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# Exploring critical incidents technique on social justice themes with Brazilian physical education teacher-researchers

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This research is qualitatively oriented and aims to analyze themes of social justice—according to the methodology proposed by the international project *EduHealth*—based on critical incidents in physical education classes. The incidents have been identified by six physical education teacher-researchers who produced vignettes from the situations. Three of them are Master's students from the Postgraduate Program in Physical Education at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (PPGEF-UFRN) and three are from the Professional Postgraduate Program in Physical Education in National Network at the Federal University of Ceará (ProEF-UFC). Both universities are located in the Northeastern region of Brazil. Findings point to themes related to gender inequality, trans invisibility and/or homophobia, socioeconomic inequalities, reflective-critical issues about democracy and social inclusion, the struggle for social rights, bullying, religions and empathy, intellectual and physical disabilities, diversity, identity, and low self-esteem. A critical education based on social justice is essential in facing the analyzed situations. In conclusion, the notion of social justice can help to promote the knowledge that teacher-researchers mobilize to teach physical education's thematic subjects in a contextualized and engaged way. This perspective helps to understand the privileges and unjust power relations present in Brazilian society, pointing out subsidies for reflection and deepening of the teaching and learning processes.

## KEYWORDS

critical incidents, physical education, social justice, teacher education, collaboration

## 1 Introduction

In this article our objective is to analyze themes of social justice—according to the methodology proposed by the international project *EduHealth* (Gerdin et al., 2022)—based on critical incidents identified by six teacher-researchers, three of whom are Master's students from the Postgraduate Program in Physical Education at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (PPGEF-UFRN) and three are from the Professional Postgraduate Program in Physical

Education in National Network at the Federal University of Ceará (ProEF-UFC). According to a systematic review carried out by Flor (2022) and Flor et al. (2023), we understand social justice as a theme of codependency in physical education, of historical protagonism with dialogs aimed at societies, permeating leisure, educational, professional, and entertainment environments.

There are some particularities about social justice suggested in the literature for physical education, taking as reference *EduHealth's* (Education for Equitable Health Outcomes – The Promise of School Health and Physical Education) recent publications focusing on the experiences of individuals and social groups (Philpot et al., 2021; Gerdin et al., 2022; Hill et al., 2022). Concepts related to social justice are constructed in different environments, influencing values, discourses, and practices. Philpot et al. (2021), for example, value teaching practices—with unique strategies—that address issues of social justice and that intervene directly in recognition of social inequalities instead of marginalizing, even more, the groups that compose it, either because of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity or socioeconomic position. A critical incident can be any situation observed in a class, which has some relation to social justice and allows structuring themes or problematizing the teaching and learning processes (Philpot et al., 2021).

In this sense, our research question is how do physical education teachers build knowledge about social justice from their own teaching experience? According to Hill et al. (2022), the teaching knowledge about the curriculum of an area or a discipline subject is built together and guided by action and experience. Thus, the experiences of each teacher strongly influence these processes. For Filgueiras et al. (2023), the concern with the social justice theme grew in Brazil from the progressive and critical conceptual framework of physical education in schools over the last 40 years. Although some studies have shown that this discussion takes place in schools, we still know little about how critical perspectives have impacted academic research and the practices and activism of teachers who build physical education in schools (Sanches Neto et al., 2023).

It is important to build up collaborative partnerships between physical education teacher-researchers to break down individualism and foster their teacher education within autonomous professional knowledge communities (Sanches Neto et al., 2017, 2022). When investigating teaching experiences related to social justice, it is possible to organize and group themes, problems, or issues relevant to students' learning. As each teaching and learning context is unique, we seek to encompass the diversity of teaching professional practice, through shared analysis with each teacher-researcher—co-author of this paper—regarding situations experienced in their classes shared as vignettes. Next, we point out methodological details that permeated the identification of critical incidents.

## 2 Methodology

This research is qualitatively configured as a collaborative investigation, with an emphasis on the dialog between teacher-researchers (Nepomuceno et al., 2019). The co-authors generated field data within their working contexts. The methodological perspective is supported by the procedures indicated by the *EduHealth* collective for capturing and analyzing critical incidents, through the use of a specific

instrument (Philpot et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2022). The conceptual aspects are based on a systematic review of social justice in the context of school physical education (Flor, 2022; Flor et al., 2023). The critical incident technique is a qualitative methodological procedure, used in educational research to identify significant factors that may contribute to the success or failure of certain events or practices (Tripp, 2012). In our investigation, we used the critical incident technique linked explicitly to social justice in school physical education (Philpot et al., 2021).

All participants are physical education teachers and Master's students. Three co-authors are part of PPGEF-UFRN: (1) teacher-researcher Breno, a 27-year-old beginning teacher with a background as a specialist in pedagogical practices; (2) teacher-researcher Rener, a 25-year-old specialist in educational management with 4 years of teaching experience, being this his first year teaching in high school; and (3) teacher-researcher Yasmin, a 26-year-old beginning teacher who is a certified lecturer in active methodologies for higher education. Three co-authors are part of ProEF-UFC: (4) teacher-researcher Jorlany, a 40-year-old specialist in inclusive education and recreation with 13 years of teaching experience; (5) teacher-researcher Junielison, a 35-year-old specialist in teaching methodologies with 15 years of experience teaching mathematics and physical education in primary and secondary public schools; and (6) teacher-researcher Manoela, a 36-year-old specialist in physical activity for special groups with 12 years of teaching experience. Noteworthy, regarding the identifying information included in their vignettes, the participants assumed full responsibility for authorship—as co-authors of this article—and refused anonymity regarding their participation. Each participant filled out and signed a term of consent (which can be made available on request).

Each teacher-researcher identified a critical incident from their teaching practice, using the instrument (observation model) proposed by Philpot et al. (2021, p. 63). They reported the incident and wrote a vignette about it. After filling in the model, the reports were shared by email among all the participants, who made individual comments and reflections in a thematic analysis debriefing through the codification of themes (Braun et al., 2016). For reliability, questions have been raised and resolved in this process—mediated by two teacher educators, Luciana and Luiz—since a dialog with (self)educative characteristics was established between the teacher-researchers. In the next sections, we present the vignettes—reframed as thematic arcs—and the discussion—based on the critical incidents analysis—followed by some concluding remarks on practical applications.

## 3 Findings

We chose to present findings according to the same topics suggested in the observation model: contextualization of the school and the class, description of the critical incident, actions of the teacher and students, and issues of social justice. Overall, the following thematic arcs pointed to themes related to gender inequality, trans invisibility and/or homophobia, socioeconomic inequalities, reflective-critical issues about democracy and social inclusion, the struggle for social rights, bullying, religions and empathy, intellectual and physical disabilities, diversity, identity, and low self-esteem.

### 3.1 On teacher-researcher Breno's critical incident—*precariousness is in the eye of the beholder*

Teacher-researcher Breno reported a critical incident that occurred in March 2022 at the school where he works, located in Jangurussu, on the outskirts of Fortaleza, the capital city of Ceará. The school includes the Santa Filomena community and offers teachers an incentive bonus due to the precarious conditions of access to the school. The situation happened in a 7th-grade class with 36 students, some of whom have studied together since the early grades. These students are militant and aware of the pinpoint guidelines that permeate their human condition (for example, racial and gender issues, etc.) and the social dialogs about them; however, they are seen by the school coordination as messy and disrespectful. Their attitudes are aimed at valuing and fulfilling (which should be mandatory) their rights (and those of their colleagues) inside and outside the school. The student in focus has been studying at the school since last year (6th grade in 2021), with his/her first contact with the school during the pandemic in a remote teaching format.

During the school year, the arrival of novice students outside the usual registration period in public schools in Fortaleza is notorious. On any given day of class, a student with a biological sex different from the one he identifies appears in the classroom as a newcomer. Initially, the other students looked on with curiosity and it was noticeable, in their expressions, that something different was happening. At the same moment he was introduced, the other students showed acceptance and willingness/enthusiasm with the arrival of this new student in the room. On the same day, the physical education teacher gave a group activity, which the novice student did not want to participate in, that is, he refused. During the activity, the other students were willing to teach him, as he was in an environment he was unfamiliar with and had no affinity with the dynamics of the group/class. Until the following phrase appears: "We do not choose sexuality, do we? We are born like this. Not that it's any of my business"—said a student who acts as class monitor for the novice student who was participating, after being welcomed by colleagues in the proposed activity.

As for the teacher's actions, at first, he did not know if this was a debate that the student was willing to carry out since he is a beginner and is studying in an environment that is unknown to some extent, even knowing that gender and sexuality were chosen contents by the class itself as lesson subjects in the elaboration of participatory planning (for this class in particular). The teacher quickly contacted the student and checked whether or not these debates were possible in the classroom. After that day, the teacher put into practice the contents chosen during the participatory planning and used the students' speeches during various activities (school day-to-day) to develop a fruitful dialog about gender and sexuality.

As for the actions of the students, teacher-researcher Breno points out that the other students, in addition to welcoming this new student, began to talk about various everyday issues and expressions such as: "homophobia, transphobia, prejudice, hate speech and incubated gay," among others. When asked, the students showed respect for the gender identity of the new student and got into fights (several times) when it was not respected by students from other classes, by other teachers, and by the school management staff. In short, through the codification of this critical incident, themes related to social justice

include gender inequality, trans invisibility, and/or homophobia recurrently, especially during classes, with actions instigated by the students.

### 3.2 On teacher-researcher Rener's critical incident—*every student's life matters*

Teacher-researcher Rener reported a critical incident that occurred at the state public school where he works in the city of Quixadá-CE. These are events frequently observed during a school year experienced by the teacher. The situation occurred with a class from the 3rd grade of high school (students between 15 and 18 years old), in which the teacher is the class director. This position has several attributions, one of which is to follow the class as closely as possible, understand the subjectivities of the students, as well as contributing to their (inter)personal relationships and their learning processes. The class had 36 students but, due to the critical incident, it currently has 35 students.

The class had a student with a physical disability, who uses a wheelchair as a means of locomotion due to cerebral palsy that compromises several movements of the upper and lower limbs. Initially, there were several critical incidents involving this student and the aforementioned class. Some students complained about possible sexual harassment committed by the student. These rumors caused divergences in the social relations of the classmates with the student. Some students in the class showed controversial empowering behaviors, based on prejudice committed against people with disabilities. These problems caused the student with disabilities to change classes. Consequently, this situation brought the feeling of failure for the class director teacher for not knowing how to deal in the best possible way for this to be resolved.

In one class, with the student already in his new class, the teacher was trying to develop topics covered in college entrance exams and in the national high school exam (ENEM) in the discipline of physical education. The class took place in the school court, with dynamics involving body movements. Despite the teacher's efforts to make teaching inclusive, the student asked to leave the class because he was not feeling well with the experience and that was giving him bad feelings. Trying to narrate the student's words, he said something along these lines: – Teacher, can I leave class early? And the teacher asked: – For what reason? Did something happen? So the student said to him: – It's because it only hurts me to stay here.

As for the teacher's actions, the initial events involving sexual harassment were discussed in a class on the subject of educating for citizenship and developing socio-emotional skills, which is taught by the class director teacher. The theme of the class emphasized sexual harassment, aiming to clarify some events, how it presents itself in society, and how it was presented at school. This action only strengthened the existing conflicts after the events. It was when the problem of capacitism (discrimination against people with disabilities) was more explicitly presented in the classroom and culminated in the change of class. About the class and capacitism, this theme was explored in subsequent physical education lessons and other subjects. In addition, lectures have been planned to problematize this theme.

Regarding the student's request to leave class early, the teacher talked about accepting disability as a human condition—physical and social—and the possibilities that coexist with this condition. Both, the

teacher and the student, reflected on which body practices could be explored according to the existing motor limitations. After the conversation, the student decided to stay in class and that's when they talked privately for a long period. This conversation made the teacher "leave aside" the other students at that moment, as it was a very broad reflection that required his exclusive dedication to the student. As for the actions of the other students, no capacitism-related behaviors were observed after changing classes. However, we cannot say whether the justification for these actions was the deepening of their knowledge on the subject or simply by forgetting the situation due to the lack of coexistence with the student involved. After their private conversation, there was an improvement in the relationship between the teacher and the student, with no new requests to leave classes early. According to the codification dialog, the recurring theme in this critical incident encompasses questions about the social injustice lived by people with disabilities.

### 3.3 On teacher-researcher Yasmin's critical incident—*growing up is not a choice*

Teacher-researcher Yasmin reported a critical incident that occurred in one physical education class at the school where she was co-responsible for teaching during the second semester of 2018. Then, she was a recipient of the Institutional Scholarship Program for Pedagogical Residency, a governmental program aimed at teacher induction as part of public education policies. The school teacher had a role as a preceptor. The teacher was between 30 and 40 years old, had a Master's degree in physical education and, at that time, was working with social justice issues in her classes, especially on gender and sexuality. A group of undergraduates who were taking the discipline "Physical Education in Elementary and High School"—at UFC—also followed the teacher's classes. Thus, that class was planned and carried out by the undergraduates as an intervention project, together with the preceptor teacher, in a high school class (with students between 14 and 18 years old) from a state public school in Ceará. The students were familiar with learning physical education subjects that contextualize social justice issues. This perspective referred to critical-reflective moments during the class.

The class was organized in four moments, two of which were identified as critical incidents by the teacher-researcher Yasmin, as both moments dialog with each other. The first moment refers to seeing the individualities of the students, who pointed out their idiosyncrasies. For example, one student said, "I'm the only one who's a parent." In the second moment, the proposal was for students to assume other identities, considered "standards of society" and, later, assume identities that do not "fit" those standards. In this way, they assumed identities such as "heterosexual man" and "I am HIV positive and have an active sex life," among others. Some identities provoked laughter and jokes in this experience. Together with the teacher, the undergraduates collaborated both in explaining and executing the moments of the class, as well as in critical reflections.

Regarding the experience of idiosyncrasies, after each student cited their particularities, there was a dialog about the notion of difference. The idea was reinforced that no one is the same, and no one fits into a normative box, as we all have particularities that make us different. In the activity of assuming an identity, the students were asked the reason for laughing and joking about certain assumed

identities, then dialoguing about the attitude of each one in the face of the difference, of what differs from the standard, in addition to a brief reflection about bullying. At that moment, according to the teacher-researcher Yasmin, the students showed a certain maturity in listening to and understanding the particularities of each student. As for the attitude toward "non-standard" identities, a moment of criticism and reflection was built up among the students in order to respect their different identities. In summary, the critical incident encompasses questions about identity markers and differences present in society.

### 3.4 On teacher-researcher Jorlany's critical incident—*what if poverty was a joke?*

Teacher-researcher Jorlany reported a critical incident that occurred in the second semester of 2022 at the school where she works in the state public network of Maranhão. The situation occurred with four classes from the 1st grade of high school (students between 14 and 16 years old). There was a consultative and deliberative assembly for the elaboration of the rules for the school's intramural games. It was organized and presided over by the physical education teacher with the presence of the commission of class representatives, formed by the classroom leaders, physical education monitors, and team coordinators. The students present at the assembly demonstrated a good affective relationship with the teacher and had been involved in the proposed activity, interacting, giving opinions, agreeing or disagreeing, and suggesting actions for each topic presented. In the conversation circle mediated by the teacher, reflective and critical dialogs about social justice took place; however, situations of bullying, disrespect, and indifference were also identified. These statements by some students were interpreted by their colleagues as "jokes."

When approaching the topic of the use of clothing for the competition, following the representative democratic criterion, the students decided, unanimously, for the mandatory use of standardized equipment by the competitors, leaving each class to choose its template and design. However, the following day, several students approached the teacher requesting the removal of their names from the competing teams because they were unable to buy any equipment. During the assembly, the teacher presented the topics and then opened space for the representatives to position themselves. On the topic of clothing, upon hearing the decision of the representatives, she questioned the feasibility of purchasing the equipment for all the students who were registered for the games, and received answers like "I think so." Faced with the dubious responses of the representatives, the teacher suggested that they consult their peers to better decide on the issue.

Then, the teacher met again with the committee of class representatives to inform them about the withdrawal of some students enrolled in the intramural games and the alleged reason, and they discussed the question. The teacher problematized what happened, allowing those present to reflect on the importance and responsibility of the role they were playing in the intramural games and that prior to making any decision, they needed to think about the whole student body since they represent a social group. During her classes, the teacher held conversation circles in the classes to hear the opinion of the other students and mediated a dialog about socioeconomic inequality and social inclusion. She challenged the students to resolve this situation democratically and fairly. The teacher stressed that social inclusion was one of the principles of the intramural games, and that

is why they should come up with a solution that included everyone who wanted to participate.

When identifying evidence of bullying, disrespect, and indifference toward peers in the statements of some students, the teacher highlighted what had happened, reprimanded the action—emphasizing that those statements were offensive and derogatory—and mediated discussions about the identified problem. In the assembly, the class representatives decided without thinking about the socioeconomic conditions of their other colleagues, based only on their own reality. In the conversation between the class representatives and the other students, a vote was taken in which the majority decided to make it mandatory to use standardized equipment, even in the face of the assertion of some colleagues that they would not participate in the competition because they did not have any terms of purchasing the equipment. The students who withdrew from the competition because they could not pay for the equipment accepted the condition without any objection. They accepted their oppressed condition without fighting for their right to participate in the school event.

Several opinions were presented by the students during the discussions, enriching the dialog with critical reflections on the problem. Some of which were exclusionary and laden with individualism, and others—the majority—from the perspective of social justice. At the end of the dialogs, each class (groups from A to D) presented feasible solutions to solve the problem situation. Group A chose to have standardized vests made because they were more affordable, so everyone could afford them. Class B decided to wear the school's physical education uniform since all students in the class had the uniform. Group C opted to have a standard shirt made, with each competitor being responsible for paying for their shirt. Class D chose to wear black shirts or T-shirts in competitions. The teacher advised that the material of the shirts and T-shirts should be adequate for the practice of physical activity. Topics related to social justice cover issues of socioeconomic inequalities, reflective-critical issues about democracy—the importance and responsibility of the role of representatives of the people, and the importance of conscientious voting—and issues about social inclusion, the struggle for social rights, bullying, gender, religions, and empathy.

### 3.5 On teacher-researcher Junielison's critical incident—the top-ranked public network has its problems as well

Teacher-researcher Junielison reported a critical incident that occurred on 17th October 2022 at the full-time school where he works in the municipal public network in Taperuaba, in the region of Sobral, country area of Ceará State. Sobral has the top-ranked public educational network in the country. It is important to say that most schools in Brazil are part-time institutions and have several shifts and multiple cohorts. Then, full-time schools are still exceptions. Activities at the school began on the 3rd of that month, and the school had been inaugurated in July of that year, with classes from the final years of elementary school. It was a conversation with an 8th-grade student at the time of changing teachers, at the end of the class, and nothing had been noticed during the entire class by the teacher. The class has 28 students aged 14 years. One student has specialized educational monitoring (such a condition allows being absent from classes), then he does not attend classes but remains at school to carry out other

activities. It is a class with many undisciplined students, alleged drug users, students with anxiety problems, lack of motivation, and lack of interest in classes.

The student asked to talk to the teacher, saying he wanted to vent his emotions. He reported that he wore a mask to school every day because if he took it off, his classmates would “make fun” of him, for being the ugliest boy in school and the whole world, the only one who was born ugly—according to his own words. He said he wanted to change classrooms because his colleagues were very annoying, and he could not do anything without explaining why and that the other classroom had “nicer people.” He named two students from the other classroom that would make him feel better. He also said that the students at school think he is “crazy,” but he is not. He just pretends to see their reaction and does certain types of things to avoid being beaten up by his peers. This strategy seems to be working apparently, according to the student. He also said that he had no friends, as no one liked him due to being the only one to be born that “way,” but he did not explain what way it would be. He just reinforced that he wanted to change schools because people hated him, and if he could, he would kill himself, but that he was normal as any other human being.

As for the teacher's actions, during the conversation, he guided the student to talk to his family and report to them everything that was bothering him at school. The teacher also suggested that the student ask them to look for the school principal to request a change of classroom, as that way he would feel better. The teacher asked him not to pay attention to his classmates, as this seemed to aggravate the situation and that, in a way, he was acting toward attracting their attention. The teacher tried to speak in a welcoming manner and stressed that the student was very dear to him. The conversation was reported to the educational counselor (a psychologist who works at the school), who said he would talk to the student. As for the actions of the other students, at various times, the classmates treated the student with attitudes of disrespect and, when they see him, they say “Here comes the guy.” In the student's view, his previous classmates respected him more, as they had studied together since kindergarten. The themes cover questions about bullying and the role of inclusion, since the student has many learning difficulties and, according to the teacher, probably has some intellectual disability. The incident also touches on issues of respect for diversity.

### 3.6 On teacher-researcher Manoela's critical incident—finding commonality with the students

The teacher-researcher Manoela reported a critical incident that occurred in a class—planned and carried out by herself—in the first semester of 2022 at the state public school where she works in Ceará. The situation happened in a high school class (students between 15 and 17 years old) of professional education. The class was about adventure body practices and the students were directed to a square close to the school to ride their bikes. However, one student did not want to participate in the class because she did not feel good with her colleagues. The student reported that nobody likes her and, therefore, she does not feel comfortable carrying out the riding experience with the other students.

On the one hand, the teacher's actions were of questioning after the student informed that she would not like to participate in the class.

The teacher questioned the reason and the student reiterated that she did not feel comfortable, as no one liked her. From investigating this speech, the teacher discovered that the student was being bullied. The teacher asked who were the people who did not like her, and she said that they were all her classmates. After talking for a long time with the student, saying that moment was hers alone, the teacher said that she could take the opportunity to take the bicycle, take a ride in the square and try to forget all her problems without caring about anyone else. So, the teacher spoke of her own experience when she pedaled and took the opportunity to empty her thoughts, just enjoying the wind on her face. She suggested that the student could try to do the same and that, afterward, she would probably feel better. Without pressuring her, the teacher asked her to try it and if it did not improve, it would be fine. She would no longer need to continue in class. In this way, the student spent almost the entire class riding a bicycle.

On the other hand, the actions of the other students did not show any concern with the situation. Only a few colleagues tried to motivate the student to participate in the class. Topics about social justice covered issues of bullying, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem.

## 4 Recognizing the teacher-researchers' pedagogical voices from their critical incidents

Listening critically to the teacher-researchers' voices – and their embodied pedagogy – is the landmark in discussing our findings. For [Russell and Martin \(2014\)](#), recognizing the teacher's pedagogical voice is an important focus to develop a learning agenda. From the vignettes, we agree that any teacher plans their class based on the content to be taught. However, “while most teachers are eager to develop students' learning capabilities, they may not recognize the potential and need for a learning agenda for each class” (p. 19). Then, building a learning agenda is unexplored territory for many teachers—either beginners or experienced—and teacher educators. Following, as a tentative mapping of such territory, we bridge the teacher-researchers' voices on their critical incidents.

As for the critical incident pointed out by teacher-researcher Jorlany, there was a similarity with situations experienced by teacher-researcher Breno with students who were injured during physical education classes because they did not have available equipment or adequate clothing. In addition, the environment can be inhospitable or unhealthy for the classes to take place, such as an uneven patio with tree roots and exposed stones on the path. The ideal would be for the school to provide support materials and suitable environments, as many students do not have the financial conditions to buy these objects, however significant and necessary they are, and it would not be up to the teachers to provide the conditions for looking for other environments for their classes.

For [Bracht et al. \(2015\)](#), there is a fluidity in respect to the impact of living in a broadly polarized political context with contrasting aims for education and differing aspirations for physical education as a subject in schools. Brazilian physical education is embedded within this socio-political environment, with many of its pedagogical intentions aimed at the transformation of educational practices and enhancement of the students' lives ([Sanchez Neto et al., 2021](#); [Barbosa et al., 2022](#)). There is a need to readdress social justice in different forms due to a range of privatization processes, levels of prosperity

and austerity, religious bodies, economic contingencies, national and local politics ([Evans and Davies, 2015](#); [Linnér et al., 2020](#)).

For teacher-researcher Juniélison, how teacher-researcher Jorlany observes the protagonism of her students is exciting, especially for high school students. The fact of questioning the possibility of purchasing materials for the competitions is essential, as there are problems that arise in carrying out the experiences, as not all students have the equipment. This is a question of social justice that deserves to be reflected collectively. Otherwise, the sport “at” the school would formally become the sport “of” the school. Teacher-researcher Breno believes that the decision-making of the groups, sharing the financial condition of some teammates, was a good strategy for the students themselves to find solutions that contemplated everyone. However, this referral leaves room for students not to mobilize because they consider that it does not affect them. In fact, we cannot blame the oppressed for not having favorable conditions for engaging in the activity ([Freire, 1996](#)). Or blame them for not facing up to what was exposed and fighting for the right to participate. What should be promoted are subsidies or possibilities for them to understand and work around the situation.

The critical incident made explicit by the teacher-researcher Manoela was corroborated by the collective of teacher-researchers. In addition to corroborating, teacher-researcher Breno believes that sharing experiences, even if they are catastrophic, can promote critical reflections on similar experiences with consequences for possible solutions. However, actions for awareness are needed about the relationships established and promoted in the classroom, in order to reverse the fact that no student manifested him/herself to collaborate with the colleague's removal. In this case, on the one hand, one possibility would be to expose experiences and trajectories that enhance critical reflections by students about empathy and social justice. On the other hand, for teacher-researcher Juniélison, it would first be worth noting that working on activities involving bicycles—something so popular and accessible—is a very innovative, courageous, and motivating theme. The teacher's attitude of putting herself in the student's shoes was the key point for the student to change her self-esteem and do something that is almost natural in our culture, which is riding a bicycle.

The critical incident pointed out by teacher-researcher Juniélison values the teacher's sensitive listening and welcoming speech. For teacher-researcher Breno, it is also important to value the conversation with the educational counselor and encourage a closer walk, both for the student and for the other students who practice this violence. For this, it is necessary to create opportunities for the teacher/student relationship to be welcoming, since the student felt at ease or desperate to the point of seeking help from another human being. From this perspective, it would be appropriate to reinforce the student's request to change classes, but it would be advisable for the teacher to closely monitor this process, in addition to discussing these issues with the other students who would remain in the same classroom. Promoting awareness of acceptance would be a good possibility to work on relationships and fighting bullying at school, within the classes and, specifically, in physical education classes.

As for the critical incident identified by teacher-researcher Renér, it is understandable that students feel uncomfortable in the environment. Teacher-researcher Breno, for example, also understands the situation of harassment denounced, although he does not approve the conversation about cases of harassment,

ableism, or any type of intolerance in an isolated discipline. The school, in its entirety, must dialog and promote healthy spaces so that the teaching and learning processes are enhanced in the light of social justice. In this way, it would be easier to guarantee a critical and liberating education, in addition to being (self)reflective and empowering, free of any discrimination (even if, eventually, discrimination happens to defend oneself from other violence). According to teacher-researcher Junielison, the individual conversation with the teacher had effects, as the student felt valued in terms of his own demands in a special way.

Nevertheless, teacher-researcher Manoela understands that the situation exposed by teacher-researcher Renner has two incidents: there is the issue of sexual harassment and the issue of inclusion. The issue of sexual harassment was not so clear, and teacher-researcher Manoela was curious about how the situation happened, as she had an autistic student who—according to the teacher’s judgmental meaning-making—had inappropriate behavior with the students. The student featured the behavior of grabbing colleagues and touching their intimate body parts. After a complaint from the students and a conversation with the management staff, the class director teacher realized that he had no discernment of what he was doing. We understand that this may be a view based on a simplistic justification about the characteristics of autism. In any case, the student saw his classmates playing these games with each other, or between dating couples and thought that he could also do the same. After all, couples apparently could do them. After talking to the class, and explaining to the student that he could not play these games, this issue was resolved over time.

Regarding the critical incident explained by the teacher-researcher Breno, his attitude of talking to the student to understand his level of acceptance regarding the discussion of the topic avoids embarrassment and trauma. The critical incident dealt with a situation that is very common in our classes, but according to the experience of teacher-researcher Julielison, we have advanced in relation to the pedagogical treatment that we can give. There was also a similar discussion in one of his classes, which stemmed from the gender issues that students have seen (with evidence from countries participating in the men’s FIFA Football World Cup, such as Qatar and Iran, in 2022). According to teacher-researcher Junielison’s reflection on the critical incident reported by teacher-researcher Yasmin, we are seeing increasing violent acts in schools in Brazil, possibly motivated by issues around bullying on gender stereotypes and taboos (Lima et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to discuss such events at school and, as was done in the reported class, not to miss the opportunities for debate that critical incidents promote.

## 5 Concluding thoughts on practical applications

Exploring ways to increase social justice in teaching is a pertinent and necessary topic in the 21st century. In summary, we found that reflective dialog seems the most coherent way to address the six critical incidents exposed in the vignettes. In addition, we argue that a critical education based on social justice is essential in facing the analyzed situations. The notion of social justice can help to promote the knowledge that teacher-researchers mobilize to teach physical education’s thematic subjects in a

contextualized and engaged way. This perspective helps to understand the privileges and unjust power relations present in Brazilian society, pointing out subsidies for reflection and deepening of both the teaching and learning processes.

We suggest that the six thematic arcs allow practical applications for developing the teachers’ pedagogical voices. Questioning whether the *precariousness is in the eye of the beholder* allows us to rethink how the students engage with learning amidst dilemmatic situations. Emphasizing that *every student’s life matters* means that no student should feel underrepresented or left behind. By reflecting that *growing up is not a choice* for students, it becomes paramount to acknowledge them as responsible enough to share decision makings. The affordances from the question *What if poverty was a joke?* impact how social biases and injustices are often neglected in teaching. It is important to understand that demands for social justice in school settings are unique and complex because even the *top-ranked public network has its problems as well*. Finally, finding commonality with the students is the basis for a dialogical teaching. A common ground is key to enhance criticality and avoid the risk of being socially unjust.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Ethics statement

Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

## Author contributions

BF, RS, YG, JS, FL, MR, LV, and LS contributed to the design, data gathering and analysis, and writing of the manuscript as well as refused anonymity within the manuscript. BF, JS, FL, MR, RS, and YG generated data from their vignettes. LV and LS provided feedback on drafts of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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