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Methods of Teaching Physical Education - an Introduction

Introduction

Hello and welcome to yet another module on Physical education. Today we are talking about the methods of Physical education.

Physical education is an integral part of the educative process which uses physical activity as a primary means to promote psychomotor, cognitive, and socio-affective growth in order to enhance the quality of life (Holst, 1993). Traditionally physical education classes have only focused on the psychomotor, or physical, aspect of learning (Poynton, 1986). The idea nowadays is to address all domains of learning.

When teaching there are an assortment of styles or methods a teacher may choose from. These methods are ways of organizing and presenting the learning experiences to children. The styles range from a direct, teacher-centered approach to an indirect, more student-centered approach. In the past direct, teacher-centered methods have been used predominately, however recently the trend seems to be shifting towards a more indirect, student-centered approach.

Normally the student-centered teaching style is more time consuming and requires more preparation by the teacher, however the benefits to be gained from these methods are definitely worth the extra time spent developing the lesson. The methods are not easy for a teacher to grasp without putting an effort into it. In order for a teacher to become comfortable and successful with using these methods it will take substantial practice on the part of the teacher involved.

The teaching styles discussed will start with the teacher-centered, command approach, followed by practice, reciprocal, and the task approach. Thereupon it will continue with increased student-centered methods, such as guided discovery, problem solving, and exploration. As you go across the continuum of teaching styles the teacher has less influence in the decision making, and the student becomes the prime decision maker.

2. Teaching Styles of a Physical Education Teacher

1. COMMAND

The command style is the most teacher-directed style of the seven styles (Mosston, 1992). In this type of style the teacher is the exclusive decision maker. Decisions on what to do, how to do it, and the level of achievement expected are all determined by the teacher (Nichols, 1994).

With this style the teacher will give a demonstration of the expected performance, as well as emphasize and explain specific important points of the movement. The demonstration gives the students an opportunity to see the skill performed accurately and observe the critical elements of the task. The teacher may guide the class through the various steps in carrying out the task. The students repeat the performance many times as they put the movements together in the proper sequence and timing. The teacher also make additional helpful inputs to a student or a group of students when necessary.

Some examples of when it would be advantages to use the command style is when showing a child how to overhand throw, instructing a specific dance step, or teaching someone to shoot a free throw in basketball. These all are tasks that have to be done in a specific fashion making the command style a very efficient method of accomplishing the task.

2. PRACTICE

The practice style is one of the most common teaching strategies used in physical education (Mosston, 1992). It is very similar to the command style in that the teacher is the primary decision maker, and the task will also start with a demonstration and description of what is to be achieved. The demonstration does not necessarily have to come from the teacher, it may come from another student or even from audiovisual aids. The students then practice the skill, either on their own or with a group, as the teacher observes their performance and offers feedback. The difference between the command and practice style is that the practice style does permit some decision making from a part of the students. For instance, the students may decide where they will practice and if they will be working with, or without, a partner (Nichols, 1994). At the end of the session the teacher may review what they did, emphasizing the essential points to have learned.

The practice style is very useful, especially when coaching. For example, if the coach is showing the team how to forearm pass a volleyball he/she would first explain the forearm pass, telling

when and why it is used and describing the critical fundamental points of the forearm pass. This would be followed with one or more demonstrations of the skill being executed, once again emphasizing the key elements of the skill. The players are then given time to practice the skill, either by themselves or with a partner. The coach can then walk around making corrections and providing encouragement. At the end of the practice the coach may ask the players to discuss the points of emphasis before going on to the next lesson.

3. RECIPROCAL

The reciprocal style allows more decision making by the students as compared to the command and practice styles, which are much more teacher dominated. With this style the teacher develops a reciprocal task sheet (appendix A) which describes the task to be performed and points out what the observer should be looking for to see if the performer is executing the task properly. The students are the observers and are responsible for viewing the performance of their classmates and providing feedback on each attempt (Nichols, 1994). The reciprocal task sheet may include pictures and a description of the task to assist the observer. It should also explain the role of the performer and observer, as well as give the amount of time or number of trials to be given in each practice session.

The session is usually initiated with a demonstration, a description of the skill, and an interpretation of the reciprocal sheet. Once this is accomplished, one student performs the task as their partner observes the performance and records when the proper criteria has been met. The observer also provides positive feedback to help improve their partner's performance of the skill. After the performer has properly executed the task a specific number of times the partners switch roles. With this style the duty of the teacher is to walk around observing the students and clarifying the tasks for both the performer and observer.

4. TASK

The task style still has the teacher deciding the content of what will be taught, however it allows the students some decision making and provides them with the chance to work at their own pace (Mosston, 1992). This type of style or method has the teacher designing an arrangement of tasks leading up to the unit outcomes. The tasks are then broken down into a group of activities, each at a different level of difficulty, in which the students progress to achieve the final task is measured

The first level of difficulty should be below the most poorly skilled students and the activities should gradually increase to a level above the most highly skilled students. More decision making is required by the students as the level of difficulty increases. During the first stage (lowest level) the teacher presents a task that is broken down into several levels of achievement. All the students are working on the same task, however the students are allowed to begin at a stage within the task that they feel comfortable with and eventually progress through the activity.

At the second level the teacher looks at the ability level of individual students and based on their level the teacher will assign specific tasks.

The third level (highest level) requires the greatest amount of decision making and responsibility by the students. Each student is given a task booklet describing all the tasks to be completed in the unit. The student chooses the tasks they wish to practice and are responsible for working on each task within the unit time (Nichols, 1994).

In this style the teacher is a valuable resource, however other aids should be provided, such as pictures, books, posters, and even film. If the students are not encouraged to use these other resources they may become dependent on the teacher for information.

The students need to be able to determine when a task has been accomplished. This can either be decided qualitatively or quantitatively, and a partner or the teacher can perform the evaluation. Having the teacher do all of the evaluations may be wasting time, besides the students should have the chance to be responsible for their own evaluation and the evaluation of their peers (Nichols, 1994).

3. Guided Discovery

The guided discovery method crosses over into the student-centered section of the continuum. This approach continues to use the teacher-designed movement tasks, however, it is done in a way that allows the children to make individual decisions about how to move (Mosston, 1992). In other words, the teacher defines the intended outcome of the movement response, but does not determine how it will be attained. This method is useful if the teacher is trying to get the students to discover the most desirable movement for a certain task or to develop a new skill (Nichols, 1994). This allows the students to experiment with different movements in order to achieve the desired goal. It will also increase their understanding of why certain movements are more advantageous and effective than others. This method is also an ideal way for the students to discover possible strategies of specific games (Rauschenbach, 1996). The idea behind this method is that the students will make up their own minds about how they will move, however limitations are enforced that narrows the students choices, thus limiting the range of movement responses. This eventually leads to the single desired outcome the teacher was looking for. This method permits the students to experiment with the movement, to make comparisons with other movement responses, and to analyze the possible motor responses (Nichols, 1994).

6. PROBLEM SOLVING

The strategy of problem solving is very similar to the strategy of guided discovery except for one important difference. With the guided discovery approach there was only one proper way of performing the final movement or task, therefore the final outcome would always be the same. With the problem solving approach several solutions can be the end result (Nichols, 1994). In problem solving, as with guided discovery, the teacher will present a movement challenge that

has certain guidelines. The guidelines may be a limitation on the use of space, directions, or movements permitted. The goal is not to find a single correct answer as with guided discovery, instead the objective is for the students to find as many different solutions to the challenge as possible (Nichols, 1994). Any movement response that fits within the guidelines is totally acceptable.

7. EXPLORATION

Exploration is the most student-centered method or style of the continuum (Nichols, 1994). With this style the students are permitted to move as freely as they desire, while staying within the limits of safety. The style is similar to that of problem solving, except the students are exploring the movements in a less restrictive and more natural environment with much less teacher direction (Nichols, 1994).

This style can be very beneficial when introducing concepts, ideas, and new equipment. It is also a good way to obtain fresh unique responses and ideas from the students. Because this style provides the students with a great amount of freedom to work at their own pace and do what they want it is important to understand that the teacher does not simply set up the equipment and let the students play totally on their own. The teacher does have some say in what the students do. For example, the teacher may ask "How many different things can you do with that ball?" The teacher must keep in mind the individual needs of the students and set new challenges when they are ready to progress.

4. Conclusion

Physical education teachers have several methods of teaching that may be employed. These methods vary in terms of who makes the decisions of what will be learned and how the learning will occur. Some methods are teacher-centered, whereby the teacher is the primary decision maker, and others are more student-centered allowing the students increased input on what they do. As mentioned earlier the most teacher-centered is the command style. Decisions of the content to be learned, how it will be learned, and so on are all determined by the teacher. The similar practice style is also very teacher-centered. The teacher will demonstrate and clarify the skill or task, the students go and practice it while the teacher observes them and provides feedback when necessary. With the reciprocal style the students have to take on more responsibility. They are accountable for the learning of their peers as they have to analyze their partners performance and give feedback. The task style shares the decision making. The teacher decides how and what will be learned, and the students choose the task or level at which they will begin working on. The teacher guides the students through an assortment of activities eventually leading to the discovery of the proper movements for a specific task, in the guided discovery style. Problem solving and exploration strategies are the most student-centered, by reason that they each allow the students to decide for themselves the movement responses (Nichols, 1994). In problem solving the teacher will ask certain questions, such as "how many

different ways can you move in the space provided?" As long as the students responses are within the criteria the answer is not wrong. Exploration offers the least amount of teacher direction and is particularly useful when working with young children.

It is difficult to say which style offers the maximum potential for learning because not all people will receive optimal learning by use of the same style. Certain material may be presented really well with one style and not as well as with another. The availability of time is another concern affecting the style chosen. A teacher should always try to meet individual needs and personal differences of each student. The best methods to achieve these goals are found within the indirect, student-centered approach. The important thing is for the teacher to be able to determine what style is most appropriate in a given situation and apply it with determination and confidence.

5. Recommendations

Teachers should be able to proficiently and effectively use all seven of the teaching styles depending on what the situation calls for. There are benefits and drawbacks in each of the styles, therefore it is important for the teacher to know when to use a specific style.

If the goal of the lesson is to be extremely organized, have a unified response, save time, or have a quick direct route to the task then the command or practice styles are recommended. If the purpose is for the students to develop responsibility, social skills and/or analytical skills then the reciprocal or task style is recommended. It is recommended that the guided discovery method be utilized if the objective is to have the students think for themselves and develop a greater understanding of the proper movements. When the intent of the lesson is not to teach a particular outcome, but instead to improve development in conceptual, cognitive, and problem solving areas, as well as enhance creativity in the movements then the style of problem solving is surely recommended. In the event that you are working with young children who are involved with their first physical education experience it is more appropriate to allow them the freedom to work and explore movements on their own, thus it is recommended that the exploration method be used for this situation.

So today we have learnt about the various teaching methods in physical education. I hope the information provided was of some use to all of you. Thank you so much for watching