition  
459 to this, Carla also struggled to understand that in order to create a democratic space, it would  
460 be necessary for the PSTs to consider the experience as a class and for her to formally teach  
461 the PSTs. Carla had to negotiate control and freedom in her pedagogy. Self-study seemed to  
462 be a powerful instrument to investigate how Carla's pedagogy changed across time. Self-

463 study practices have proved to be attractive to teacher educators because they place teaching  
464 and learning about teaching at the center of the research endeavor (J. Loughran, 2014).

465 By considering a pedagogy of love, Carla assumed the role of an activist who  
466 identifies power relations and reduces inequities through pedagogical dialogue. Carla fought  
467 with the PSTs against some forms of oppression that happened in the university. The PSTs  
468 believed in a top-down way of learning where the lecturer would tell them what and how they  
469 should learn. By insisting on creating a democratic space in this situation, the culture of  
470 learning in the university was challenged, which in turn challenged the culture of students  
471 within the traditional educational system. This resistance observed in the PSTs behavior  
472 might suggest a neoliberal environment that seeks to limit education to technological practice  
473 or what Paulo Freire called the banking concept of education where education is no longer  
474 understood as formative, but simply as training (Freire, 1987, 2005). The banking concept of  
475 education stifles critical thought, reducing citizenship to the act of consuming, defining  
476 certain marginal populations as contaminated and disposable, and removing the discourse of  
477 democracy (Darder 2017; Giroux 2011). In that sense, education is no longer understood as  
478 formative, but simply as training (Freire, 1987, 2005). The learning community, cultivating  
479 by Carla, the PSTs, and youth, created a space to challenge this paradigm.

#### 480 **Solidarity and Humility as Expressions of Love in a Facilitator's Characteristics**

481 We found that solidarity and humility were important characteristics to scaffold PSTs'  
482 learning an activist approach. The facilitator needs to be a solidary person who nourishes  
483 authentic interpersonal relationships. Carla described this authentic relationship in the  
484 vignette where she explored her feeling of *saudade*. Carla explained that in the first semester  
485 they barely knew each other and operated in an individualistic way. Carla worked with the  
486 PSTs to create spaces of communion where they start to care for each other. They learned the  
487 importance of these interpersonal relationships. Carla understood the challenges the PSTs

488 faced and shared her struggles with them as well. They created an identity as a group,  
489 becoming a family. Their knowledge was created in the context of genuine human  
490 relationships where they needed the value of emotions, sensibility, affectivity, and intuition.  
491 In that sense, it was necessary to overcome the separation between being a facilitator and the  
492 expression of feeling, and considering affectivity essential in this process (Freire, 1998,  
493 2005). As Carla described, in experiencing authentic interpersonal relationships with the  
494 PSTs, “they taught her, they transformed her, and they made her a better person.” Carla  
495 shared her struggles of trying to transform various forms of oppression in the university  
496 context, with the PSTs. She joined the PSTs in achieving social justice and it required her to  
497 be humble enough to re-think herself.

498           Another important characteristic in facilitating learning communities to scaffold  
499 PSTs’ learning an activist approach is considering the facilitator as a continuous learner who  
500 is not afraid to reveal his/her own vulnerabilities. As described by Freire (2005), the  
501 facilitator needs to be an educator with genuine humility and not afraid of revealing his/her  
502 own ignorance. In the present study, Carla shared with the PSTs the struggles she was facing  
503 within the group to create a democratic space. Furthermore, she identified that creating a  
504 democratic space would challenge the culture of learning typical to the university. She also  
505 asked what she should do in order to encourage them to take responsibility for their learning.  
506 Carla revealed her discomfort with the chaos and unpredictability in the second semester.  
507 They learned together that errors were learning opportunities. The PSTs also taught Carla that  
508 she should be patient with them through their process of learning to see themselves as  
509 teachers.

510           Carla and the PSTs understood the ‘unfinishedness’ of the human person described by  
511 Freire (1998). According to him, the person in charge of education (in this case the  
512 facilitator) is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught

513 forms him/herself in this process. In this sense, being a facilitator is not about transferring  
514 knowledge or content, it is about creating possibilities for the construction and production of  
515 knowledge (Freire, 1987). Carla invited the PSTs to be co-responsible for the creating of a  
516 democratic space. It was a space where Carla had to negotiate multiple challenges and let the  
517 PSTs to know her vulnerabilities. Carla asked for their help and they learned together. There  
518 is, in fact, no teaching/facilitating without learning, without a continuous process of  
519 becoming a subject (Freire, 1998). This permanent movement of searching creates a capacity  
520 for learning, not only to adapt to the world but especially to intervene, to re-create, and to  
521 transform it (Freire). The reciprocal learning between facilitators and teachers is what gives  
522 educational practice its transformative character (Freire).

### 523 **Future Studies**

524 Future directions should continue to examine the effectiveness of pedagogy of  
525 facilitation as an act of love and specifically encourage teacher educators to reflect on  
526 solidarity and humility as important characteristics in order to scaffold PSTs' learning. In that  
527 context, the facilitator is viewed as a social agent, responsible for engaging with PSTs and  
528 teachers in an ongoing reflection and action to the cause of liberation (Freire, 1987, 2005).  
529 Our recommendations would be to explore a pedagogy of facilitation as an act of love in  
530 learning communities cultivated in the formal curriculums. Considering a pedagogy of  
531 facilitation as an act of love offers possibilities for decolonizing and reinventing reality by  
532 emphasizing dialogue, critique, and action. Our recommendations would be to study this  
533 pedagogy inside of the formal PETE programs and the impact on the process of learning  
534 about being a teacher educator through researching practice based on self-study. We suggest  
535 that the pedagogy of love offers genuine possibilities for decolonizing and reinventing reality  
536 by naming, critiquing, and challenging/negotiating various forms of oppression (Freire, 1987,  
537 2005).

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