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Exploring Perceptions of Teaching Strategies for Fundamental Movement Skills in Primary Physical Education Programs

Physical education (PE) programs are uniquely situated to promote motor skill development during childhood. When children do not receive appropriate instructions during development, they are likely to experience motor delays. Nevertheless, the relationship between Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) and teaching styles in PE has remained relatively unexplored in previous research. The present study explored teacher perceptions of teaching strategies and FMS development through a mixed-methods approach. Participants were a mix of preservice, specialist, and general primary school teachers with varying levels of PE experience. Surveys assessed self-reported use of the spectrum of teaching styles (STS) in PE. Subsequent interviews explored teacher perceptions of how FMS are taught within primary school PE. Results demonstrated that, regardless of teacher population, in a PE context there is a preference for explicit teaching strategies, characterized by a collaborative approach to teaching and learning. Participants demonstrated a preference for the “practice style” within the STS, wherein the teacher provides activities and learning outcomes, but students practice and interact with the task while receiving feedback. Both quantitative and qualitative results support the suggestion that subject knowledge, experience and training are influential in the development of teaching practices. Participants expressed a desire for additional training due to the unique subject and pedagogical knowledge required to confidently plan and deliver lessons that facilitate FMS development. Taken together, the findings provide further evidence for an understanding of teaching styles used to teach FMS during primary school PE, and a need to explore different types of PE teachers.