0512

Understanding fundamental movement skills in primary and special education school settings: the perspectives of teachers and sports coaches

Angus Ryrie[1], Julie Money[1], Eiméar Holland[3], Jonathan Sibley[1], Stuart J. Fairclough[1,2]
[1]Faculty of Education, Community, and Leisure, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, United Kingdom, [2]REACH Group, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, United Kingdom, [3]Faculty of Science and Health, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

Background

Literature supports the premise that children's movement development is central to their participation in all forms of physical activity (Bailey, 2006; Martin, Rudisill & Hastie, 2009). In particular, this is deemed to be the case in the stage of life which spans compulsory schooling, when the most rapid development of movement skills occurs (Gallahue & Cleland-Donnelly, 2003; Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2000). An important reason for progression during these years is the extent to which children are exposed to movements and skills that they can combine and apply in various physical activity contexts (Gallahue & Cleland-Donnelly, 2003). The quality of this exposure is influenced by the difficulty of the movement tasks and by environmental factors, such as the physical location, equipment, and significant others (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006), with Stodden et al. (2008) also hypothesising a relationship between fundamental movement skills (FMS) and specialised movement skills and lifelong physical activity participation.

'Learning to Move, Moving to Learn' is a Manchester schools city-wide programme which aims to improve children's fundamental movement skills (FMS) and multi-skills competency, through the provision of playground markings and INSET training. This qualitative research reported here formed part of a mixed methodology pilot project commissioned by Manchester City Council.

Research Questions

The research focus was to:

- (1) Assess primary and special education teachers' knowledge and understanding of FMS, and 'multi-skills'.
- (2) Explore perceptions surrounding how confident and competent teachers' felt about integrating these concepts into Physical Education lessons.

The subsidiary research focus was to:

- (3) Examine teachers' understanding and ability to transfer skills between different activities and sports.
- (4) Assess any wider educational benefits that can be gained from using FMS and 'multi-skills' as a method of delivery.

Methods

The study adopted a pre-post research design in three primary and two special education school settings. Data were collected through 10 targeted focus groups. Seventeen participants involved in the teaching of multi-skills (5 male, 12 female) with varied teaching and coaching experience in schools (e.g., NQT through to 22 years in service) participated in the research. Data were collected using focus group interviews in each school before and after the implementation of the intervention. Interviews were recorded using an Olympus WS-32M digital voice recorder, and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was undertaken using content analysis, which is described as "a

heterogeneous domain of techniques which are focussed upon the systematic, objective and qualitative description of communication" (Coolican, 1999, p. 455). The data were inductively analysed through the use of the qualitative research package NVIVO to establish any trends, links or key themes relating to the research focus.

Frame

Morley (2009) highlights that in recent years, opportunities for children to access multi-skills activities has led to the adoption of an infrastructure utilised within schools and community settings in England. Within the framework, organisations involved with the development of physical activity, health and sport suggest that this method of delivery supports effective movement development (Youth Sport Trust, 2008) and increased participation in physical activity and sport (Sport England, 2008) .

The development of these movement skills in children has been conceptualised in a variety of ways (Bayli & Stafford, 2005; Côté, Baker & Abernathy, 2007; Gallahue & Cleland-Donnelly, 2003), with a number of pedagogical and sports participation models being proposed. Within these models, common themes exist surrounding the importance of developing efficient movement patterns through internally paced, fun activities, deliberate play (Bayli & Stafford, 2005; Côté, Baker & Abernathy, 2007), and the provision of skill refinement activities within supportive, nonthreatening environments (Gallahue & Cleland-Donnelly, 2003).

Research findings

The data identified issues regarding the use and understanding of the terms and concepts associated with FMS and multi-skills, and the impact of FMS on pupils. Some of the participants had some conceptual understanding of the terms, with others having very little knowledge. The data also highlighted the need to gain pupil understanding of FMS to reinforce the positive impact it could have on their ability to perform skills and activities more effectively. Within this, there was an assumption that multi-skills was only relevant to KS 1 pupils, although there was an appreciation that unless multi-skills were developed early on, other more complex skills could not be realised.

Strong evidence was provided by all teachers on the positive impact that teaching FMS had on pupils with regard to concentration, improved self-esteem, increased body awareness and engagement of individuals who normally do not participate. Staff also suggested that FMS (in conjunction with physiotherapy) had made a significant impact on mobility and the quality of life of some special school pupils.

There was a general understanding of the importance of movement skills to support physical, social and psychological development. Moreover, all participants valued or understood the benefits of PE in relation to health, movement, social interaction with peers and to a lesser extent the acquisition of skills. However, although implicit recognition of the value of FMS and multi-skills was universal, in some cases there was limited technical knowledge or understanding surrounding effective curriculum delivery.

Key points that contribute to knowledge:

Within primary and special school provision, there is ambiguity and a lack of understanding surrounding the terms associated with FMS and multi-skills. Thus, there is a need to develop greater understanding of the purpose of and effective delivery of FMS. Training surrounding FMS and multi-skills needs to be effective, pedagogically grounded and accessible to teachers, teaching assistants and coaches involved in the delivery of Physical Education and School Sport. In addition, within the current structure in schools, this study suggests that ambiguity regarding the use and understanding of the concepts associated with FMS and multi-skills exists, and this could potentially impacts on pupils' FMS and SMS development.