




This item was submitted to Loughborough's Institutional Repository (<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/>) by the author and is made available under the following Creative Commons Licence conditions.




CC creative commons
COMMONS DEED


Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5


You are free:

- to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work

Under the following conditions:

 **Attribution.** You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor.


 **Noncommercial.** You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

 **No Derivative Works.** You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

- For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.
- Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

This is a human-readable summary of the [Legal Code \(the full license\)](#).

[Disclaimer](#) 

For the full text of this licence, please go to:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>

Facilitating 'High Quality' Physical Education and 'High Quality' Gymnastics: An Intervention in a City School

Lorraine Cale, Mike Waring, Louisa Webb & Rebecca Duncombe
Loughborough University

Introduction

High quality physical education should be an aspiration for all schools and is considered to be important for many reasons, not least because it may help young people to make informed lifestyle choices and encourage lifelong participation in physical activity (Kay, 2005; Kirk, 2005; Haydn-Davies, 2005; Morgan, Kingston & Sproule, 2005). Moreover, the introduction of the Physical Education School Sport and Club Links Strategy in 2003 (DfES & DCMS, 2004) and then the Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People in 2008 (www.teachernet.gov.uk/pe/) further heightened and highlighted the importance of regular participation in high quality physical activity, physical education and school sport. At the core of both strategies has been the drive to increase young people's participation in high quality physical education and school sport.

It was concern and interest in the above context that triggered a local secondary school to approach researchers at Loughborough University to ask for support in the provision of high quality physical education. A preliminary meeting took place with the physical education staff to establish the particular needs of the department and the priority areas for intervention. It was agreed that the initial phase of the research project should focus on facilitating high quality teaching and learning in gymnastics. Gymnastics was chosen because it was an area where some teachers at the school lacked confidence and where existing planning and activities were considered to be relatively uninspiring and lacking in challenge. Athletics was also identified as a priority area for the department and it was decided that phase 2 of the research would focus on this activity, drawing on the lessons learned from phase 1. The aim was to facilitate high quality teaching and learning and try to identify key principles that contribute to high quality outcomes and which could be applied across the physical education curriculum. This short article provides a summary of phase 1 of the research (gymnastics), and a subsequent article will focus on phase 2 (athletics).

The School

The school was a mixed, city school and specialist sports college, with approximately 950 pupils aged 11-18. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs was above the national average. The school context at the time of the research was interesting because the school had just received an unsatisfactory Ofsted report. Thus, the research took place amongst whole school efforts to make rapid improvements in teaching and learning across all subjects.

The Project

Full ethical approval was gained for the research project from the university's ethical advisory committee in the first instance. The next task was to define what high quality PE meant in practice. The document '*High Quality PE and Sport for Young People*' (DfES & DCMS, 2004) was used to guide and inform this definition. This document describes what high quality in physical education 'looks like', provides guidance on how schools can achieve it, and contains descriptions of ten outcomes of high quality.

Drawing on the above, an intervention to facilitate high quality teaching and learning in gymnastics was designed. In so doing, two main factors were taken into account. Firstly, the teachers' and pupils' views were considered. This involved conducting teacher interviews and pupil focus groups to identify how gymnastics was currently being taught and what the teachers' and pupils' wants and needs were in relation to the area.

Regarding the latter, for example, the teachers were asked what support they felt they needed and the pupils were asked what they enjoyed, did not enjoy, and what they might like to do differently in gymnastics. Secondly, the literature, including the DfES/DCMS guidance, was reviewed in order to establish how 'high quality' in physical education could be achieved. A number of physical education teaching 'theories' were considered in terms of what might constitute 'high quality' or effective teaching and learning (including, for example, Mosston, 1966; Hellison & Templin, 1991; Mawer, 1995; Hardy & Mawer, 1999; Silverman & Ennis, 1996; and Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000).

Taking into account the teachers' and pupils' views, the teacher effectiveness literature, and the DfES & DCMS high quality outcome document, units of work with associated learning activities were produced and implemented which incorporated a number of teaching strategies aimed at improving motivation, enjoyment and attainment in gymnastics. The teaching materials were then evaluated via the collection and analysis of data from a variety of complementary sources. These included lesson observations, lesson evaluations, pupil focus groups, teacher interviews, and teachers' personal journals. Comparisons were made between the teachers' and pupils' pre- and post-unit responses, and high quality outcomes were identified from the lesson observations. Based on this, the success of the units and learning activities were established and further recommendations were identified.

Findings

Whilst the findings were numerous and, in some cases complex, the data highlighted a number of areas where the units of work and associated learning activities had been successful. The key findings are summarised in the table below.

Summary of the Key Findings from the Intervention

Teachers	Pupils
<p>The units and learning activities were well received and staff found them to be well structured, user-friendly and flexible.</p> <p>The units had a positive impact on the teachers' confidence, knowledge, content ideas, and teaching strategies and for some, on their attitude/enjoyment of gymnastics.</p> <p>The teachers were able to facilitate high quality learning through their gymnastics teaching.</p> <p>The teachers covered 'knowledge and understanding of fitness and health' within the units in a relatively narrow/limited way, referring sometimes only to warming up/cooling down.</p> <p>Limited use of ICT was reported by the teachers, despite this featuring within a number of the learning activities. When ICT was used however, it was successful.</p>	<p>To varying degrees, the units had a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes and enjoyment of gymnastics. Pupils were able to identify a number of elements they enjoyed.</p> <p>The girls were generally more positive about gymnastics than the boys.</p> <p>Following the new units, the pupils were able to speak about gymnastics in a more informed way.</p> <p>To varying degrees, the teachers felt that the units had a positive impact on the pupils' achievement of high quality outcomes. A number of outcomes (relating to performance, participation, enjoyment, commitment/attitude) were achieved by most pupils.</p> <p>Overall, pupils did not feel the units involved them in much decision making or in different roles (though the teachers' reports contradicted this).</p>

Issues

A number of issues were uncovered by the research team and the teachers which impacted on the research and the findings. These included pupil behaviour, pupil embarrassment, the effectiveness of introductions/plenaries, the balance between teacher talk and activity, pupil groupings, the complexity of the change process, the environment, as well as general research constraints such as logistics and time.

Recommendations

From the above, a number of recommendations were made to further facilitate the achievement of high quality physical education and gymnastics teaching within the school. Some of these were quite specific to the particular school and department context, whilst others were more general and perhaps of most relevance here. For example, general recommendations included:

1. That teachers make some elements of units more explicit to pupils (for example, for teachers to raise pupils' awareness as to when they are involved in decision making and different roles within lessons).
2. That teachers pay more explicit attention to 'knowledge and understanding of fitness and health' and to recognise/adopt a broader interpretation of the associated knowledge base, moving beyond warming up/cooling down.
3. That ICT be incorporated more readily within lessons to involve pupils even more so in different teaching strategies and roles.
4. That the cross-curricular links identified within the learning activities be strengthened in terms of specific communication/links between subject areas (such as IT, PSHE and Science).
5. That grouping procedures be considered carefully to ensure all pupils feel comfortable and confident when working in gymnastics.
6. That the activity be made more relevant for pupils by promoting and increasing gymnastics club involvement (for example, raise pupils' awareness of the gymnastics opportunities that are available within and beyond school).

Summary

The findings highlight that, despite some issues and variations in outcomes, the intervention had a positive impact in facilitating high quality teaching and learning and outcomes in gymnastics. By addressing the recommendations and extending the work to another area of the physical education curriculum, namely athletics in phase 2, it was hoped to further identify and develop the principles that contribute to high quality physical education. The details and findings of phase 2 of the research will be summarised in a future article.

References

DFES & DCMS (2004). High Quality PE and Sport for Young People. Nottingham: DFES Publications.

Hardy, C., & Mawer, M. (1999). Learning and Teaching in Physical Education. London: Falmer Press.

Haydn-Davies, D. How Does the Concept of Physical Literacy Affect What is and Might be the Practice of Physical Education. Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.physical-literacy.org.uk/haydn-davies2005.php>

Hellison, D. R., & Templin, T. J. (1991). A Reflective Approach to Teaching Physical Education. Leeds: Human Kinetics.

Kay, W. (2005). Physical Education - Quality: A quality experience for all pupils. Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ccpr.org.uk/dyncat.cfm?catid=15898>

Kirk, D. (2005). Physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation: the importance of early learning experiences. European Physical Education Review, 11(3), 239-255.

Mawer, M. (1995). The Effective Teaching of Physical Education. London: Longman.

Morgan, K., Kingston, K., & Sproule, J. (2005). Effects of Different Teaching Styles on the Behaviours that Influence Motivational Climate and Pupils' Motivation in Physical Education, European Physical Education Review, 11(3), 257-286.

Mosston, M. & Ashworth, S. (2002). Teaching Physical Education (5th ed.). San Francisco: Pearson Education.

Siedentop, D., & Tannehill, D. (2000). Developing Teaching Skills in Physical Education. California: McGraw-Hill.

Silverman, S., & Ennis, C.D. (1996). Student Learning in Physical Education. Leeds: Human Kinetics.