How does teacher choice influence the affective domains of learning for SEND students?

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ABSTRACT

Teacher choices can be seen to affect traditional attainment in education but how do these choices affect student experiences, perceptions and feelings toward their academia? Physical education (PE) can often be seen to have traditional values which question the holistic and inclusive nature of how the subject is delivered to students. Teaching with innovative teaching models highlights how the emotional states of young people can be positively impacted when considering how they view the subject before, during and after they have completed their learning time. The present article considers two cohorts of students, one with no additional learning needs and one with various learning difficulties. It also examines mainstream and special school environments and discusses which environments have greater effects on young people's lives. An active enquiry was run in a school in East London to determine how much influence teachers can have on inclusive PE and holistic well-being for students. The results suggest that adopting a 'teaching games for understanding' (TGFU) pedagogical model reduces anxiety for students both before and after a module of work. The article raises questions about not only teacher choice, but the role peers have within society and how elitist and ableist views can still affect education in the present day.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present research investigates whether different pedagogical models influence the affective domains of learning for SEND students and works from a teaching games for understanding (TGFU) pedagogical model (Butler & Griffin, 2010). The research concentrates on a Year 8 mainstream physical education (PE) class (21 young people) who were participating in a handball unit of work (UoW). The focus of the study was to measure the emotionality of a sub-cohort of special educational needs (SEND) young people before and after a unit of work (four hours

of activity) and to see whether their emotional states improved by teachers proactively empowering inclusive practice in their lessons. The range of additional needs includes Speech, Language or Communication Needs (SLCN), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD) and Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD).

LITERATURE REVIEW

HISTORICAL AND DOMINANT APPROACHES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Research has suggested that physical education has a tendency to focus on competitive sport, where repetitious games are used in a multi-activity model (Kirk, 2010). Having said this, other research has shown how PE can bring people closer together and build unity. Traditional considerations include whether PE has been exclusionary in its practice. From the historical perspective of PE, it can be seen that through using set pedagogical models educators have created movement cultures that teach specified technique learning (Kirk, 2010; 2013) This looks like a warm-up, skill and games curricular model in the practice of PE lessons. To build on traditional pedagogical models we must consider learning and cultural dimensions because this builds ongoing relationships that contribute to a context that can be applied to everyday life (Amade-Escot, 2006). Transactions in PE could be looked upon as the maintenance, regulation and representation of the body, but this is argued against with perceptions of PE being a mind–body dualism that incorporates meaning behind the movement (Crum, 1993; Kirk, 1999).

THE PURPOSE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The purpose of PE should be to develop cognitive and behavioural processes through skills that are transferable over a lifetime; this can be achieved through effective psychomotor activity (O'Sullivan, 2004). It has been found that there is

a lack of confidence and self-efficacy among young people in PE because of a lack of reflective interactions with teachers, teachers being affected by their acculturation and also by constraints on resources and support (McEvoy *et al.*, 2015; 2017). Students' voices must be present in their education, as seen in negotiated curriculums that allow for advocacy of physical activity through total accountability of involvement (Piggin and Hart, 2017). This present research aims to highlight the social, cognitive and physical benefits PE has for young people but also to show how easily skills can be transferred across a curriculum.

IS PHYSICAL EDUCATION EXCLUSIONARY?

When exploring inclusion within PE, we must consider essential components that make up the foundation of SEND and conceptual practice and how these compare to mainstream provisions. The environmental landscape in mainstream schools can be seen as policy, instruction, curriculum and student assessment whilst having nationally based expectations that concern time and content, such as two lessons of PE a week (Burson *et al.*, 2021). There is a different landscape in SEND schools; for example, these schools have less assessment of students, which contradicts how effectively integrated SEND learning is in mainstream environments (Haycock & Smith, 2010). In the context of the present research, it is important to understand what schools are promoting: is it elitism and sporting success or is it fun, inclusivity and empowerment? Research has found that social acts within education reinforce exclusion and that this can often be correlated with social justice and poverty issues.

EFFECTIVE LEARNING DOMAINS OF STUDENTS WITH SEND

When considering effective learning domains for SEND students, we must consider model-based approaches to learning. Research has focused on single-model approaches, with hybrid models

being a developing approach (Kirk, 2013). The notion of a singular approach is still being prioritised over the use of different approaches, even though recent research highlights how a multi-model curriculum enhances the learning environment (Metzler, 2000; 2008). As the field of physical education progresses, early career teachers are using up-to-date pedagogical models such as TGFU instead of common direct instruction models which lead to learning domains directly correlating with perspectives of ableism in PE (Casey *et al.*, 2017). SEND PE often has an outside perception associated to 'rehabilitation sport' and 'disabled sports'. These narratives create marginalisation's of young people which questions opportunities these young people may access in the wider community (Giese & Ruin, 2018). These processes exclude individuals from PE and do not take account of social justice factors such as poverty. This perspective is supported by research that condemns PE for following social order and ignoring the holistic meaning of equality and inclusion within sport (Buchner *et al.,* 2015). To avoid the labelling of students, different pedagogy can be used, such as the critical emancipatory approach which rejects the prioritisation of high-performance sports and conceptualises anthropological and inclusive domains. This viewpoint is supported by research that focuses on instrumental movement tendencies through contexts of certain sports, for example, a TGFU model through the perception of football (Ruin, 2018).

THE EMOTIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND

An environmental analysis allows consideration of how vulnerable SEND students become frozen out of toxic school environments through the difficulty of tasks and the toxic role of social standings in schools. Social-ecological factors such as behaviour policy and routines within learning are affecting teacher's abilities to stop using simplistic instructional pedagogy; however, it can be seen that

teachers are using school programme-level interventions to promote inclusivity (Reed *et al.*, 2017; Rukavina *et al.*, 2019). It is my opinion that elitist social standing is still present in PE, with the more confident students still being prioritised, especially when considering SEND needs. Confidence, self-efficacy and motivation are intercorrelated in how young people feel about their physical learning domains. A cross-sectional cohort design can be employed to perceive self-efficacy for SEND young people and it can be seen that physical activity does not directly lead to higher self-fulfilment levels, thus showing that educators must facilitate cultures that do not result in feelings of anxiety and fear (Wu *et al.*, 2011).

HOW DO STUDENT FEELINGS AFFECT PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS?

It can be seen that TGFU increases motivational desires by positively changing perspectives within a class, but also through how cognitively stimulated SEND students are, showing how having high expectations through supporting structures leads to clinical thinking and accountability (Marin & Halpern, 2011; Ibrahim, 2021). Statistically, positivity increases by 90% for SEND students when TGFU is used alongside specialised sports such as kin-ball (Dimmick, 2022). This happens because students can take control of independent learning whilst working on unique learning outcomes with cooperative themes incorporated into the specific domain they are within (Wang and Ha, 2013). Most interestingly when considering pedagogy, TGFU can also be seen to boost the teacher's enthusiasm and productivity, which increases the chances of success for young people. Research suggests a lack of consistent and inclusive SEND practices in the field of mainstream PE, which shows how we do not fully understand the social constructs behind learning for these young people.
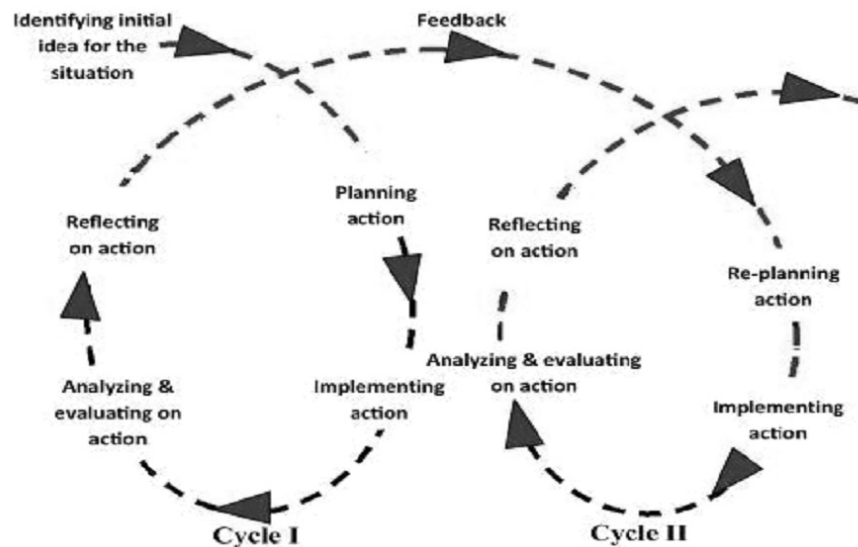

Figure 1: The cycle of active research by Abdel-Fattah (2015).

METHODOLOGY

ACTIVE RESEARCH

Active research is putting in place self-reflective interventions for targeted subject groups; research is ongoing and works towards a certain domain that initiates change. Active research can be defined as 'a methodology commonly used in collaborations between teachers and university-based researchers for the alteration of curriculum and common practices in schools through problem-posing, data collection, analysis and action' (Casey *et al.*, 2017, p. 22). Figure 1 encompasses how an initial active research hypothesis is identified, planned, analysed and reflected upon.

SETTING AND LOCATION

This research took place in a mainstream secondary school located in East Ham, London. The research concerned a Year 8 class in which a sub-cohort of the students have additional needs. The school suits the conceptual underpinnings of the present research as every class has SEND student integration, with the students being taught in consistent domains. The school also has both a specialised Autism and Complex Needs department working alongside the mainstream provision.

POSITIONALITY

I identify as a British, young, white, heterosexual male with the pronouns he/him. I consider myself non-disabled, both physically and cognitively. I am 26 years old and currently live in east London, having previously lived in East Anglia and southwest London. I am currently a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) teacher trainee student at the University of East London (UEL). My education philosophy includes providing equal, diverse and progressive opportunities to every young person, whilst being a role model and part of a support network in any context that they need. I view physical education as an opportunity to work on life skills through movement and to provide schooling confidence that will set students up for meaningful and transferable experiences.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data for this research was taken from two double-period Year 8 TGFU handball PE lessons (four hours) and was compiled from entry and exit tickets that asked participants to circle their emotional feelings/responses to PE: for example, 'sad', 'accepting' or 'excited'. Qualitative data was collated through written transcripts of feelings at the start and end points of the research. The qualitative data provided a rationale to how the students filled out the questionnaire. Research has shown how quantitative analysis can be used alongside qualitative data collection to allow for factor analysis, cluster analysis and multidimensional

numerical scaling whilst simultaneously providing a written context to findings (Donaires *et al.*, 2023).

Ethical considerations

The ethical processes followed the protocol of UEL, which works in collaboration with the school in which the research took place. The research was considered and accepted by my university lecturer, school placement mentor and school subject mentor.

Figure 3: Exit tickets (21 participants: 8 SEND, 13 mainstream young people).

FINDINGS

Summary

The findings of this research showed how a Year 8 SEND sub-cohort class emotionally responded to PE both before (entry tickets) and after (exit tickets) a TGFU (Handball) UOW. Responses were compared with the remaining cohort of the class who were not perceived to have any additional needs. When the quantitative data was analysed, it showed that in all phases of the research, SEND students reported more responses to perceived negative emotions such as sadness or anxiety. As an example of this, the entry questionnaires show two SEND students who felt anxious before PE whereas zero mainstream students reported this feeling. This finding is consistent with the exit questionnaires where one SEND student felt anxious compared with zero in the mainstream cohort. It can also be seen that the emotionality of SEND students did improve when considering the start and end points of the data
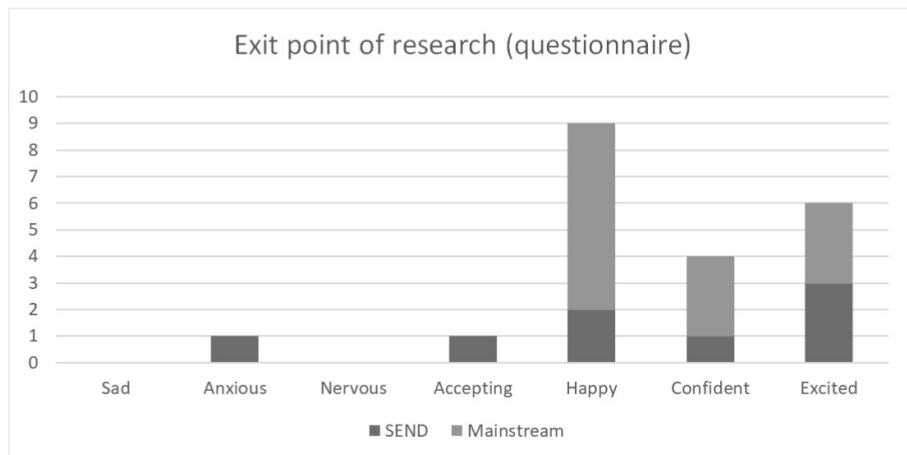
collection. This finding is supported by Dimmick (2022). Figures 2 and 3 show the journey of emotionality throughout the research.

Figure 2 shows negative emotions, such as anxiety, came from SEND students at the entry point of the research. This finding is supported by Trigueros (2019) who suggested marginalisation of those with additional needs through educational provisions. Traditional perspectives of PE were also supported in Figure 2 as mainstream students had positive emotions, which suggests they felt more supported in their learning environment (Kirk, 2013). The entry point data shows that this PE environment was following social order and demonstrates how positive cultures are not holistically embedded within teaching and learning (Buchner *et al.*, 2015). Figure 3 shows how emotionality changed over the course of the UOW.

It can be seen in Figure 3 that the emotionality of SEND young people improved as students reported fewer negative emotions such as anxiety. Research by Ibrahim (2021) shows how this progression is created through increased motivational desires when participating in PE. These findings also show that when using a non-traditional pedagogical model, mainstream students felt equally as challenged in their learning, and their enjoyment was still evident in responses such as 'feeling excited'. Students enjoy being cooperative in their PE lessons and, when given the freedom, they can showcase creativity and demonstrate equality (Haycock and Smith, 2010; Dimmick, 2023). It is clear from the findings that when students are given clear, supportive structures, which allow for teamwork, the inclusion levels of the affected learning domain improve (Dimmick, 2022).

The present study also included qualitative research to provide more clarity about how the young people were feeling about PE. The following quotes give an example for both cohorts, from analysis of both the entry and exit questionnaires. These young people were asked to share any feelings or thoughts they had toward PE.

Mainstream young person (entry): 'I will have to accept who wins and loses the games today'.

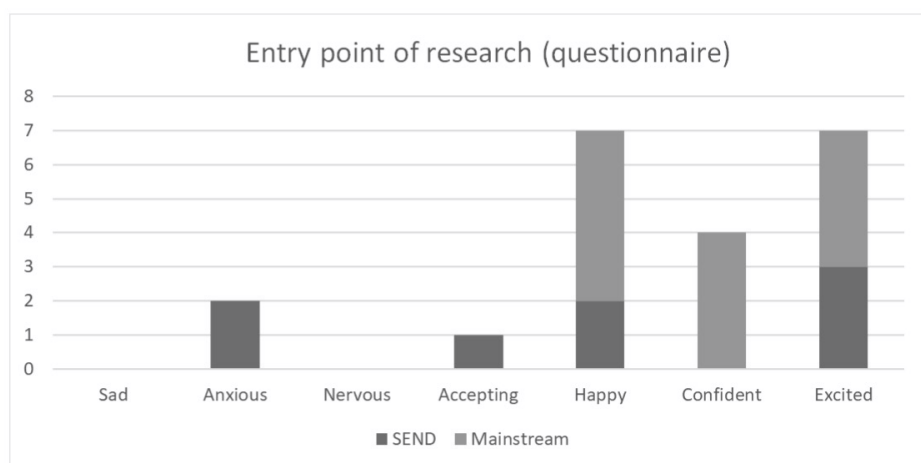SEND young person (entry): 'I feel scared today'.

Figure 2: Entry tickets (21 participants: 8 SEND, 13 mainstream young people).

Mainstream young person (exit): 'I really like this subject'.

SEND young person (exit): 'I am happy when I do PE'

In summary of the qualitative analysis, it can be seen that SEND students reported feelings such as being scared. The analysis also shows how these opinions changed positively by the endpoint of the research. This improvement is shown by a SEND student feeling happy in the final questionnaire. It can also be seen, when considering both the quantitative and qualitative that the emotional responses in SEND students were directly affected by a TGFU model. This supports research by Dimmick (2022; 2023) that when using innovative pedagogical models, that are not historically used, cognitive and social learning happens faster (Marin and Halpern, 2011; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2021).

LITERATURE

The results of the study aim to highlight how appropriate pedagogical considerations can influence positive social and emotional behaviours which progress coping mechanisms and transferrable life skills of students with SEND. This shows in principle how PE can be socially just and inclusive to every student (Quarmby *et al.*, 2021). This research concerns both accountability and cooperation in learning, which shows how students can be responsible for elements of their own education and how this then leads to the realisation of how students must independently create social constructs in order to be successful in an activity (Erwin and Castelli, 2008). In conclusion, it can be seen that SEND students need clear supportive structures, accountability and high expectations from a teacher in order to create an emotionally stable environment in which cooperation with their classmates can thrive and progress (Wang and Ha, 2013; Dimmick, 2022).

The results of this research show how institutional, sociocultural and physical considerations must work in harmony with personality traits in order for students to be successful. This can be seen through pedagogical decision-making and how well peers communicate (Fakhritdin, 2023). High expectations lead to cognitive stimulation for students and this can be seen in the present research through values of equality and support being prevalent in learning (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2021). In conclusion, research by Dimmick (2022; 2023) is supported by the findings of the present research when considering statistical rises in positivity when TGFU is incorporated into PE lessons.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

In summary of the findings of this research, it can be seen that when a TGFU pedagogical model is used, it can positively affect the emotionally affected learning domains of students with SEND. This result is consistent with both mainstream and SEND sub-cohorts of a Year 8 PE class. Consequently, I recommend that a TGFU approach is more commonly used across PE provisions, especially where SEND and mainstream students share the same environment. I also suggest that specialised sports such as kinball, goalball and boccia are used to promote inclusivity in PE, which, in turn, broadens the horizons of every student.

LIMITATIONS

The present research has limitations when considering the planning, delivery and assessment of results. It is important to factor in the practical implications of my PGCE placement when looking at areas of development for the research, for example, the specified length of placement 1, which is commonly seen as 12 school-weeks' teaching experience in a certain school. Limitations for the planning phase include not being able to choose the subject sport: ideally, the research would have concerned a more holistic activity rather than a rigid invasion game such as handball. In terms of the delivery of the research, I would have preferred a longitudinal approach where students were observed over various activities

and subjects; this would have a more profound conclusion for emotionality in a school setting. ∎

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