

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Opening up Neat New Things: Exploring Understandings and Experiences of Social and Emotional Learning and Meaningful Physical Education Utilizing Democratic and Reflective Pedagogies

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THE PROBLEM

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a current topic of interest in health education and physical education (PE); in fact, the learning outcomes related to these domains are quite important in secondary school settings. Unfortunately, there is not enough high-quality research related to SEL in physical education that uses theoretical frameworks and appropriate assessment tools. There is still debate about whether holistic and meaningful experiences related to health and physical activity are truly occurring in PE settings. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the experiences of SEL and meaningful physical education (MPE) using pedagogical methods.



Research Summary

This qualitative study was implemented for 10 months in a secondary PE class at Tyber College in the United States. The participants included one male teacher-researcher (TR), two female teaching assistants, one female PE teacher, and 16 students in the PE teacher's class. Focus group interviews with students, TR journal entries, post-lesson teaching reflections, interviews with the PE teacher, critical friend, and teaching assistant were also conducted. The findings indicated that using democratic and reflective approaches, based on social constructivist learning theory, helped develop positive SEL and MPE experiences. This approach helped students reflect and discuss how movement experiences inside and outside of PE shaped their active lifestyle.

Conclusion

There is a concern that emphasizing SEL too much might reduce cognitive and psychomotor learning in PE in schools. Teaching SEL and MPE using common terminology and clearly defined skills and features can help create more consistent and practical learning experiences. This approach helps students develop a better understanding of participation in PE and physical activity. It also helps them engage more in meaningful physical activities, both in and out of school, to support a healthy lifestyle.

Key Takeaway

Democratic and reflective teaching in PE helped students develop social-emotional skills. It also helped them reflect on how their movement experiences shape a better understanding of meaningful activity. This approach promotes a more inclusive and holistic PE experience for students.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Howley, D., Dyson, B., Baek, S., Fowler, J., & Shen, Y. (2021). "This is not gym": Enacting student voice pedagogies to promote social and emotional learning and meaningful physical education. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 3, 764613.