

Perseverance in physical education: the role of feedback

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Introduction and objectives

In order to master a motor task, it is crucial to practice a lot. This exercise process is often accompanied by failure, which requires perseverance to succeed. Self-Determination Theory (Deci, & Ryan, 2012) suggests that the quality of the teacher-student interactions, and particularly the way by which teachers provide feedback, is crucially important when it comes to students' learning in physical education (PE) (Krijgsman et al., 2019). Thus, teachers are advised to give positive feedback to motivate children, but possibly the type of positive feedback is also very important. It is assumed that positive effort feedback after failure will lead to more perseverance than positive feedback aimed at talent. In the current study, we examined whether the type of positive feedback provided by the PE teacher affects children's perseverance when facing challenging exercises.

Methodology

An experimental design with 176 children (44.3% boys, 9-13 years) being randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions was used. Conditions differed based on the type of positive feedback that was provided: person-oriented feedback (i.e. "Well done, you're very talented"), task-oriented feedback (i.e. "Well done, you tried really hard and I appreciate your effort") and standard feedback (i.e. "Well done") after children succeeded in a set of easy exercises in the first part of the experiment. Children were also presented with very hard exercises in which they failed, after which they received the same negative feedback in all three conditions. Children were then given the opportunity to either stop or continue practicing.

Results and discussion

Results showed that the type of positive feedback significantly affected children's perseverance after failure. Children who received task oriented feedback persisted more than 30 sec longer than children in both the person feedback and control condition ($F=6.832$, $p<0.01$). They also chose more difficult exercises than children in the control condition ($F=3.848$, $p<0.05$).

Conclusions and perspectives

The way by which the PE teacher provided positive feedback affected children's perseverance. Children who received task- rather than person-oriented or standard positive feedback persisted longer and chose more difficult exercises. This study has important implications for PE teachers as it shows the importance of offering task-oriented positive feedback to increase students' persistence in PE.

References

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