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Article

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Motivation and Physical Literacy: How can Motivation levels of female Pupils be improved within KS3 Basketball Physical Education Lessons?

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research case study was to investigate the impact of selected psychological factors affecting pupil motivation within a specific Physical Education class. This is pertinent to the promotion of physical literacy within which motivation is a key element. The teaching strategies selected for use included co-construction, collaborative learning, scaffolding and pupil groupings. These were chosen to encourage and facilitate personalised learning and active engagement, whilst promoting changes in behaviour by identifying and overcoming barriers to learning.

The results of the study found that the combination of co-construction, collaborative learning and scaffolding, along with optimal groupings, developed and improved motivation, effort and engagement levels within this particular class. This study was successful as it placed the learner at the centre of focus. This facilitated opportunities for personalized learning and active engagement, which supported changes in behaviours by overcoming barriers to learning. By structuring learning tasks as a collaborative mastery endeavour it enabled the redefinition of gender and social stereotypes within the class, allowing the students' sense of self to be preserved and protected from negative comparisons and comments by peers, allowing them to enjoy and reconnect with their own learning.

Introduction

The selected school for the setting of this case study identified during its 2010 annual strategic plan that low-level disruption was a significant problem within the school. Low-level disruption was used as a general term to describe any of the following pupil behaviour:

- Whistling
- Drumming on desk/clicking pens
- Throwing small objects around class
- Shouting out
- Persistent talking and turning around

- Eating/drinking in class without permission
- Listening to music/mobile phones
- Answering back
- Asking irrelevant questions
- Encouraging other pupils' bad behaviour

Low-level disruption characteristics specific to physical education included the following pupil behaviour:

- Fiddling with, or using, equipment in a way other than what it was designed for e.g. bouncing a basketball while the teacher is speaking, putting bibs on incorrectly, or kicking basketballs or netballs.
- Deviating from the task or not participating with adequate effort e.g. not completing a drill correctly through choice (not misunderstanding), or not being engaged within a game situation (by being a social loafer or competent bystander) such as standing by, or talking to the goalkeeper in hockey or football when the ball is in the attacking half.
- Apathy or an apparent lack of motivation, e.g. not answering questions although the answer is known, or not contributing to class and group discussions.

The above characteristics are not an exhaustive list but instead low-level disruption was considered to be any type of behaviour that disrupted or delayed the learning or teaching process.

In the case study schools' annual strategic review it was suggested that low-level disruption had directly affected the GCSE results in 2010 and was also highlighted as a whole school problem affecting attainment and achievement across all years and subject areas. The amount of low-level disruption and pupil disengagement was highlighted as an issue causing concern in that there was a clear relationship between pupils who regularly demonstrated low-level disruption and underachievement (gaining results below their median) at GCSE level. This was a commonality across all subject areas including PE.

This case study was in response to the comments made within the 2010 annual strategic plan. This study aimed to investigate what teaching strategies could be implemented in order to combat the amount of low-level disruption and pupil disengagement within key stage three (KS3) basketball PE lessons. This focus group was chosen as it was recognised that the heart of the problem could be found in KS3 where poor educational behaviours and attitudes to learning were being allowed to develop and then this behaviour was carried over into KS4, which then impacted the GCSE results. This case study aimed to identify teaching strategies that can be used as tools for tackling low-level disruption and creating a conducive learning environment to support students throughout their educational career.

The pupils at the focus of this investigation were a year eight, single sexed class, consisting of twenty-nine female students of mixed ability. There are no English as an Additional Language (EAL) or Special Educational Needs (SEN) requirements within the class. The area of activity they were taking part in was Basketball. Prior to the study, low-level disruption,

apathy and disengagement were regular behaviours demonstrated within PE lessons by the majority of the class.

This particular class was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, the class had historically demonstrated low-level disruption and low motivation levels regardless of activity area. The sport of Basketball was not a deliberate choice of activity area. The year 8 scheme of work scheduled Basketball as the activity area when the investigation took place, and this was the reasoning behind the choice of sport.

Review of Literature

The full review of literature can be found in the full case study. A number of books, journals and articles informed this study, in order to establish the key social and psychological factors that could affect motivation including gender, age, social identity, motivational source, ability and subject delivery.

Results

Figure 1: Average Motivation, Effort and Achievement Levels

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Figure 1 illustrates an improvement in motivation, effort and achievement (MEA) levels over the course of the action research study.

As the weeks progressed the average MEA levels improved, with the exception of week 3 when MEA levels decreased due to the group dynamics. This would suggest that the participants social and gender identity were challenged during this lesson, causing the group dynamics to break down allowing participants to revert back to dominant behaviours and characteristics of social comparison and therefore an over cautious awareness of self, which had a direct negative impact on their MEA levels. This was compounded by the increased difficulty of skill level (moving from shooting statically to shooting on the move (lay-up)) and with this increase in difficulty ego orientated comparisons were made, as the divide between who could and could not perform the lay-up was apparent.

The results from this graph would suggest that the teaching strategies of scaffolding, co-construction, collaborative learning and group dynamics had a positive effect on pupil MEA levels over the seven-week study.

Figure 2: Motivation, Effort and Achievement Levels

Picture did not copy correctly in original

Motivation saw the biggest improvement over the seven-week study improving by a value of 26, effort was improved by 18, and achievement was improved by 15 over the course of the study.

This graph suggests that although motivation may increase rapidly, effort and achievement are not as easy to drastically improve. This would suggest that although pupils may be more motivated towards the subject they may not achieve greater results or put in more effort as a direct correlation, the results should improve but it may not be in proportion to the increase in motivation. This would take into account your competent bystander and pupils who are highly motivated and put in lots of effort but are unable to achieve results. These are areas that could be examined further in order to maximise motivation, effort and achievement of all groups. This may also be a direct result of psychologically wanting to be more motivated towards physical activity and this having a relatively instant change in behaviour or drive, whilst still exhibiting previous habits and dominant behaviours such as monitoring appearance and therefore not maximising effort, or not wanting to be seen to be 'good' at sport which may challenge femininity and therefore reduce achievement. From these results it would appear that there is a positive impact on motivating disengaged pupils when using co-construction, collaborative learning and scaffolding as teaching strategies.

Conclusion

In order to improve this study further the MEA levels of specific individuals could have been tracked from a range of ability groups in order to establish where the most improvement was achieved. This may have highlighted specific groups that responded particularly well to the teaching strategies implemented and other groups that may not have had the same response.

If this study was to be repeated, it would benefit from taking place over a longer time frame, to establish what impact the teaching strategies have over a longer period of time, and whether there is an optimum amount of time that the teaching strategies have the most impact, or does this impact reduce over time.

It would also be interesting to conduct this study with a mixed class to further understand the difficulties of implementing these particular teaching strategies with a mixed gendered class. This may alter the group dynamics and place a greater importance on gender identity and preservation, which would have a dramatic effect on motivation.

This study could be conducted with other classes similar in nature, in order to establish whether this correlation is relatively stable across classes, age groups and ability levels or whether it is an isolated phenomenon. This would improve the validity of the impact that these teaching strategies have on disengaged pupils as it can be repeated in other situations and environments. Conducting the study with a single sexed male class may also highlight different preferred learning styles between genders.

In conclusion, this research project has found a positive relationship between the use of co-construction, collaborative learning and scaffolding along with the careful consideration of group dynamics as teaching strategies which improve MEA levels within a single sexed, key

stage three, core physical education class. The results obtained from this research suggest that teaching strategies should be tailored to the needs of the pupils within any given class, personalising learning wherever possible. Being flexible in how teachers teach, and therefore how pupils learn, is essential in being able to adapt the delivery of education in order to impart knowledge most effectively.

The action research project demonstrated positive results in pupil MEA levels due to the social and psychological factors affecting participation (gender, age, motivation and subject delivery) being addressed. Gender stereotypes were broken down by redefining what is seen to be acceptable feminine behaviour, by allowing pupils to demonstrate behaviour in relation to the situational context, without posing a threat to their femininity.

Age related factors were addressed by considering and understanding that pupils during adolescence have a heightened sense of comparison with others in order to define what is, and what is not acceptable or desirable behaviour. This overcome by allowing pupils extra time to get changed after physical activity giving them an opportunity to restore their appearance and help define that certain behaviour can be exhibited and expressed when conducting physical activity and the results of which (perspiration, hair out of place etc.) can be rectified afterwards.

Motivational sources were shifted from ego orientation and extrinsic rewards, to a task and mastery approach aimed at cultivating intrinsic motivational sources. This also helped combat gender stereotypes and age related factors as less importance was given on comparing oneself with others, but instead completion of a self reference goal or mastering a task. And finally, the subject delivery was tailored to suit the needs of the learners, through the use of co-construction and collaborative learning. This enabled pupils to be able to reconnect and identify with what they were being taught allowing them to restructure how they learnt which affected how they perceived the activity being undertaken. This action research project has highlighted how important social and psychological factors are in affecting participation. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the gender, age, motivation of pupils and subject delivery, personalising learning wherever possible in order to maximize learning and pupil enjoyment within physical education and physical activity.

These are useful findings in the context of fostering physical literacy on account of motivation being at the heart of the concept.

Further Reading

For free access to the full case study please visit:
http://www.pescholar.com/resource/phase/ks3/3183/engaging-disengaged-students-physical-literacy-conference-2013/

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