

## Best Practice in P.E. for gender equity-A review

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### Abstract:

This review wants to provide a summary of selected literature from the past 10 years on gender equity in P.E. It aims at providing an overview of the current research, while suggesting viable solutions to encourage girls to take a more active role in sport and physical activity. To ensure the respect of gender identity in education, the quality of teaching is crucial. Therefore, we argue that there is greater need for research in the field of gender equity in PE. While much research focused on how gender reproduced through pedagogical practice in PE, this review aims at analyzing how to challenge it and identify good practices. The analysis of the didactic process pointed out five dimensions (design, methodological, reflexive, organizational, relational). For each dimension, the critical aspects for education to gender equity have been identified, together with the effective practice and strategy to promote gender equity and equal education in PE. Methods and techniques useful for PE teachers were highlighted to give teachers the right tools to orientate students to sports, limit early sport dropouts and valorise the practice of all sports equally, as disciplines for both men and women.

**Key words:** gender, physical education, didactic, curriculum, reflexive thinking, equity, methodology.

### Introduction

Over the past three decades, researchers and educators have increasingly recognized the importance of gender education in sport. In Italy and around the world there is a growing interest in question around female participation in sport and gender relation in sport. In 2007, a Commission of representatives of the European Communities drafted "The White Book of Sport". The publication highlights shortcomings in sports and gender, identifying the needs that have to be addressed by policies. It also highlights necessary elements to write efficient policies on the integration of women in sport with particular attention to management/direction roles and to media attention of women in sport. Additionally a European Commission of Experts 'Gender Equality in Sport' reunited in Brussels on 18 February 2014 recommended the Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014 – 2020 cite :

“There have been many positive activities, projects and actions taken for women in sport by the signatories of the Brighton Declaration. However, it is still questionable how sustainable these activities have been and how many mainstream sports organisations were involved. It seems that many sports organisations have not been able to institutionalize gender mainstreaming within sport” (European Commission, 2014)

The 2015 ISTAT investigation in Italy, shows a growing interest in sport and motor practice for all genders and age groups. The interest grew from 15.9% in 1995, to 22.4% in 2010, up to 24.5% in 2015. Data shows 29.5% of men practice sport with continuity, while 11.7% only practice it occasionally. For women, percentages are lower and respectively 19.6% and 8.1%. The above data shows that there is still a gender gap in sports practice, regardless of age and generation. The gender gap decreased between 1995 and 2005 and stabilised afterwards. The gender gap decreased between 2006 and 2015 for children between 11 and 14 years old, when ISTAT recorded a significant increase in girls in sport (ISTAT, 2015). International literature supports the above described (Smith & Wrynn, 2013). In 2017, ISTAT recorded 4.7 million members registered in sport, 28.2% were women and 71.8% were men (Italian Olympic National Committee, Service 2017). Research shows that the growth of the number of women in sports refers to sports that are typically masculine or neutral. The differentiation between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ sports is still rooted in the socialisation process of sports. The data suggests that women feel this difference less than men, in light of their growing interest in ‘masculine sports’ (Chalabaev , Sarrazin , Fontayne, & Boiché, 2013; Burton, 2015). Men still categorise sports in masculine, feminine and neutral (Hively & El-Alayli, 2014). In general, the association between sports and masculinity is still strong (Clément-Guillotin, Chalabaev, & Fontayne, 2011, due to media (Trolan, 2013; Fink, 2015) underlining the stereotype of social unsuitability of women for several sports, as well as in learning sports ability or in performance (Heidrich & Chiviacowsky, 2015; Chalabaev, Sarrazin, Stone, & Cury, 2008; Stone & McWhinnie, 2008).

The gender gap identified in the ISTAT investigation can be explained through sports and motor practices that emphasise and underline a feminine or masculine ideal. Sports are still associated to a vision of masculinity or femininity, therefore still explained as socially adequate for a specific gender. It is common conception that sports require certain physical, psychological and emotional characteristics that are typically masculine or feminine in a specific cultural context (Sykes, 2011; Appleby & Foster, 2013; Tischer, Hartmann-Tews, & Combrink, 2011; Azzarito & Solmon, 2009). The collective perception of a differentiation between masculine, feminine and neutral sports was already suggested by Koivula (2001) and confirmed by Lentillon (2009). Clément-Guillotin et al. (2011) argue that men practicing ‘feminine’ sports are less socially accepted than women who practice ‘masculine’ sports. This suggests that incentivising male participation to feminine sports could help to remove gender categorisation. Despite the improvements from the past, the gender gap in sport participation still exists (Deaner et al., 2012). Education centres can promote the motivation and involvement of girls and boys through practices that take into account their environment, interests and needs. From a pedagogic point of view, sport is a social catalyst that can implement change, abolish racial barriers, overcome gender gaps and eliminate socioeconomical and sociocultural barriers (Sherry, Schulenkorf, & Chalip, 2015; Appleby & Foster, 2013; Isidori & Fraile, 2008). These education paths could overturn the low self esteem that afflicts women in their perception of sport performance (Franceschini, Galli, Chiesi, & Primi, 2014; Kit, Mateer, Tuokko, & Spence, 2014) and be potential mediators of sport skills (Chiviawosky, 2014).

There is evidence that gender education paths, supported by adequate methodologies, can lead change in the perception of gender stereotypes (Gutierrez & Garcia - Lopez, 2012). In the examination of the literature on gender equality in PE of the last 10 years, this review suggests to teachers possible actions and reflections to fill the participation gap of women in sports and motor practice (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). It is now shared opinion that practicing sports or motor activities during childhood and adolescence positively affects the implementation of a healthy lifestyle during adulthood, influencing also self-development, future orientation and self-efficacy (Alcalá & Garijo, 2017).

### **Materials & Methods**

In this review we address five essential areas of focus, which we call the five dimensions of educational process in school, (Costoldi, 2012); design dimension, methodological dimension, organizational dimension, relational dimension, reflective dimension. To produce this literature review we adopted the following method:

- First, we consulted manuals, books, essays by Italian academic educationalists and identified the five dimensions of didactic.
- Second we analysed international books, reports and papers related to gender equity in sport and in PE from 2009 to date. We then examined the citations and identified the studies that were relevant to teaching gender equity.
- Third, we conducted a search for the five dimensions of didactic about educational process in general and gender equity education.

Evidences suggest the persistence of the stereotype on typical male and female traits, both in physical characteristics, social roles and occupation. School teaching practices reinforce a certain stereotyped idea of gender. The ever-growing body of research on gender equity continuously attests to its importance, including on the following aspects social, emotional, intellectual, physical health, youth development, mental health and good relationship. Before we review the literature on the aforementioned five dimension, we discuss research on results associated with overall female / male participation in P.E. and in sport.

### **Results**

#### **Gender Issues in P.E. classes**

Researchers highlighted the consequences of gender stereotypes in sports on different aspects of social life (Plaza, Brunel, & Ruchaud, 2017; Sykes, 2011; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). The social construction of gender is linked to discussions around the appropriate gender of sport. This forces gender identity in dualism and limits the choice of physical activities to those considered more appropriate (Azzarito & Solmon, 2009; Plaza et al., 2017). Enright & O’Sullivan (2010) linked the relational environment of the PE class to gender dynamics, examining girls’ wellbeing during class. The results of the study confirmed girls are mostly dominated by male presence and find it hard to be involved in front of male exuberance and competitiveness. The problems are also linked to the male domination of teaching time, space and play, boys teasing or harassing girls (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). Contextual analysis shows girls having less play time (Van Acker, Carreiro da Costa, & De Bourdeaud, 2010) boys have higher tendency to seek competition (Murphy et al., 2014) and public recognition and have significantly higher performance than girls (Constantinou, Manson, & Silverman, 2009). Male dominance and aggressiveness, their competitive nature, were seen as an obstacle for the emancipation process and for gender equality (Murphy et al., 2014). Studies have shown the ways girls respond to the barriers to sports practice (Constantinou et al., 2009). One of the main obstacles in girls’ participation and involvement in physical activities is male criticism towards girls’ low performance or mistakes during class. To some extent, this behaviour can be linked to the social expectations boys are faced with, including competition, achievement, orientation and self-reliance (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). In PE classes, the activation of those mechanisms

creates negative experiences for girls and subsequent exclusion from sport life (Oliver, Hamzeh, & McCaug, 2009; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016). Where there are positive experiences, there is empowerment, inclusion and tenacity (Azzarito, 2010). The focus of gender bias issues revolves around the belief that these interactions are typical of the different behaviour girls and boys have, due to their natural different abilities and skills. The naturalisation of differences is then highlighted (Isidori & Fraile 2008), hiding problems linked to curriculum appropriateness and the management of PE classes (Hills & Croston, 2012). Hyde (2014) provided evidence of similarities rather than differences, highlighting the importance of the context in the creation or elimination of gender differences. When a teacher manages a class in a certain way, they can create a social construction of the gender (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010), that defines the ideal of masculinity of femininity, and can create a favourable environment for constructive motor experiences. This attitude towards teaching/learning encourages the motivation towards physical activity and sports: "Task- involving motivational climate could be used as a relevant method to promote perceived competence, intrinsic motivation, and further enjoyment in school PE, especially among girls" (Gråstén, Jaakkola, Liukkonen, & Watt, 2012, p. 260). Peer judgments and feelings of inadequacy influence an individual's relationship with sport practice (Bryan & Solmon, 2012; Solmon, Lee, Belcher, & Harrison, 2003). Shen et al. (2003) argue that creating interest in learning can help to overcome the gender gap in physical activities. In addition to feeling less competent, girls value sports less than boys (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011), also deviating towards activities that are perceived by society as more appropriate for females, also due to peer pressure (Bailey, Wellard, & Dismore, 2011). In the last decade, researchers agreed that gender segregation has significantly reduced, however a gap in sport participation and motivation still exists. This has consequences on the individual and social sphere, in the construction of personality and orientation. In the social sphere, there are consequences on public health, talent valorisation and equal opportunities (Appleby & Foster, 2013; Bailey, Wellard, & Dismore, 2011) (Chalabaev, Sarrazin, Fontayne, & Boiché, 2013; Clément-Guillotin, Chalabaev, & Fontayne, 2011; Fiset, 2013; Lentillon, 2009).

Sociological research further argues that the lack of a reflexive process (reflectivity), can perpetuate gender stereotypes through verbal, non-verbal and didactic actions (Oliver & Kirk, 2016). This study analyses the five dimensions of the didactic process, considering each one as a space where the teacher can challenge gender stereotype in sport during PE classes. The Italian school and other education agencies should promote the integral development of individuals, through disciplinary know-hows in line with National Policies of the Ministry of Education (MIUR, 2012). The school receives an educational mandate from the community. This is influenced by beliefs, values and knowledge intersected with the moral and psychological characteristics of the teachers (Ferrante & Sartori 2011). P.E. teachers are tasked to promote healthy lifestyles through sport and physical activity, offering modern lenses and up to date tools (Isidori & Fraile, 2008), creating opportunities to acquire "positive personal characteristics like moral development, leadership, and pro-social sporting behaviours" (Weinberg & Gould, 2011; Gutiérrez, Ruiz, L. M., & López, 2010; Tannehill & Lund, 2010) without sex discrimination. Investigating ways to transmit education by promoting active participation in sport for women and men, is relevant for cultural, political and social reasons (Appleby & Foster, 2013). This is also because P.E. practices integrate a stereotypisation of masculine and feminine, desirable for society but not necessarily creating a comfort zone for girls and boys (Sykes 2018). Isidori (2009) identified important cultural gaps that overlook gender stereotypes, thinking that the female emancipation process has already happened. Talking about female emancipation is completely different from the recognition of gender differences (Isidori, 2009, p. 61). There is still a lack of interest in gender issues in education.

### **Gender stereotypes in sport practice**

"Given the extensive use of gender categories and the seeming utility of differentiating between women and men, people may be resistant to change their stereotypes to any significant degree" (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016, p. 359). The dependence on gender stereotypes therefore endures in current culture as shown by Guillotin et al. (2011). The administration of the IAT (Implicit Association Test) confirmed that sport is still male dominated. The results show that the association sport/masculinity is strongly rooted in the cognitive network of individuals, regardless of their orientation towards gender roles, and that the automatism of this association is more persistent in men (Clément-Guillotin et al., 2011). Literature shed light on school practices in PE that reinforce the gender stereotype and perpetuate its survival in social practices. Davis (2003) in his review "Teaching for gender equity in physical education" selected the literature of the past 30 years, highlighting the below aspects: use of verbal and non-verbal iterations more frequent in relationships with male students, higher request of performance for male, language male oriented, male supported for good performances and women supported for their effort, different teacher's reactions towards behaviours of males or females, performance expectations teachers different for males or females, use of materials and books that highlighted gender differences in images and texts. Our analysis of relevant literature further confirms the trends. Schools need sport proposals that are conceived and programmed with gender lenses, according to complex and articulated perspectives, in line with an historical context that is moving towards gender fluidity (Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016). Several studies on general and disciplinary didactic offer guidelines and directions to implement gender equity activities with girls and boys (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Oliver et al., 2009; Hills & Croston, 2012; Fernandez-Rio Calderón, Alcalá, Pérez-Pueyo, & Cebamanos, 2016). Many of the work

reviewed also shows that the effects of stereotypes can be modified or erased with systematic educational approaches, with appropriate strategies, in certain conditions, together with the development of programmes that put particular attention on the development of abilities of girls (del Castillo , Granados, Ramirez T.G., & Mesa, 2012; Chalabaev et al., 2013). Therefore gender is “something not only culturally and socially constructed (performed) but also continuously deconstructed in social practices and daily interactions” (Tarabusi, 2013, p. 113).

**Didactic and gender**

Whereas it is hard to draw the boundaries and outlines of teaching (Baldacci M. 2012), in light of its complexity and variety (shape, content, action, relation, formal, informal), teaching can be thought as a system of variables in relation between each other. These connections create a ‘model’, intended as a scheme where aims and educational practices are linked (Baldacci M., 2016). It is possible to define these connections in relation to gender, and in turn draw didactic directions.

To sum up with (Castoldi, 2012) the essential elements of didactic action can be outlined as described in Table 1. In relation to the permanence of issues around gender stereotypes (Murphy , Dionigi , & Litchfield, 2014) it is interesting to focus the dimensions of the didact in order to shape the PE and sport teaching on good practices for gender equity.

Table 1. The dimensions of didactic (Castoldi 2012, modified)

Dimensions	Action	Direction	Teacher action
Design	Anticipation Research Analysis	Objectives Contents Context	Teacher anticipates the teaching action and researches and analyses the task
Methodological	Mediation	Subject and object for learning	Teacher operates a didactic mediation between the subject of learning and the object, through teaching/learning devices (methodologies, instruments, strategies...)
Organisational	Focalisation Construction	Cultural Heritage Curriculum	Teacher organises the educational setting, setting up the learning environment, focusing on the cultural heritage to impart.
Relational	Management	Verbal and non verbal communication	Teacher manages the relation and educative communication
Reflexive	Analysis Observation Evaluation	Teach-Learn. Process Educational Intention	Teacher manages, evaluates and modifies own action reflecting on students’ observations, on educational intentions, behaviour and results (evaluation).

**Design dimension : Anticipation, research and analysis of the task**

The design of education actions happens in a system of values that stems from the community. They follow institutional guidelines and context restrictions that determine the resistance or acceptance of the development of the design and its significance level. Baldacci (2016) defined this theoretical activity as a “crucial moment of practice” in which a leading model is chosen, among those produced in a given socio-cultural context, through a process of critical reflection. For this first phase to be effective in leading change, it is necessary to analyse the context in this initial phase of exploration and research of the formative task. It is essential to refer to the legislation and to the cultural horizon of the community, to find the needs and to highlight objectives that should be realistic, directive, decisional and evaluative (Baldacci M., 2010).

In this phase, investigating which gender models one adheres to, means giving them a face, recognising them through gestures, words, relations and deconstruct them: “There’s no pedagogy or practical didactic that can be considered neutral” (Biemmi & Leonelli, 2017)“. In order to favour the creation of a critical thought, the deconstruction needs to happen with the students. Starting from the assumption that an education action is always a moral action, the teacher in this phase goes through a process of clarification/identification of values and objectives that justify methods, strategies and activities. This happens keeping in mind the institutional and community context. In this context, Isidori and Fraile (2008) define deconstructive pedagogy as a rationality exercise that wants teachers and students to think about social mechanisms linked with a certain representation of the institutionalised order, of certain stereotypes and contradictions linked with sport and gender. Deconstructing gender stereotypes in sport and physical education means thinking about rules, meanings and levels of values in sports and motor practice. The deconstruction can happen also through the understanding and discussion of values and practices related to sport. Reflecting on both values and practices can be helpful to develop critical skills, in turn activating cultural transformation processes that can include gender (Isidori & Fraile, 2008). The reconstruction of sport history, always male domain, can lead to the elaboration of a transformative knowledge. The analysis of the meanings of victory, agonism, strength, fair play in sport

deconstructs the mediatic information (Napolitano 2014). Unveiling the perceived marginal knowledge and power structure of the sport world can then challenge gender stereotypes.

**Methodological dimension: mediation between the subject of learning and the object**

This paragraph analyses studies on effective strategies and procedures that can be adopted in PE classes to stimulate the perception of own competences through positive motor practices that can encourage girls and boys to practice sports, adopting healthy lifestyles (Pritchard, McCollum, Sundal, & Colquit, 2014; Alcalá & Garijo, 2017). The recognition of own competences and skills has a positive influence on self-perception, orientation and extracurricular choices. On the contrary, negative experiences manifest frustration resulting in discrimination or auto discrimination (Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016). Offering students positive, varied and motivating experiences can help increasing self-esteem of girls and reduce potential embarrassment in male dominated classes. In turn, judgement towards physical appearance and competence levels become less of an issue (Fisette, 2013; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016). Educators should create teachings that implement strategies that are differentiated for the students they refer to, and consider different aspects including gender differences (Ferriz, Sicilia, & Sáenz-Álvarez, 2013; Hortigüela, Salicetti, & Hernández, 2018, Stidder Gary & Hayes, 2012). Gender equity is therefore solidified in the use of different strategies and methods of teaching.

It is possible to blur the boundaries of gender by focusing on innovative activities. Viable examples are popular, traditional or emerging games (e.g. ultimate frisbee) where individuals are not engaging activities that are gender related, like in sports. This highlights examples of feminine and masculine skills in a range of intermediate activities. Many studies focus on the use of technical and tactical games (TGfU) (Alcalá & Garijo, 2017; Roberts & Fairclough, 2011; Pritchard et al., 2014) and of coeducational or single sex classes (Vargos, 2017; Beasley, 2013; Pritchard et al. 2014, Lyu & Gill, 2011; Crystal 2017). The use of TGfU has been investigated for its didactic- pedagogic and gender equity potential. Bandura in his self-efficacy theory argued that TGfU allow students to live positive experiences creating a sense of self-efficacy (perception of being able to do and act) and involvement (Bandura, 1982). This is due to their flexible structure and the possibility of being modified. These strategies support performance and the cognitive aspect (decision, comprehension, tactic, evaluation, emotional control) and the learning process. They favour inclusion, satisfaction and personal security (self concept & self improvement) of participants, in turn lowering girls sense of inadequacy compared to boys (Pritchard et al. 2014; Van Acker et al, 2010; Alcalá & Garijo, 2017).

Despite the plethora of studies on coeducational or single sex classes, results are not univocal. However, it is possible to argue that in coeducational classes there is higher chance of stimulation on gender practices and reflections (Beasley, 2013; Hills & Croston, 2012; Gurian 2010).

**Organisational dimension: the curriculum**

The curriculum is a key element in the organizational dimension, since it integrates the discipline with a student's knowledge and learning skills (Isidori, 2009). "Curriculum development is about designing quality program: programs that means something are built on a philosophy that reflects the values and beliefs of teachers, student and the community" (Tannehill & Lund, 2010, p.37). It is evident there is no list of interconnected subjects, but rather a system of knowledge suitable for future generations in a certain historical and cultural context, and that needs to be adapted to students' learning process (Säfvenbom, Haugen, & Bulie, 2015).

The teacher is responsible to choose what to include in the PE curriculum and how to deliver it to students, also according to current legislation. The curriculum can pursue stereotyped gender relations that in turn can create unequal power relations. Teachers may use segregating strategies, activities (football and fitness) and means (girls' balls and boys' balls) or they may not give equal opportunity of practice to girls and boys. Castelon and Gimelez (2015) conducted an explorative study aiming at analysing what teachers think about contents of P.E. and their adaptation to gender, and if these perceptions influence students' activities. Data shows that majority of teachers do not perceive gender differences in students' preferences (88,9 percent), but admit that some contents are more or less masculine or feminine (83,3 percent). There is also a general perception that curricula favour boys over girls.

Curriculum proposals are therefore often anchored to stereotypes and the idea that sports have to be proposed as they are socialised (Fisette, 2013; Castejón & Giménez, 2015; Kirk, 2014). In school, cultural transmission, interconnected with current culture and leading values, including the idea of gender (Biemmi, 2015) reflects on the hidden curriculum (Musi, 2015). This can include messages such as the unequal skills of males and females. The hidden curriculum is built on the experiences of teachers, who are not immune from pre-established conception of reality. This creates a risk to spread gender stereotypes, both consciously and unconsciously. These can in turn have significant influence on the professional practice and learning processes (Aiello, Sharma & Sibilio 2016). Using gender lenses also means knowing that cultural transmission through the curriculum can turn into reproduction of stereotypes (Musi, 2015). A curriculum needs to stimulate participation, satisfaction and enjoyment in students to earn all the benefits usually associated to sports (Wajciechowski, 2019). This aspect implies the responsibility linked to negative experiences, in PE, as predicting a sedentary lifestyle linked to motor inadequacy of self-efficacy. There is growing consensus on the necessity of curriculum

negotiation in a way that girls can take part in the social construction of gender through PE (Castejón & Giménez, 2015).

The didactic representation aims at favouring a new construction of knowledge in the student, and offers the possibility to recodify a knowledge based on one's interpretation schemes (Oliver & Kirk, 2016; Walseth, Engebretsen, & Elvebakk, 2018; Gemma, 2013). Curriculum development arises also from active approaches, a formative agreement elaborated with the students who can create, modify and invest in their learning and skills. O'Sullivan et al. (2010) propose a critical approach to the curriculum that leads the student to a critical approach to sport and physical activity, also through the knowledge of sport representation at local and national level.

#### **Relational Dimension : verbal and non verbal communication**

“There is growing consensus that the nature and quality of relationship with their teachers play a critical and central role in motivating and engaging student to learn. This relationship quality are believed to support the development of student's emotional wellbeing and positive sense of self, motivational orientation for social and academics outcomes and actual social and academic skills” (Wentzel, 2009, p. 301). Several theoretical models develop the student-teacher relationship that, beside the emotional aspect, is influenced by value expectations and perceptions of the teacher's competence (Wentzel, 2009). The teacher is responsible for the relationship with the students while promoting relations between them, regardless of their gender. Many reviewed studies in gender education in PE analyse activist approaches, aiming at identifying barriers for girls' involvement. In these studies, girls can express themselves and their voice has a value. The narration technique is commonly used, and it allows to tell the experience and work on what represents an obstacle to the inclusion process of girls in PE (Oliver & Kirk, 2016; Hills & Croston, 2012; Walseth, Engebretsen, & Elvebakk, 2018; Enright & McCuaig, 2016; Sánchez-Hernández

, Martos-García, & Soler, 2018). This inclusion process requires a close observation of male thought on sport, still imbued with masculinity, where the dominance of performance is a strong gender stereotype. The negotiation of PE curricula in school should make students think about gender stereotypes (White & Hobson, 2017; Clément- Guillotin, et al., 2013).

The management of communication in gender relations can in turn show original contents, supporting the understanding of life experiences. (Castoldi M., 2012) The voice of students unveils dominant power relations built by adults according to the mainstreaming conception of P.E. that often excludes the students from their own learning. Fisetto (2013) used focus groups, formal interviews, descriptions and informal discussions to show the barriers to girls' participation to sports. These include the perception of male domination in physical activity and that of feeling ignored, the embarrassment in front of the class to be judged for poor performance and appearance. Girls commit to transforming practices and their involvement once they are offered the opportunity to dialogue. Gender education therefore implies reciprocity in the relation teaching-learning, where students need to feel they are builders, together with the teachers, of knowledge. They need to contribute and create ideas, create new practices that can in turn involve them (Taylor & Parsons, 2011; Sánchez-Hernández et al, 2018). In this continuous reciprocity, the teacher needs to listen to students to understand which representations differ from their own. This facilitates the appearance of gender thoughts and the situations girls feel are barriers for their practice. (Fisetto, 2013; del Castillo et al., 2012; Hill, 2015; Robinson & Taylor, 2007; Quennerstedt, 2019). Men and women paths can be asymmetrical, and language is important. Using a language that gives values also to female experiences means leaving the androcentric vision that has characterised sports until today (Musi, 2015; Talbot, 2010). This is true for both verbal and non-verbal language, including for instance preferences given to male students to show abilities to the class, game time (del Castillo et al., 2012), the use of machines, the time and channel of communication, and also more time for kinaesthetic communication (Fisetto, 2013; Castejón & Giménez, 2015; Kirk, 2014). These practices carry messages in favour of one gender. It is also important to mention the deconstruction of gender stereotypes spread by media. They can be identified through critical awareness paths, aiming at a conscious use of products and messages offered by mass media (Napolitano, 2014 ; Sandri 2015)

#### **Reflexive dimension : Process Educational Intention**

In a PE class, practices can reflect a teacher's assumptions and beliefs that are generally created in heterosexually normed contexts which do not consider alternative gender conceptions (Wrench & Garrett, 2017; Ferrante & Sartori, 2012). The recognition of socio cultural gender influences requires a reflective process that can lead the way to the deconstruction of stereotypes and the possibility to manage didactic actions in this sense (Scraton, 2018; (Ferrante & Sartori, 2012). In this process, it is crucial that the teacher focuses not only on their way of teaching, but also on their way of learning and reproducing concepts in relation to their biases, ideas and assumptions (Nigris, 2015). Research on reflexive practices prove it is difficult for teachers to focus the complexity of relations and influences from society, including gender ones. Dowling and Kårhus (2011) proved how teachers' discourses are simplified, aligned on generic conceptual values (game rules, transferring team work values) excluding all other influences, including gender ones. School is not the only agency where stereotyped gender roles can survive, however its mission is to criticise, rather than ignore or legitimise these. The unsaid, the neutrality can also reaffirm powerful gender norms (Musi,2015). The habit to a reflective

thought is a skill that can be acquired and improved (Cropley & Hanton, 2011; Knowles et al., 2001) through appropriate training (Derwent, 2015) supporting the development of critical skills, empathy and cooperation.

### Conclusion

The aims of this review were to provide a summary and discussion of the literature on gender equity in P.E. This literature showed a growing interest in the topic in past 10 years. The evidence suggests that teachers can transmit inequality both consciously and unconsciously. A viable solution seems to be acquired and improved the habit to a reflective thinking through the training teachers, while avoiding the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Teachers should therefore become conscious of their own biases and learn how to educate others on gender equity.

Findings of this review also show that socio and cultural context is key in creating and erasing gender differences. The evidence suggests that effective methods to facilitate gender equity in P.E. include the use of TGFU, the development of a curriculum with the students and giving a voice to the students. However, the review was limited by certain challenges including the number of keywords used in the study (gender, equity, differences, gender stereotypes in P.E., curriculum in P.E., reflexive thinking), that may have limited the number of studies identified. Future research should therefore include more keywords in gender equity lenses. More research is still needed, in particular to explore gender equity practices in different social and cultural context; the role of governments and institutions and the effects of gender equity on students, parents and teachers. Nevertheless, this review has improved our knowledge of the type of studies undertaken in the field of gender equity in P.E.

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