

Mindfulness in education: Human bodies in focus.

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What is a human body?

How might one answer this question without thinking about a certain body, in view of the multiplicity of bodies, each one with its own singularity? Furthermore, a body from the perspective of an artist is not the same as that for a doctor or a personal trainer, and my body is not like yours!

When we arrive at school (a plural environment) with our singular bodies, we face several others' bodies. In trying to define them, the school opts to make an over simplification: head, chest, limbs. This simplification exclude those bodies that are outside that standard. This process also impacts the toys used to play at school, excluding, for example, dolls without arms or legs.

The necessity to live in a society in which bodies become a important component to define identity requires us to think about them more deeply. In a particular study, Rahm (2007) and Rahm and Ash (2008) showed the way in which students assign certain types of language (patterns of enunciation) to certain social groups. The same kind of relation may be established with the body. Some bodies become associated with social groups, and that causes conflicts regarding how I am viewed by others. The bodies presented through different media and in public spaces reflect an idealism that is hard for individuals to fit. This lack of synchrony between real bodies and idealized ones is a source of pain and frustration for many. This struggle leads people to adopt nutrition disorders such as bulimia and behavior disorders such as low self-esteem, among other problems. From a collective perspective, the adoption of idealized patterns implies the exercise of intolerance, which is one of the more damaging aspects of our life in society. The existence of idealized bodies in establishing hierarchies between people valorizes some and devalorizes others. In such a situation, there is no way to establish a healthy community life in dealing with the differences that exist.

The diversity of bodies is then ignored at school, not only by the fact that the concept of the "body" is normally approached in a biologic way in the school curriculum, but mainly by the existence of political and cultural power in the school that acts *vis-a-vis* a normalization of the differences. Most teachers are not aware of the fact that they are vectors who spread a model of standardized bodies which most children and adults cannot identify with. This matter, far from being restricted to the aspect of the body, appears in other instances, such as the process of formation of identity throughout the school. In one case, the science content presented to students was often produced only by men, which made the girls feel isolated and inhibited in their science classes (Brickhouse and Potter, 2001). At the same time, the harms mentioned previously are also out of teachers' reach, since they are not aware that, when they do not explore diversity, they reinforce an impossible standard to be followed by many, which causes a norm by which to judge people and incite students' lack of compassion. The difficulty placed on themselves in the others' place is at the origins of many problems within the school context, such as bullying, with additional ethical and moral issues unfolding.

The previous thought about bodies is especially important in the context of child education, in which children first approach their own bodies. In the case of child education, we have children

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contacting another world that is different from that which is known by them, by their families, by their geography, and by their religion and habits. However, familiarity with the diversity of bodies with their biological and cultural variations is required if we want to take a non-biased approach toward differences for these children.

This theme has been assumed by experts in child education. The following section will present part of these experts' work under the theme of differences. However, it seems important to discuss this problem from the perspective of how capable teachers are to establish a state of consciousness to deal with different emotions and attitudes that come from this context. From this last perspective, the main idea is to deal with emotional patterns and mainly with the dimension of what has been called mindfulness (Powietrzynska, Tobin, and Alexakos, 2014). The connection between "aware" and "unaware" is at the core of the study of mindfulness, and the latest studies show how we can change patterns of rational thinking so that a more balanced state and emotional well-being can be achieved.

This paper aims to study ways to develop in teachers of the initial school grades a more balanced state and emotional well-being within the body in its multiple states. The expected result is that, when the teacher becomes aware of the possibilities to establish such state, they can work intensively under the theme of the body with their students to establish more healthy ways of living in the community, where their bodies in their unique differences and particularities become part of a same set of characteristics of human beings.

Standards and Differences

Based on the considerations brought to light by Sacristan and Gomez (1998), consideration for the school curriculum includes not only checking the traditional courses but also experiences regarding the re-creation of culture and the problematic situations within the school. In a society whose references are to the Caucasian heterosexual man, with urban and Christian habits, for instance, we can state that there is a body that is considered normal, acceptable, and standard-driven from a vertical perspective³.

Miskolci (2005), in a study entitled "From deviation to the differences," defines a difference as an evaluation category that comes to question the values and concepts that pose as criteria to constitute the "other" in our society. In turn, this other was built socially from a reference that came from the consolidation process of the bourgeois class, which has always been received as a derogative classification (deviation, abnormal, or pathologic).

The author states that, due to the influence that arose from Charles Darwin and Francis Galton's theories, it was understood that such deviation was inherited; thus it should undergo medical treatment and not be reproduced. Those ideas originated from a kind of science that discusses the improvement of the races, known as eugenics.

We can state that this concept influenced a generation. In the early XIX century, Auguste Comte granted meaning to the word normal as everything that is found in the greatest part of a species (MISKOLCI, 2005, p.10); i.e., "normal" referred to everything that set the habits, the culture of the ruling class. From this perspective, according to the author, the abnormal comes as a deviation, and the explanation of its status will greatly cast the base of a hypothetical spoiled nature, which, in

³ The difference is normally used to decrease instead of re-affirmation or make positive

the second half of the XIX century is denominated “degeneration.” Degeneration “was considered a deviation of the normality, by means of inheritance and cure-less” (Miskolci, 2005, p.18).

According to the author, the movement for the difference is recent (second half of the 20th century), and its purpose was to question the established rules and, likewise, reinforce what was historically considered negative. The author understands that there was an epistemological inflection of the deviation that made possible “the passage of the studies about normality and a deviation to an approach about differences” (MISKOLCI, 2005); such differences underestimate their presence instead of making it positive. This happened mainly after the Second World War, in association with the decay of a biological understanding of social identities that were on the basis of the greatest genocide of humankind.

The construction of the body concept also includes the discussion of differences. In order to understand the different bodies present in the field of education and more specifically in the classroom, we must consider how each body carries the signature of some historical and cultural marks. In this context, we can consider the following questions: how is education involved in the making of certain types of bodies? How are the experiences lived by the body in several educational contexts? Is it possible to design education to explore the difference? Who makes the difference? What differences are there, and where do they come from?

These questions present an introduction to understand that differences are socially constructed from some reference that is set as normal. According to Moruzzi (2010), in an adult-centered society, for instance, children are the difference. They act, think, express themselves, internalize, and appreciate the world around them differently from adults.

Most textbooks show a male adult as a general human body image, standardized in terms of the external and internal constituent parts displayed. Furthermore, we are bombarded by the media (which permeates schools through magazines, films, and also through the children, teachers, and school staff members' imaginations) and the image of a white and lean body as a synonym of a beautiful and healthy person. However, in other times, through textual and iconic records, the model was another beautiful body, represented by a stout women. In this sense, Daolio (1995, 37) states that,

[...] Beyond the physical similarities or differences, there is a set of meanings that each society carves in its citizens over time, such meanings that define what the body is in several ways.

Thus, the body is a product of culture, built differently in each social set; it is what brings the assigned meaning within each culture and not just their universal biological similarities. We cannot ignore the fact that consideration of the body in terms of biology (and a specific biology), it is also a social construction and serves as an ideology. Conceiving the body as merely biological and – explicitly or implicitly – as natural therefore leads one to understand the nature of man as a prerequisite of culture.

To illustrate these ideas, we might consider bodies within cultures that make us wonder, such as the long-necked “giraffe” women of Thailand, the custom of having female feet tied to keep them small that is still present in certain regions of Japan, female genital mutilation in certain African communities, and trans-sexuality and the current body art and body modification, with changes in the body including tattoos, self-mutilation, the use of ear reamers, and subcutaneous implants.

This simplistic reality, which is associated with the human body, as proposed by Cris Shilling (2001) enables one to understand the body as both a biological and social entity, considering

that the body is unfinished at birth and that, in the course of life, it changes through both biological and social processes intertwined. In this sense, it is necessary to face the challenge to put aside the idea of “bodily unity” in order to understand it.

MINDFULNESS

Based on these ideas, we aim to present and analyze teachers' concepts about the body in the early stages of elementary school. The purpose of this paper goes beyond just rating and listing the ways teachers understanding bodies and the pedagogical strategies they use to teach this subject. The plan is to overcome previous understanding and reveal evidence of change in epistemological, ontological, and axiological stances regarding the human body, then to stimulate changes in the manner in which this subject is taught in the classroom. This implies a paradigm shift in the rational and ethical thought of teachers that would allow them to work with the subject of the body in schools on a different level of consciousness (Davidson and Beley, 2013). The debate over the body and the emphasis on the differences in individuals ends up promoting the development of tolerance. Although an important step toward changing attitudes regarding bodies in all their multiple expressions, tolerance is a different way to accept differences or not to judge. This state of mind involves the ability to be in other people's shoes and to be helpful, exercising the original meaning of the word “compassion.”

The Dalai Lama makes clear several ways of understanding the notion of compassion:

“I would like to explain what is the importance of love and compassion. It is important to know what compassion is; sometimes we think it is to feel pity, but this is not compassion. Compassion is a sense of caring, but more than that, is the clear notion that all beings have exactly **the same right to happiness**. This comprehension is what brings us the sense of compassion... True compassion is what leads us to see the other person **as having exactly the same right I have for happiness**.”

(Bold excerpt, free translation extracted from a seminar held at Teatro Opera de Arame, in Curitiba, on April 5-6, 1999. Source http://www.humaniversidade.com.br/boletins/funcao_compaixao.htm, accessed on May 29, 2014)

The qualities of non-judgment, acceptance of differences, and compassion are linked to awareness; i.e. to uncover the bias, judgments, and rules of conduct within us, those that were blended in an unconscious way. Emotions and feelings are associated with situations in which we identify differences in who we are and how we live. Bodies, specifically speaking, as an important part of our identity, are among the primary sources of discrimination. Our reactions of contempt, anger, and rejection as well as sympathy, empathy, and wonder in many cases are born from the first contact we have with other human beings. These emotions are shown inside and come out of our bodies either through facial expressions by positioning our heads, backs, and limbs and changes in our breathing or our heartbeats; we react to what we perceive and interpret as differences. Hence, bodies are the origin and extend the consequences of the encounters one has with others.

Research Development

In this work, reports have been analyzed in an online discussion forum for elementary school teachers who had participated in an in-service course entitled “Improvement in Technical

Education”⁴. The course was 128 hours in length and was divided into 4 modules. The body was one of the subjects addressed in Module 3, lasted a week, and was present in the initial grades in elementary school. Around 200 students participated in 5 classes, each of whom coordinated with a tutor.

The forum was preceded by a presentation with many pictures concerning bodies in some different contexts: i) bodies in the **arts**, with the painting, "Abaporu," by Tarsila do Amaral, one of the pioneer paintings of the Brazilian Anthropophagy Movement of 1928, with its disproportionate dimensions; "The Black Woman", by the same author; and the statue of Alison Lapper Pregnant, who was born in London with short legs and no upper limbs, among others, ii) bodies in real **life** with pictures of olympic bodies without limbs, in religious rituals, anorexic and overweight bodies, black bodies, fetal bodies, child and elderly bodies; transvestites, mutilated, tattooed, amputated bodies) and iii) bodies in **textbooks**, with pictures of white, perfect, masculine, static bodies. Some of the photos used in the activity are presented below, with a personal interpretation of authors seeking to justify their choice and what one would expect of their performance of the activity. The photo itself is displayed in some cases. Sometimes links to access the Internet material are provided due to copyright reasons.

It was chosen to illustrate human bodies without the upper and/or lower limbs, inserted in several contexts of everyday life in order to contextualize the bodies found in everyday life. A Paralympic athlete without upper limbs, showed in photo 1, contrasts the classification of the human body as pictured in textbooks: head, trunk, and limbs.



Figure 1 – Paralympic athlete João da Silva

Source: Blog – CMS Eithel Dr. Pinheiro de Oliveira Lima;⁵

We also sought images that could reflect the discussion on bodies in their cultural context, aiming to promote insight among teachers about the printed culture in human bodies and expressed through them.

⁴ Accessible possible in <http://legozoom.fafe.org.br/>

⁵ Accessible in: <http://smsdc-cms-eithelpinheiro.blogspot.com.br/2011/10/11-de-outubro-dia-do-deficinete-fisico.html>

Consider the giraffe women in Thailand for instance; for cultural reasons, they modify their bodies so that they can belong within their social group. According to researchers at the University of Chiang Mai, Thailand, the neck is not growing; instead, the shoulders are pushed down – the clavicle will sag under the weight of the rims. This is how giraffe women from Thailand shape their bodies.



Figure 2 – giraffe women from Thailand

Source: Blog – Ajmatosgouveia ⁶

In order to reflect the importance of pedagogy in controlling the bodies to keep a healthy, disciplined, and equal body, we seek images of the current *body art* and *body modification*, with changes in the body ranging from paintings and tattoos to self-mutilation, flagellation, use of reamers, and subdermal implants. Such bodies are presented as a means of social action, and they serve as a powerful weapon by which it is possible, in Pluchart's words, "to expose determinism, taboos, obstacles to freedom and individuals' freedom of speech." Bodies were modified because of their owners' desire as privileged means of expression.

⁶ accessible in: <http://ajmatosgouveia.blogspot.com.br/2009/03/mulher-girafa.html>



Figure 3 – Body Art - Vampire Human, The Most Tattooed Body in the World

Source: "Matéria incógnita" ⁷

In the field of art, we seek the representation of perception, attention, and creative imagination of human bodies by several artists. We understand art as an expression of human feelings as well as of reason and reflection, which makes it possible to grant meaning to the language, to our experiences, and to the living world. Having art as a starting point, we encounter the possibility to work with human subjectivity. Such work contributes to the construction of cultural identity and a more conscious society.

Tarsila do Amaral's painting **Abaporu** inaugurates the "Antropofágico"⁸ movement in the visual arts. This movement was proposed to digest foreign art and culture and adapt these elements to Brazilian culture. Abaporu was created with disproportionate dimensions, with large hands and legs to enhance the workforce struggle which most of the workers of the country endured. Despite the limbs' proportion, we realize that the head is much smaller, showing the undervalued intellectual work at that time.

⁷ accessible in:

<http://www.materiaincognita.com.br/mulher-vampiro-e-a-lady-gaga-da-tatuagem-radical/#axzz2YfWqDGHt>

⁸ Antropofágico is a Brazilian neologism derived from another Brazilian word "antropofágico" that could be translated in english by cannibal.



Figure 4 – Abapuru Tarsila do Amaral –

Source: Tarsila – site oficial⁹

The statue of Alison Lapper Pregnant, a woman with physical disabilities (born without arms and with short legs), raised in London, was also chosen as an image for this work. At first glance, the work seems shocking, but, as pointed out by the model itself, it invites a second look “to review the concept of beauty.” “It is an honor for me to be up there,” Lapper said.

⁹ See an image of the picture at <http://tarsiladoamaral.com.br/obras/antropofagica-1928-1930/> accessed on June 9, 2014

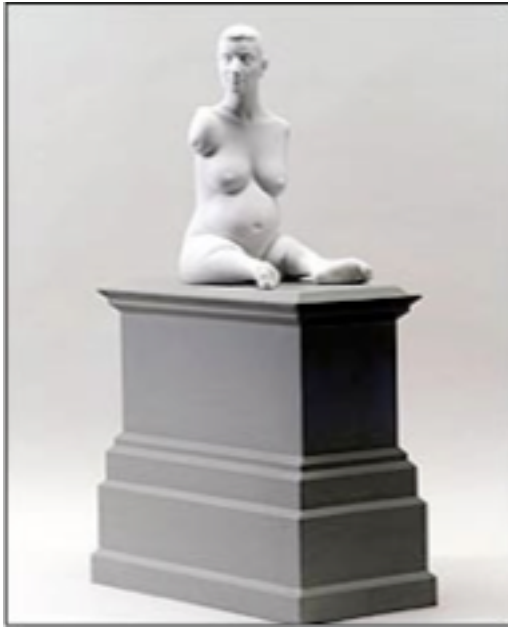


Photo 5 – Statue of Alison Lapper Pregnant in Trafalgar Square in London.

Source: Begal ¹⁰

Immersed in discussion about the differences between bodies, we also consider it relevant to reflect on the child's body. In an adult-centered society, the child is considerate of differences. As quoted above, they act, think, manifest, internalize, and appreciate the world around them differently from adults. Incidentally, is the fetus a human body?



Photo 6 – Fetus

Source: Beta Positivo ¹¹,

¹⁰ Accessible at <http://www.bengalalegal.com/estatua>

¹¹ Accessible in <http://www.betapositivo.com.br/2013/03/afeto-para-o-feto-por-diolecio-campos-junior>

Finally, we contrast the various bodies marked by cultural and biological expressions present in everyday life and art, with the static, perfect, white, and male body present in most textbooks.

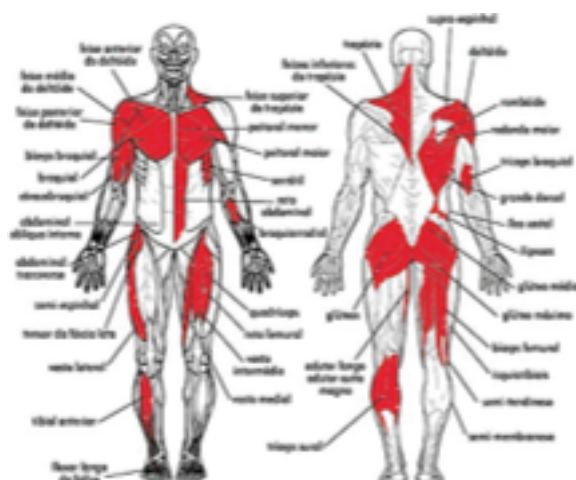


Photo 7 – Human Anatomy

Source: Corpo Humano ¹²

The presentation ended with the following question: What is the human body after all?

Motivated by this question and based on the presentation and readings, the next step was found on an online discussion forum. The forum mediator tried to lead the participants to consider how education functions in the role of the production of certain types of bodies as well as the course content discussions on the early years of elementary school. To do so, other questions were raised by the course tutors, such as the following: How are body experiences in different educational practices experienced? How is sexuality in childhood seen, especially in schools? Television and newspaper stands often display pictures of nude and half-nude bodies. What assumptions about sexuality do you believe that children get from these images?

In courses offered through a virtual collaborative learning environment, the online forum can be defined as a space of discussion on participants' proposed topics. In the interaction promoted in this space, each participant submits his or her collaborations to collective criticism, and consequently, based on group intervention, each thread adds new perspectives to their knowledge about the subject as well as integrates new arguments and reflections on what has been discussed.

The goal of the activity was to engage teachers in insight about the importance of the working printed culture in human bodies and the culture expressed by these bodies as well as their differences in horizontal logic¹³ and not only the biological body. The goal of this research was to identify through the teachers' testimonials the initial conceptions, development, and awareness of the automated and instinctive mechanisms that reduce the biological body size and exclude its social nature. Becoming aware of these automated and instinctive mechanisms that are silently

¹²Accessible in <http://www.humanbody.xpg.com.br/sistemamu.htm>

¹³Horizontal logic, in opposition to the vertical one, deals with the differences without an hierarchy between them.

learned is a step toward the emancipation and improvement for the studied theme in the school environment. Even though sheer awareness is important, it is not enough in order to accept differences for the suspension of judgment and compassion in the sense previously discussed. Several studies have been devoted to understanding the ways emotions arise and how they impact our individual and collective well-being (Davidson and Begley 2012). Some of them link the individual and collective well-being to the idea of mindfulness as the expression of a state of consciousness in which we become aware of several ways to react emotionally and physically to the different situations we face in everyday life.

The set of six characteristics that indicate the mindfulness state of consciousness may be defined as awareness, focus, compassion, acceptance of differences (or non-judgment), detachment, and ethics (Tobin and Ritchie 2012). It is important to emphasize that these features are included in a personal development project, for which each individual is at a different stage. Some of them may have developed awareness but may still be gray to the acceptance of differences or detachment. The first analysis of the material obtained from the online forum showed that many teachers exceeded the sheer magnitude of awareness; they demonstrated the attitudes and behaviors that indicate other states of consciousness listed above. Thus, what we intend to analyze are indicators of personal development that these teachers had while they attended an activity focused on the topic of the body, which originally was not against developing a state of mindfulness.

The Body in Art, in Everyday Life and in the Textbook: The teachers' conceptions.

The forum facilitated the discussion of important aspects of the subject of “body”: the idea of the body as a biological concept, but also as a cultural one. Furthermore, it showed the importance of the school in allowing children to have interaction with different bodies and to learn how to recognize these bodies and respect them, as we can see on a teacher's testimonial:

...in watching the slides I have **reflected** that the bodies are marks that distinguish one person from another. (...) These images are great to start a project with the human body as a theme. It is possible to problematize because these are images that make us **reflect** on the several conceptions that we could have about the body. We may go further in interdisciplinary work. (Teacher #1)

Of particular importance in the above excerpt is that the teacher uses the term “reflection” twice (highlighted in bold), with the clear intention of showing awareness of something that was hidden from their perception. Later on, the same teacher showed that, besides awareness, she realized that there is a hierarchy that leads to judgment while watching the school presentation about the body. The following passage indicates this.

When I saw the slide presentation, I thought about what exactly we see and what we pass to our students — **a reflection that bodies only exist in the way they are presented in textbooks**, we do not stop to think that there are other types of bodies and we have to introduce our students to the reality; it is because not is always like that as “a perfect body”... we need to rethink when teaching about the human body. (Teacher #1)

During the forum activity, we realized how the presentation with the images touched the participants, as it lead teachers to think deeply of their own teaching practices and personal behavior. It also allowed them to think about their body conception and how they promote a judgmental attitude towards others. The previous and the following testimonials reveal these reflections:

In checking the images, I wondered, “**Am I also telling my students what is normal in our culture? What is perfect or ideal to them?**” [judgment](Teacher #2)

Certainly when I will be working with my students, I will **explore this issue in a different manner from the way I having been done before** [awareness]. I had already worked with artwork, with images of textbooks, approaching the differences such as **weight, height, race. But I did not explore the body “in everyday life”. People that have bodies without limbs, mutilated, tattooed, with reamers, pierced ones, with small feet, long necks, etc.** [acceptance of differences]. (Teacher #3)

The presented text and images **also made me to reflect on my practices** [awareness] related to the theme. I will surely approach the human body with another look by showing the differences and varieties cited in the text and, of course, **being careful** (...) concerning the available material and **the models and standards** [non-judgmental] and the inclusion of discussion at times. (Teacher #4)

In the three previous testimonies, the passages in bold demonstrated awareness and a non-judgment and acceptance of differences. In the following paragraph a new element is presented: the idea of compassion in the sense presented in the Dalai Lama excerpt above.

As I read the text and watched the slide presentation, when teaching about the human body, **I had never thought about people who do not have an arm or a leg** [compassion]. Really, the textbooks and the media always show perfect bodies as if they were all perfect. After reading this I could see how it is possible to **work the inclusion** in the school context [acceptance of differences], if the textbooks segregate such unique bodies. (Teacher #5)

In the beginning of the sentence, the teacher uses the inception, “... never thought about people...” and gives the impression of a simple awareness, but the next passage shows a step further when she concluded with the excerpt, “... who do not have an arm or a leg.” It seems to be clear that she started thinking of the disabled ones. It is an example of active thinking, as she became able to put herself in another’s body; later on she manifested understanding of how to work the theme of inclusion that indicates the acceptance and integration of differences.

The slide presentation makes teachers sensible to the theme, allowing them to reflect on the teaching work, about their vision of the body and in making comments emerge about the necessity of a surveillance of their own practice. They have showed the need to present the reality (the body in everyday life) to students; i.e. The body “without limbs, mutilated, tattooed, with reamers,

pierced with small feet, long necks, etc.” Other teachers highlighted the attention during the process to make materials available to children.

The body and sexuality were also discussed. The teachers reported their difficulties with the theme by recognizing that they are not able to approach the theme with the children and their families. One teacher reported an experience in which it was necessary to hold a parents’ meeting and explained that there is no "class of sex" to their children, but children's inquiries motivated by watching soap operas and by listening to songs were being answered in the some classes. Again more signs of awareness are shown here, as seen in the following teacher's testimonial. The teacher realized that she was unprepared to deal with the sexuality issue with children.

All the project's themes were about the human body, and in our conversations, questions related to sexuality were always present. I confess that many questions blushed me, then **I realized how unprepared I was to deal with these situations** [awareness]. (Teacher #6)

Taboos and controversies surround the topic of sex in school. Some teachers pretend they do not exist. Others, like Professor #6, find themselves unprepared to deal with it. But it is interesting that addressing the topic of sex with children is directly reflected in the families. The act of demonstrating to the families that the decision to approach the topic of sex is made with consideration for the children's benefit reflects more than an ethical stand, but true ethical awareness. This is because there is difficulty for families to understand that even very young children have bodies that feel and are stimulated by other children's bodies, and they are also influenced by the information and behavior patterns of the adult world they receive. To discuss the need to treat the subject of sex in school is a complex matter, as seen in the following passage.

Another parents' meeting was held to show them that there was no "classes of sex" at all [ethical], rather than talking over some children's questions in the school, and especially scenes they watched on a soap opera called “Malhação”, and also song lyrics like “French kiss was out-dated, cool people just date nude now” (Teacher #7)

One teacher talked about the school's responsibility regarding songs and kinky dances, by illustrating with his work on urban tribes and street dance that featured behavior research, clothing, and way of thinking and culminated in a presentation whose costumes were decided collectively based on what would be the most convenient for the school environment. Ethical awareness allows people to adopt caring standards for each other that would go unnoticed. The highlighted phrase in Teacher B's comments below shows this state of perception.

I see these songs and kinky dances issues as a matter of high responsibility of the school while children are present therein. As educator We must **take the utmost care in order to introduce activities** that involve dances. Children **bring their habits from home so naturally, as parents and family members even encourage their children to do so**. The trend nowadays defines the rules, starting from the way many people dress. (Teacher #8)

The issue of physical disability was very frequent in the discussions, highlighting their difficulties regarding the way in which inclusion is being implemented in Brazil and the system's inability to have these children. One of the teachers, however, went further in this discussion by mentioning how we express ourselves through our bodies and compared the communication just by the look of many disabled people (the body that speaks) and how the school is organized only for a certain types of bodies, and there is no room for collective acceptance of differences. Another teacher presented as an example the game of dodgeball, and it can be used as an awareness exercise for putting yourself in the other's shoes [compassion], but also as a strategy of adaptation of the activities to embrace different bodies involved in the game.

The inquiry into the experiences of the body with the kids reminded me an activity I performed in **a training course which consisted of playing dodge ball sited [compassion]** (...). (Teacher #9)

One of the teachers (#10) spoke about inclusion by referring not only to disability, but also the red Indian, the black, the poor, the maimed, and the tattooed, among other "different bodies." Such a comment led to an argument that the difference (and not being the same) should be the starting point of school work, since we could not face a class of children as homogeneous, since every child has its particularities, and we know that the differences enrich the school environment and the classroom. Valuing differences means breaking ties with the bad attitudes and biased speech, but mostly to overcome the consciousness that we are or at least should be equal.

When it comes to diversity of a different body, it is important to work with our children in the classroom and to show them the importance of inclusion in the school. Children have to learn that that **inclusion does not refer only to the disabilities**, [compassion] but also for everyone like the red Indian, the black, the poor, the mutilated, tattooed, among other "different bodies" (Teacher #10).

The issue of differences is quite clear in the previous passage. What matters is to overcome the idea that we are all the same or we should be equal and value our differences. Valuing differences involves breaking from the biased discourses and negative attitudes.

In addition, we notice that the forum activity with photos and images was able to trigger insights and engage participants in lively discussions, and it also made teachers aware about the differences in the bodies and the several levels of consciousness necessary to deal with this subject in the school. Teachers' manifestations showed evidence of development of a broader state of consciousness where compassion, acceptance of differences and ethics have become part of their way of being in this world. The images played an important role in triggering this process that the teachers have learned through their non-rational being. The experience allowed teachers to wonder about their own prejudices, either in their behavior, or in their way of thinking and assessment, but mostly in the form of standing towards others.

Final Considerations

The theme was presented in a way that could have a deep impact on the participants and then lead them to achieve self-awareness on the subject. On the other hand, most of the teachers' comments were in the field of personal experiences and were closely related to disability, an important subject for them that are not always ready to respond to it while in the classroom. The teachers brought significant examples and ideas on what the school may contribute towards the discussion beyond a biological body, thus avoiding the reproduction of stereotypes built by the consumerist mass media.

It is known that the employed approach based in the human body helps children to have access to different bodies while learning to recognize and to respect them. This discussion becomes meaningful if we consider that pedagogy had (and still has) an important role in controlling the bodies in order to keep an orderly and healthy body. Inside the school, beyond the perspective of the perfect body, in the sense of its parts being presented in the school's disciplinary discourse, a movement of individualization has been developed, with a growing demand for taking care of bodies in every detail. This pedagogical posture implies the search for a standardized body which ends up generating undermined self-esteem that not all youths are able to overcome. This source of bitterness often induces an identification with bodies that cannot be achieved by everyone. The outcome includes frustration, low self-esteem, and shunning among youth who could be happier and enjoy states of physical and mental well-being if they had had the opportunity to experience the diversity of bodies that are available in the world.

It is necessary to reflect on the attitudes and representations in the school about cultural diversity, differences, and gender issues, as children incorporate rules, values, norms, and beliefs that reflect social roles. It implies consideration of an emancipatory curriculum that embraces identities, since the children carry in their bodies the marks of their relationship with the world in which they live.

The idea of an emancipatory curriculum brings the reflection that leads us to believe in bodies and their differences. However, the reflection in this case can overcome aspects of the bodies' differences and extend to the way in which teachers become aware of their judgments and practices. In the case study presented herein, teachers were able to notice the reductionist way in which the bodies were treated at school, and they also went beyond self-awareness and walked through the door that we define as mindfulness (Powietrzynska, M., Tobin, K., & Alexakos, K., 2014). The acceptance of differences, the non-judgment posture, and compassionate and ethical behavior were highlighted in some teachers' speech. We believe that these characteristics are essential to be groomed in teachers, for these characteristics imply a change in pedagogical approach; they also establish a new relationship with individuals in general. Why is our body "a business card" in human relationships for being the first source to let us be or not in deepening social interactions, with the thought that avoids stereotypes and opens up to the establishment of relationships with the differences can and should be cultivated.

Being aware of the diversity of bodies and how to work the theme at school involves teachers in developing a state of mindfulness. The present activity with the pictures showed us the real possibility of developing such a state in teachers of child education related to the body theme. One possibility would be the use of images in heuristics, like those developed by Powietrzynska (2014). Although they rely on surveys that include characteristics as assertions, it would be possible to think of a heuristic that uses images as a means of bringing awareness¹⁴.

¹⁴ This idea appeared during a session about mindfulness in the USER-S seminar at the Urban Education Program, Graduated Center, City University of New York, organized by Ken Tobin. Helen Qua was one of the people I (Maurício) remember to have cited the use of images as heuristics.

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