

Getting Ireland's Children Moving:

Examining Fundamental Movement Skills in Irish Schoolchildren as a key component for Physical Literacy

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Background



Only 14%

of 10 to 18 year olds in Ireland exercise for the recommended 60 mins a day. This is leading to health problems including obesity and diabetes

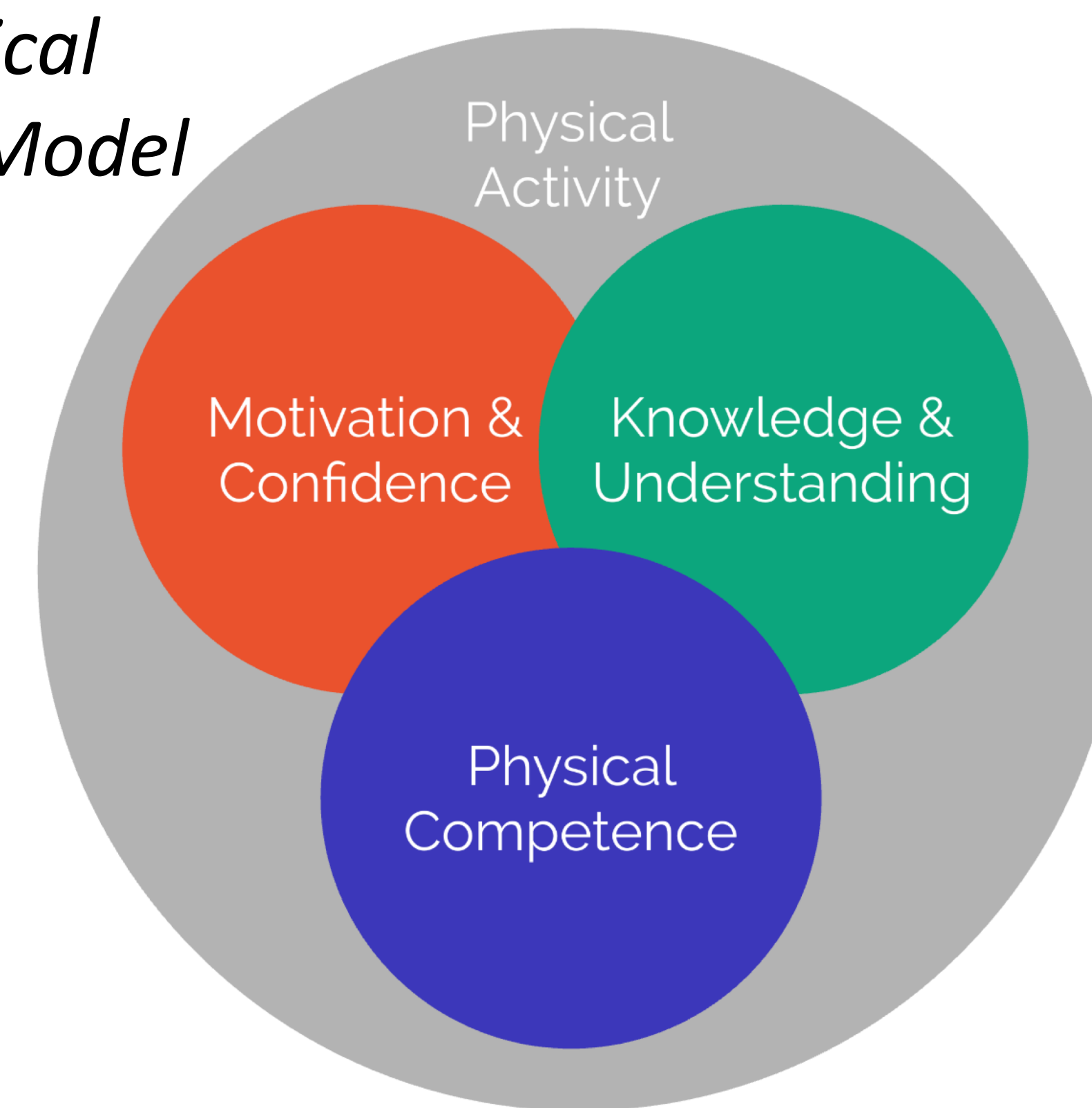


Starting with a simple fact: exercising less tends to lead to excess mass. A recent World Health Organisation report has projected Ireland to be the most obese in Europe by 2030. Gaining weight hinders the ability to move and specifically to move "well". If one cannot move well, then they will tend to move less. Entering this negative spiral during childhood will prevent normal motor development. The idea will be to break this vicious circle with a drastic change of perspective. So far interventions aiming at reducing obesity are not working, and it is time to take a different approach.



Methods

The Physical Literacy Model



With physical literacy being recognised as a key driver in lifelong physical activity participation, phase one of the Moving Well-Being Well study has assessed primary school children (5-13 years) in all aspects of the currently accepted physical literacy model. Areas of assessment included; fundamental movement skills (FMS) proficiency, perceived motor skill competence, motivation and confidence measures, health related fitness measures, body image, wellbeing and physical activity participation. FMS proficiency has been associated with beneficial health outcomes, and is most successfully developed during early school years, and as such is a central component of this study. The Test of Gross Motor Competence was used to assess the participants, and data was collected nationwide (n=2098, male 53%).

Results

2,148

children assessed throughout the country

12

counties across all four provinces

44

schools

100

classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class



Key Findings

- 78% scored 'very poor' or 'below average' in FMS
- Schools in disadvantaged areas scored significantly lower in FMS
- Children who undertook higher levels of MVPA scored significantly higher in FMS

Findings suggest that Irish primary school children fail to exhibit age-appropriate FMS proficiency. This low level of motor skills proficiency can have direct negative implications for future participation in physical activity. These findings are being used to create the structure of the Moving Well-Being Well intervention aiming at addressing these deficiencies

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