




## IT IS A NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY: LEARNING TO BECOME A FACILITATOR IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

*É UMA JORNADA SEM FIM: APRENDENDO A SE TORNAR UM FACILITADOR NAS PRÁTICAS COLABORATIVAS NA FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES DE EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA* 

*ES UN TRAYECTO SIN FIN: APRENDER A CONVERTIRSE EN FACILITADOR DE PRÁCTICAS COLABORATIVAS EN LA FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA* 

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to analyze the contribution of collaborative reflection to individual and collective processes of learning how to become a facilitator in Physical Education teacher education (PETE). Collaborative self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) was used as methodology. Participants were three teacher educators from Brazil, Turkey, and the USA. Group meetings, individuals' memory work, field notes, and reflective journals were the data sources. Data were collaboratively analyzed by using constant comparative content analysis. Results were organized in two themes: (a) Challenges and opportunities to become facilitators; (b) Self-study: the rise of new insights; which represented their pathways to become facilitators in PETE programs. This self-study process challenged the understanding of the process of becoming a facilitator and demonstrated that this process is a never-ending journey in which teacher educators' careers are continuously shaped and redefined.

**Keywords:** Facilitation. Situated learning. Identity. Critical friend.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The ability to facilitate collaborative practices in the educational scenario has been identified as an effective strategy to promote learning (HUNUK, 2017; PATTON; PARKER; NEUTZLING, 2012). Within an atmosphere of sharing decisions and building trust, facilitation practices empower participants of a learning community to actively engage with others by constructing new meanings grounded on their own experiences and prior knowledge (GOODYEAR; DUDLEY, 2015; PATTON; PARKER; NEUTZLING, 2012; POEKERT, 2011). Furthermore, effective facilitation practices occur with a combination of a series of group and individual sessions, in which facilitators skillfully and tacitly provide expert input while sharing leadership with the learning community (ARMOUR; YELLING, 2007; PATTON; PARKER, 2014).

This implies that in teacher education programs, facilitators need to acquire prerequisite skills to be able to facilitate learning opportunities with pre-service and in-service teachers. Poekert (2011) suggests that to become a facilitator, teacher educators need to leave traditional prescriptive models (e.g., supervision teaching styles) on the side to go beyond what skills and content are needed to help learners grow for themselves. Therefore, the process of becoming a facilitator is a complex and a non-linear trajectory that needs to be examined (GOODYEAR; DUDLEY, 2015; HUNUK, 2017; MAKOPOULOU, 2018).

Even though there is a body of research about physical education teacher education (PETE) in facilitation practices on facilitators' actions (HUNUK, 2017; GONCALVES *et al.*, 2020) and identity (BENI, 2021), the literature is still scarce in terms of the process of becoming a facilitator and learning necessary skills to this role (PARKER *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the purpose of this self-study was to analyze the contribution of collaborative reflection to individual and collective processes of learning how to become a facilitator in physical education teacher education. Specifically, we questioned (1) What were the challenges and opportunities to grow encountered during participants' facilitation learning experiences in PETE? and (2) How has this collaborative self-study changed the participants' understandings about facilitation in PETE? This paper begins articulating facilitation as a situated learning experience, followed by how we conducted a self-study, and finally, our findings and discussion. We conclude with implications for PETE and future research.

### 1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning is a situated process of social historical, production, transformation, and people changing. Instead of just being situated in practice, learning became an integral part of social practice in the lived world. Through this lens, the situated learning theory (LAVE; WENGER, 1991) conveys learning as participation in communities. The authors used the expression legitimate peripheral participation to indicate their comprehension of the situated learning that occurs in a community of practice.

The legitimate peripheral participation terms that define learning in this theory are not conceived in isolation, rather, they constitute each other. Legitimate

participation is a way of belonging in the community. In its turn, the concept of legitimacy is connected with the notion of peripherality. The latter is a way of being, located in a social world. Thus, peripheral participation does not refer to locations outside the community's border but refers instead to being in a constant movement of engagement. It is an inclusion movement toward full participation.

Thus, legitimate peripheral participation involves the knowledgeable skilled person as well as the (re)production of the community. Constantly, the whole person negotiates and renegotiates the meaning of the world. It "implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings" (LAVE; WENGER, 1991, p. 53). Seen in this way, PETE educators, understood as facilitators, are individuals who, while participating in communities - such as their own department or external groups, can engage in a constant movement of learning. In other words, it is by the social process of full participation in a PETE community that teacher educators can learn how to become a facilitator of others' learning (PATTON; PARKER, 2017; MACPHAIL *et al.* 2014).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This current study was designed in accordance with the principles and practices of collaborative self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) methodology (LABOSKEY, 2004), which involves: (a) self-initiation and self-focus, (b) improvement-aimed, (c) interactivity in the purpose of methodology and pedagogy, (d) generating from multiple qualitative data sources, and (e) positioning validity as a process based in trustworthiness. This collaborative self-study allowed us as teacher educators to reflect retrospectively on our processes of learning to become a facilitator.

### 2.1 CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

In this study, we had fully recorded 14 meetings. Each meeting lasted approximately one hour. In the first six weeks, we focused on our roles and identities as PETE educators, on the differences and commonalities in our experiences as facilitators or supervisors, and on sharing and reading sources from PETE literature. In the 7<sup>th</sup> week, we also made a 30-minute presentation showcasing each of our timelines regarding our facilitation experiences in PETE. This session ended up with a 5-minute questions and answers. In the 7-8 weeks, we discussed the theoretical framework of the paper, shared a 200 words background about our role in PETE in our context and shared how conversations shaped our role in facilitation. The last 5 weeks (weeks 9-14) were about the collaborative data analysis. Due to this long-term interaction and the mutual engagement around the facilitation topic, we started to see ourselves as we move from learning community to community of practice in its initial stage (LAVE; WENGER, 1991).

As a community, we became participants of this collaborative S-STEP. Carla is a 55-year-old woman who started her career as a K-12 PE teacher in Brazil. After 10 years of teaching, she pursued her master's and doctoral degrees with an emphasis in PETE in the United States (US). As part of her PhD program assistantship, she

started learning how to supervise pre-service teachers. From a theoretical standpoint, a supervision course helped Carla to understand different approaches to supervise pre-service teachers, such as different supervision models, teacher effectiveness research, and observation techniques. From a practical standpoint, Carla's initial stages of supervising pre-service teachers were challenging. Carla's supervision skills progressed throughout her years as a supervisor and instructor of methods courses. More recently, Carla has embarked in this new path. She has been reflecting on her role as a facilitator and its impact on individual pre-service teachers.

Deniz is a 41-year-old woman who started her career as a research assistant in Turkey. During her PhD program, she focused on creating and sustaining communities of practice for PE in-service teachers and examining their impact on student learning. Since she completed her doctoral degree in 2013, she has been involved in many projects and practices with in-service teachers regarding sustaining and facilitating different learning communities. After completing her PhD program, Deniz started working as a teacher educator in a PETE program in Turkey. Currently, her research examines her teaching experiences as a teacher educator, and she engages pre-service teachers in action research as a methodology during their teaching practice. Through her action research initiative, Deniz hopes to empower pre-service teachers to critically examine their personal experiences, and to demonstrate their potential to be influential reflective practitioners while improving her own teaching skills.

Luiza is a 37-year-old Brazilian woman who started her career as a PE teacher in primary and secondary education in public and private schools for eight years in Brazil. Her experience as a PE teacher motivated her to expand her degrees to teach pre-service teachers in PETE programs. Since 2010, Luiza has worked in Brazilian universities. During this period, she has focused on pre-service teachers developing evidence-based teaching practice through constant engagement with in-service teachers in her local community. Luiza has also been involved in collaborative practices with in-service teachers' continuing professional development. Specifically, since the end of her PhD in 2019, she has facilitated school-based learning communities with in-service teachers. Currently, Luiza has been working on facilitation projects that involve learning communities of both pre-service and in-service teachers in school settings.

## 2.2 DATA GENERATION

Data source for this collaborative self-study were: (a) individuals' memory work reported and recorded during group meetings, (b) field notes focused on collective input on main topics addressed during the meetings, (c) post-meetings reflective journals focused on individuals' perception of the meeting discussions and (d) recorded presentations showcasing each member's timeline regarding facilitation experiences in PETE.

Meetings and Individuals' memory work: In this study, there were 14 fully recorded meetings among participants.

Field notes: Field notes were taken after the meetings and each time one of us wrote the field notes. We had six field notes and each one was one to two pages. On

our collective field notes, we first focused on the content and minutes of the meeting and then took notes about what to do for the next meeting. Field notes served to guide our work and were not primary source of this research.

**Post-Meetings Reflective journals:** We also decided to write post-meeting reflective journals after the third meeting. For the reason that this was our first self-study experience, we used a template to structure our reflections. We wrote individual journals four times, and in our reflective journals we focused on two topics: what were our initial thoughts/feelings about the meeting and what we learned from today's meeting?

**Presentation:** In our seventh meeting, we recorded presentations showcasing each member's timeline regarding facilitation experiences in PETE programs.

### 2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were collaboratively analyzed by using inductive and deductive content analysis (PATTON, 2015). All audio-recorded meetings, written post-meetings reflective journals, shared slides and participants' field notes were analyzed by using collaborative constant comparative analysis (PATTON, 2015). Through the interaction between data and researchers' interpretation, deductive analysis of the data constructed themes however sub-themes were constructed by inductive analysis of the data. Firstly, the themes were created from research questions which were drawn from the literature. Two themes emerged inductively from the analysis. Inductive analysis was accomplished for sub-themes in several steps. Firstly, three of us engaged in open and axial coding of excerpts from all the data sources (GLASER; STRAUS, 1967). For open coding, three of us engaged in a process of reading all field notes, post-meetings reflective journals, and listening to our meetings while looking for connections with the research questions. Each of us reviewed all data using open coding to identify and discuss themes. Through axial coding, we met regularly to discuss the coding process and adjust the categories. After the axial coding, we developed an initial thematic structure, which involved emerging subthemes. We then, interactively discussed the sub-themes to reach a consensus. (Table 1).

**Tabela 1** - Example of data analysis for the first research question (What were the challenges and opportunities to grow encountered during participants' facilitation learning experiences in PETE?)

Example of codes emerged from data sources	Codes grouped in subthemes	Themes
Lack of observation by a mentor, lack of guiding during the induction period of the teaching career, lack of confidence to teach, lack of sharing of teaching experiences, lack of supervision, growing in hierarchical environments, lack of collaborative practices in the past, lack of reflection on the practices,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feeling isolated; lack of observation and guiding during the induction period, growing up in hierarchical learning environments,</li> <li>- Struggles to reflect on practice; lack of confidence to teach, lack of reflection in and on the practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Isolation and struggles to reflect on practice</li> </ul>

Source: Based on de Glaser & Strauss' (1967)

In this study, trustworthiness was enhanced through the triangulation of data across sources (i.e., field notes, post-meetings reflective journals, meetings) and using multiple participants (three teacher educators become each other's critical friends and an expert was invited for the clarity of the methodology). Data were also collected through a number of interactive processes, and through investigating and sharing the data analysis and findings collaboratively among the researchers (LABOSKEY, 2004).

### 3 RESULTS

The results section was organized under two themes: (a) Challenges and opportunities to become facilitators; (b) Self-study: the rise of new insights; which represented our pathways to become facilitators in PETE programs.

#### 3.1 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME FACILITATORS

During this collaborative self-study we found similarities in our facilitation learning experiences. Four sub-themes emerged from challenges and opportunities during facilitators' learning: (a) Feelings of isolation and struggles to reflect on practice, (b) The power game is always present, (c) The role of mentorship, and (d) Learning by experiencing: Living the process of facilitation.

##### 3.1.1 Isolation and struggles to reflect on practice

Even though we came from different cultures and backgrounds, we noticed that all of us had doubts if we were doing right or wrong and lacked confidence to debrief pre-service teachers. Among these hesitations during the induction period of our careers, we did not have anybody to guide us, observing our classes or supervision sessions, helping with our reflections, or debriefing with us about our challenges. Thus, isolation seemed to be a common challenge across our stories. Deniz reflected on the isolated feelings:

We were all isolated in our experiences with pre-service teachers, I guess. Carla mentioned that I had Deborah as a mentor, but I was still a doctoral student at that time. I was not teaching [...] Two years after I finished my PhD, I had the opportunity to supervise pre-service teachers. I was by myself. Nobody told me what to do, nobody observed my classes or supervision sessions (Deniz, Meeting 4).

Through our discussions, we found that the professional isolation that we underwent was combined with the lack of experience and knowledge to engage in reflective practices. When Luiza raised this issue to the group, Carla stated:

Luiza, when you spoke about your initial experiences, you said that you lacked reflection on your supervision actions. It made me think, how could you reflect on something that you didn't have a lot of experience yet? And I see that happened with me during my beginning stages of supervision too, I didn't question myself much. And if you asked me, why don't you keep a journal? I would say... for what? I would not write anything because I couldn't analyze my practices yet (Carla, Presentation Meeting 7).

We agreed that at the beginning of our careers we did not see what direction to take regarding reflections. We reflect more often on our feelings of comfort or discomfort, but not necessarily about strategies that could improve our practices.

### 3.1.2 The power game is always present

The issue of power relations seemed to be part of our facilitators' challenging trajectories. For example, Carla began supervising pre-service teachers during her PhD program in the US. Below is Carla's memory about how her language barrier (English as a second language) affected her relationship with pre-service teachers due to her low self-esteem and lack of confidence:

For me, supervising American pre-service teachers at the beginning of my career was hard [...] During debriefings, I did not question them much [...] I thought they knew more than I did, because they spoke English fluently, and I didn't think I could express myself as well as they did (Carla, Meeting 14).

Carla, as an international PhD student, found that the language barrier was a strong representation of power and a challenge for her to improve her supervision skills. Furthermore, Deniz provided another way that power relations can arise in teacher education experiences. She shared how difficult it was to work with students who come from traditional educational backgrounds, where grading and assessments are punitive, and students are intimidated to participate in the classes. This situation implies that the teacher educator has the power over students:

The biggest challenge for me at the beginning of my career was the power relations with my students. This is because the environment I used to work as a teacher educator was not used to encourage collaborative practices. So, students did not like to talk a lot in classes. How could I give them voices? How could I make them share their experiences? How could I create a more open, democratic, and positive space? They were like [...] 'I do not want to talk today' (Deniz, Presentation Meeting 7).

We found that the power game is explicitly present in some universities' accountability systems. We agreed that there is a pressure on teacher educators when students' complete course/instructor's evaluation at the end of the semester, and when faculty promotion is based on this evaluation. Carla stated: "I always question myself: Am I too harsh with my students? Will such action or course decision affect my course evaluation?" (Meeting 11). Although Deniz and Carla have been learning how to manage these issues with pre-service teachers, we agreed that this type of power relations will always be a constant challenge in our practices. Luiza brought up that even though you can become an experienced facilitator and more conscious about your role, it is still difficult to find a balance regarding power in our practices. She shared her thoughts during one meeting:

I don't know how to explain this but, I had the idea that being a facilitator is to abandon the sense of power. It is a completely shared power in the group, with the students. But sometimes I feel it is not possible. I don't know [...] I am still hesitating about this power thing... How I can lead without being so directive, but also leading in a way that they need guidance [...] (Luiza, Meeting 5).

Knowing when and how to guide students to lead brought many doubts to our discussion. Learning to be in different power positions within different groups was certainly a challenge present in our pathways. Similarly, the PETE literature (BENI, 2021; GONÇALVES *et al.*, 2022) points out that it is not possible to live the role of facilitator in PETE programs without facing constant and inherent challenges. Rather, we understand that we live and learn with them throughout our pathways, adapting ourselves (BENI, 2021) while looking for opportunities for growth and overcoming these challenges.

### 3.1.3 The role of mentorship

As an opportunity to learn to become a facilitator, during our meetings, we remembered mentors who we modeled our teaching, who challenged us with critical questions, and who listened to our questions. These mentors were important figures in our facilitation experiences. For example, Luiza and Deniz's experiences as facilitators of in-service teachers went back to their PhD programs. They had the opportunities to observe their mentors and start shaping their themselves as facilitators.

Luiza and I had similar experiences about facilitation. She also learned and experienced her facilitation skills during her PhD by observing the role model. She shared how her pathway changed from looking from a more didactic perspective to creating more democratic learning environments with in-service teachers. We both have experience with in-service teachers but working on how to transform our facilitation skills to teach pre-service teachers (Deniz, Reflective Journal).

During our fourth meeting, Deniz highlighted that Deborah was a mentor who asked analytical questions about her role in the class; she listened to her, and what challenged her. Her questions were important to improve her reflective skills. Luiza also shared her experiences with her mentor:

I conducted my first experience with in-service teachers in the same way that I was accustomed to with my pre-service teachers at the university. It took me a long time to learn about and adopt strategies that are more student-centered, democratic, and not controlling. This is the time Missy appeared in my life. I learned by her example and support, how I could facilitate in-service teachers' learning by creating opportunities and showing different possibilities and pathways to them (Luiza, Meeting 4).

Carla's facilitation pathway was different from Deniz and Luiza. Due to her lack of confidence, in her early experiences with pre-service teachers, she was very technical in terms of supervision instruments. Her supervision instruments were her main guiding tools, and facilitation was not part of her professional skills yet:

I focused my observation on classroom management because that's what I thought at the time I knew more and was able to debrief my pre-service teachers. I shadowed another supervisor (Marly) because she was experienced and kind enough to mentor me. With Marly, I learned how to be more receptive with students, and to be more caring, instead of just reading through my checklists with teaching behaviors. But I still focused exclusively on management. I didn't feel I had much to say in relation to content development and assessments (Carla, Reflective Journal).

We acknowledged our mentors appeared in our lives on the right time of our pathways. They helped us to reflect, respected our career developmental levels, and



provided us with insights to keep building our facilitation skills at different stages of our careers.

### 3.1.4 Learning by experiencing the facilitation process

Another opportunity for growth we had in common was through learning by experiencing. As a pedagogical strategy, Deniz shared that she intentionally transferred her facilitation skills learned and experienced with in-service training to when she was assigned to work with pre-service teachers:

When I first started working with pre-service teachers, I asked this question myself: How can I transfer my facilitation experiences with in-service to pre-service teachers? How can I improve their learning by creating small learning communities? I was working with six or seven pre-service teachers in their teaching practice. I wanted to try something new by creating a collaborative environment and giving them more voice. I wanted to let them share their experiences with the group (Deniz, Presentation Meeting 7).

Meanwhile, Luiza expressed that living facilitation experiences were associated with the help of her mentor. Luiza pointed out that her initial mentor (Missy) became her critical friend. Luiza reported that her critical friend made facilitation experiences more meaningful and effective for herself. “As I was living the experiences as a facilitator with in-service teachers, I learned a lot from them. But if I didn’t have Missy, my experiences wouldn’t be the same with them. Having a critical friend, maybe is linked with the quality of learning how to facilitate” (Meeting 12). After completing her PhD, Luiza and Missy have collaboratively been working together in multiple projects.

Carla, described that she was living the experience of facilitation while she was teaching during the period of our self-study meetings. While she was learning her facilitation skills and experiencing with her current pre-service teachers, she also emphasized the importance of having these conversations with colleagues.

A lot of things have changed in my career because I live and learn by experience. Every year I can go back and change my courses, but my facilitation skills are changing now because I met you. [Pointing Luiza and Deniz]. And the term of facilitation, this topic [...] or this type of conversation never happened to me before meeting this group (Carla, Meeting 12).

Thus, by living experiences of facilitation, we discovered ways to evolve as facilitators. In this path, it was important to learn by doing, by trying and by sharing (PATTON; PARKER; PRATT, 2013). Our analysis also brought the importance of understanding mentors as critical friend as essential to a quality experience of facilitation.

## 3.2 SELF-STUDY: THE RISE OF NEW INSIGHTS

We understood that our differences in background triggered interesting conversations and strengthened our group connection. This connection resulted in reliance on sharing our thoughts, doubts, insights, and frustrations. Two sub-themes emerged as an outcome of this self-study: (a) Group meetings and impact on perceptions about facilitation, and (b) The renaissance stage and beginning of a critical friendship.

### 3.2.1 Group meetings and impact on perceptions about facilitation

During our group meetings, we came across situations where we challenged our understandings about facilitation. For example, Luiza, in one of her reflections, explained how our conversations helped her to work on a project with pre-service teachers, which she was meeting in two different situations, one as a learning group in the classroom and another during practicum experiences in a school setting along with in-service teachers.

Throughout our meetings, I have changed my perspective on the facilitation of collaborative practices with pre-service teachers. This group made me understand that being a facilitator is more like a perspective; a way to approach the group. It involves changing hats all the time. One moment taking the leadership in a more active manner, other times sharing the leadership with the group. There is a balance in the process of facilitation that goes from supervising pre-service teachers' practices to facilitating learning groups (Luiza, Meeting 4).

Luiza stated that through our conversations, we were learning in depth the different nuances of becoming a facilitator. For example, after our meetings, she felt more confident about being a facilitator. The depth of our conversations and the attention (listening) given to each other's stories made her feel more relaxed and less judgmental about what she was doing, and more confident to change hats during collaborative practices with her students.

In addition to that, Carla shared how this collaborative self-study had changed her as an instructor and supervisor. She reported having feelings of frustration occurring year after year for noticing that students overlooked the importance of PE content development and student learning during teaching practices by only discussing or reporting their progress in classroom management.

The challenge I've been facing since we started this self-study is to phase out my traditional supervisor skills, which sometimes make me feel like I'm a cop, and embark on the way to facilitate my supervision sessions. I feel that becoming a facilitator is a step forward to helping my students [pre-service teachers] to succeed in the teaching world. I think that I needed my experience as a traditional supervisor to realize and learn that I can evolve. To me, becoming a facilitator is to understand that our role is fluid, continuous, changeable, and unpredictable. At this moment, it feels good knowing that there is no ending point in becoming a facilitator (Carla, Reflective Journal).

Deniz analyzed how she was shaping her skills as a facilitator. During the early stages of our project, she drew her professional trajectory with examples of facilitation from her PhD program while observing and learning from her mentor to her professional development practices with in-service teachers. Her theoretical and practical background equipped her to apply different facilitation and reflective strategies while working with pre-service and in-service teachers, and to disseminate her findings through her research activities. Even with this robust background in collaborative facilitation, Deniz expressed new nuances enriching her perceptions.

This collaborative self-study was important for me because it gave me a chance to identify my pathway as a facilitator. Thinking and reflecting on the challenges on my way to learning to be a facilitator and strategies

to overcome those challenges was so educational and enjoyable. Our meetings helped me see myself and share and compare my experiences with my international colleagues. I saw that even with our different backgrounds, somehow, we had similar experiences and feelings in both pre-service and in-service education. [...]. However, I believe that Carla had the most important gain from this collaborative self-study. She was living and applying in her practice what we talked about in our meetings (Deniz, Reflective Journal).

In this self-study, we recognized our resistance to teacher-centered approaches, we discussed how to balance our role as supervisors, and we awakened our perceptions to evolve our facilitation practices.

### 3.2.2 The renaissance stage and beginning of critical friendship

Carla reported that the insights she gained from Deniz and Luiza made her feel that this self-study turned out to be her professional renaissance. Renaissance in terms of discovering and reinventing her role from a supervisor to adopting a facilitation approach. She explained that she changed how she saw things, citing that “if you change the way you see things, things will change” (Carla, Reflective Journal). One example was that she changed her approach to debriefing individual students during supervision sessions. She found ways to infuse content and student learning in a more personal conversation with individual students. Carla felt that she was getting better responses from her students on an individual basis while they were in a school setting. She attributed these changes to the work they were doing in this self-study:

You became my critical friends [...]. These conversations changed me [...]. I felt different than both of you because I was living the experience of teaching and supervising. While we were talking about facilitation strategies, I was also applying them [...]. I don't think that I changed completely but in certain things I feel that I changed [...]. I don't even know if my students changed, but the way that I looked at them [understood them] changed (Carla, Meeting 8).

On another occasion, Luiza challenged Carla to think about what made her teaching and supervision to be collaborative practices. In this case, Luiza's role as a critical friend made Carla increase her awareness about how she could expand her collaborative practices. Carla reported details of her collaborative work with students in lesson and unit planning, and decision-making with cooperating teachers. However, this discussion made her question... “What else can I do to make my teaching and supervision more collaborative with my students and cooperating teachers?” (Carla, Reflective Journal)

As illustrated above, our group had already established that the presence of a critical friend was crucial in the process to become a facilitator in collaborative practices. Deniz and Luiza shared that their mentors acting as critical friends guided them to identify strategies to facilitate different learning groups, which gave them support when they needed it, challenged them to stimulate their growth and reflective skills, and led them to develop a theoretical background. Deniz reported her thoughts on how, during this self-study, we worked on these aspects and became our critical friends.

I do believe that with this collaborative self-study we became each other's critical friends. At the beginning I was thinking that we need a critical friend

as an outsider who is leading and guiding us in this project, but Carla encouraged us to be each other's critical friends. I believe that we became each other's critical friends by talking, sharing, and asking critical questions about our experiences. These experiences also helped us reflect on our understanding/practices (Deniz, Reflective Journal).

In another way, Luiza described that being a critical friend teaches you things about yourself. For example, you reflect on questions you are asking, on challenges you are posing, and on interpretations of the context others are living. At the end of this project, we understood that what we learned in this self-study would not happen without our involvement as a learning community. It was the social and situated nature of this study that promoted new insights into our professional lives. By participating in this self-study, with this group, we fostered a community engaged in reflecting on our role as facilitators. We listened and shared personal stories; we became our case study. As Deniz wrote, we identified ourselves through our similarities regarding the struggles and challenges we lived (LAVE; WENGER, 1991). Therefore, recognized our journey in shaping our uniqueness as teacher educators-facilitators.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored individual and collective processes of learning how to become facilitators. Through a collaborative self-study, we understood that becoming a facilitator is a never-ending journey that brings not only different challenges but also opportunities for facilitators' growth and development. Becoming a facilitator is a situated learning process that requires living the experience of facilitating under the support and guidance of masters or peers, in this case, mentors/critical friends. By living the experience of facilitating while participating in our own learning community, and by reflecting during this process throughout this self-study, we understood that we continually shaped our career as teacher educators/facilitators.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991) individuals must be full participants in an ongoing practice, where the role of a master or an old-timer – in this case the mentors and critical friends, is not to be adversarial of the newcomer – understood as the facilitator that is learning their role. Rather, conferring legitimacy, creating opportunities to learn, and supporting the learner in their journey. In this study, while Deniz and Luiza counted on the support of their masters when included as full participants in collaborative practices, Carla was learning her role as a facilitator by the support of Deniz and Luiza as old-timers in these practices.

Moreover, it is known that the peripheral position might empower the participants because when participation is "[...] enabled, (it) suggests an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement" (LAVE; WENGER, 1991, p. 37). Carla's engaged in a legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice formed by herself, Deniz and Luiza (LAVE; WENGER, 1991). This full participation empowered Carla, creating an opportunity for her to learn how to become a facilitator of others' learning. She was gaining new knowledge and skills related to the facilitator's role while Deniz and Luiza were refining their knowledge and reflecting upon the reasons why to approach their practice as facilitators. Every member in this

community found his own reason to engage as a full participant and transform their practice, continually learning how to become a teacher educator/facilitator.

This study also highlights the importance of critical friends in the process of becoming facilitators. In a previous research, Fletcher, Ní Chróinín and O'Sullivan (2016) demonstrated the value of a layered approach to critical friendship in developing understanding of teacher education practice. In their two-year study, while Deirdre and Tim became critical friends of each other, their meta-critical friend provided contentious feedback and helped them to push each other beyond their personal and pedagogical comfort zones. In our self-study, we experienced another way of being critical friend of each other. In particular, while we were all becoming each other's critical friend, Deniz and Luiza were also experiencing the challenge of being a meta-critical friend of Carla. They supported and critiqued her practices to become a facilitator in a collaborative practice.

Interestingly, Deniz and Luiza had masters as their critical friends with whom they learned how to facilitate learning communities. Although this hierarchical relation might be a common way of learning, this study demonstrated through Carla's experience that engaging in learning by listening to the experience of peers while applying the learning in one's own context may be an effective way of learning to become a facilitator (LAVE; WENGER, 1991). Moreover, Wenger (1998) enlightened us by saying that we can define who we are by looking where we have been and where we are going. We are constantly "renegotiating the course of our lives" (WENGER, 1998, p.154). In this sense, this self-study process also allowed us to revise our past, reflecting on our own experiences to continually construct ourselves as teacher educators-facilitators.

This study will contribute to the teacher education literature in several ways: (a) it extends the benefits S-STEP as a reflective process by describing three teacher educators' journeys to become facilitators, (b) it adds another example of protocol to conduct S-STEP research, (c) it enhances the importance of critical friends when learning to become facilitators, and (d) it provides examples of how facilitators can learn their role. Future research is needed to expand the literature (a) on how to become a facilitator, (b) the effects of facilitators on pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of collaborative practices, and (c) the effects of critical friends on facilitators' professional growth.

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**Resumo:** O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a contribuição da reflexão colaborativa para os processos individuais e coletivos de aprender a se tornar um facilitador na formação de professores de Educação Física. O autoestudo colaborativo das práticas de formação de professores foi utilizado como metodologia. Os participantes foram três professoras universitárias do Brasil, Turquia e EUA. As reuniões do grupo, memórias dos indivíduos, notas de campo e diários reflexivos foram fontes de dados. Os dados foram analisados de forma colaborativa por meio de constante análise comparativa de conteúdo. Os resultados foram organizados em dois temas: (a) Desafios e oportunidades para se tornar facilitador; (b) Autoestudo: o surgimento de novos *insights*; os quais representaram seus caminhos para formação de facilitadores em programas de formação de professores. Esse processo de autoestudo desafiou a compreensão do processo de se tornar um facilitador e demonstrou que esse processo é uma jornada sem fim em que as carreiras dos professores são continuamente moldadas e redefinidas.

**Palavras-chave:** Facilitação. Aprendizagem situada. Identidade. Amigo crítico.

**Resumen:** El propósito de este estudio fue analizar la contribución de la reflexión colaborativa a los procesos individuales y colectivos de aprendizaje para convertirse en un facilitador en la formación de profesores de Educación Física. Se utilizó como metodología el autoestudio colaborativo de prácticas de formación docente. Los participantes fueron tres profesores universitarios de Brasil, Turquía y Estados Unidos. Las reuniones de grupo, memoria de los sujetos, las notas de campo y los diarios reflexivos fueron fuentes de datos. Los datos se analizaron de forma colaborativa a través de constantes análisis comparativos de contenido. Los resultados se organizaron en dos temas: (a) Desafíos y oportunidades para convertirse en facilitador; (b) Autoaprendizaje: el surgimiento de nuevos conocimientos; los cuales representaban sus caminos para la formación de facilitadores en programas de formación docente. Este proceso de autoaprendizaje desafió la comprensión del proceso de convertirse en facilitador y demostró que este proceso es un viaje interminable en el que las carreras de los docentes se moldean y redefinen continuamente.

**Palabras clave:** Facilitación. Aprendizaje situado. Identidad. Amigo crítico.



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### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

This was a collaborative self-study, therefore all authors participate in data collection, analyses and writing of the paper.

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### **EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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