Importance of Student Attitude Towards Physical Education

Article Submission #1

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This article highlighted issues about how students view physical education class and why obesity and overweight issues are becoming more prevalent amongst Canadians of all ages. The findings of a study conducted on grade 10 high school students in the Vancouver area were analyzed and input from the respective physical education (PE) teachers was included in the analysis of the findings.

The article emphasizes that the obesity problem is growing with an alarming 24% of Canadian children falling into the overweight category (Landolfi, 2014). This weight gain trend alarms health care professionals due to increased health risks associated with obesity as well as the strain it puts on health care funding. A totaled $4.3 billion is spent annually to treat obese people across the country (Landolfi, 2014). People often address obesity as being the outcome of below-average exercise habits and a poor diet, however this article suggests that the issue may find its roots in behavioral and environmental elements. (Landolfi, 2014). Components of physical education class such as the types of activities being completed, where the activities are taking place, the gender-structure of the class (co-ed vs single sex), interests of the students, and how comfortable the students feel in the class setting (Landolfi, 2014) are all aspects that were reviewed (Landolfi, 2014). Twenty-one PE teachers from the Vancouver area were interviewed and the questions used to collect data had no right or wrong answers (Landolfi, 2014). The participating teachers were reassured that the purpose of the interviews was not to evaluate their teaching methods rather the focus was to better understand the attitudes students had toward PE (Landolfi, 2014). The findings in the study suggest that student involvement in lifelong physical activity depends on the values and attitudes they form towards PE during high school (Landolfi, 2014).

 This article was perspective changing and is applicable to what I hope to accomplish during my teaching career. The study provides excellent insight in regard to some of the struggles I may face as a PE teacher. Student involvement, enjoyment, and engagement all play an important role in whether a student will form a positive or negative attitude towards physical activity (Landolfi, 2014). The article suggests that incorporating forms of physical activity that stray from traditional sports such as outdoor units (canoeing) and activities at facilities away from the school attract student interest (Landolfi, 2014). Despite the benefit of these activities, school budgets often do not allow for this (Landolfi, 2014).

One of the main reasons for a lack of involvement in high school PE is that students feel uncomfortable in the gym class environment. Often gym classes are co-ed and as such they are competitive. Male students often cause female students to feel uncomfortable and some students (male or female) are simply embarrassed to run around and play sports because they are not confident in their bodies, ability, or their motor skills compared to those of their peers. This may be due to the exposure they have had to sport growing up and also may be due to the lifestyle their families live. This is an issue for PE teachers and is one of the primary reasons I selected this as one of my articles for this assignment. Student involvement and enjoyment comes down to how comfortable they feel within the environment in which they are learning.

I personally can relate to this issue. At the high school I attended there was a choice in grade eleven as to which PE class students would like to take part in. The two options were ‘strength and conditioning’ (S&C) or ‘sped’ (special education). Strength and conditioning was a co-ed class that focused on weight lifting and learning how to get the most out of workouts, whereas sped was about exploring different activities and ways of staying physically active aside from running and weight lifting. Sped ran over lunch hour and fourth period and this extra time was used to travel to other facilities to complete various activities (ex. lawn bowling, curling, boxing, Zumba, fencing, etc.). The particular sped class that I was in was all girls, whereas the strength and conditioning class was co-ed and consisted of mostly male students.

After reading this article I can begin to understand the lower female participation rate in the S&C class. I now realize why my female peers (including myself) who were interested in learning more about weight lifting opted out of the S&C class. The high number of male participants in the class was intimidating and caused my female peers and I to feel insecure and uncomfortable with the co-ed class environment. Looking at the high female involvement in the sped class it is evident that the female participants in this class were able to step outside their comfort zones and try new activities without the fear of being judged because the environment allowed them to do so. I was pleasantly surprised with the number of girls who embraced each new activity without embarrassment or hesitation.

I believe this fearlessness to step out of comfort zones and attempt new activities was the result of two factors: the first being that the class was all girls (including the teacher), the second being that it was a “judgment free class” and everybody was having fun and encouraging each other. The goal of the class was to learn new activities and to have fun doing so. Nobody was afraid to be marked poorly based on their performance of the activity and everybody was there because they wanted to be there. This class environment allowed girls who usually felt uncomfortable in gym class to try new sports and activities without feeling judged or embarrassed. This inspired me.

From my personal experiences and the information in this article I now have an idea of what I can do to inspire enjoyment of physical activity. My experience with sped has proven to me that even inactive, uncoordinated, shy, and self-conscious young females can discover happiness in physical activity; and this discovery can go on to benefit them for the rest of their lives. This is the power of a PE teacher that the article talks about. This article has helped me to connect the findings of the study to my own personal experience with PE and has inspired me to provide students with a gym class environment that enables them to enjoy being physically active just as my PE teacher did.

References

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