

Training of physical education teachers and the use of rules to improve school coexistence

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Abstract

Background. School coexistence affects the well-being of the entire educational community, students, families and teachers. In turn, it affects school results. Teacher training and school rules management are important variables to consider to improve school coexistence. The aim of this study is to determine the teachers' perception of training in school coexistence and the use of school rules. Materials and methods. In this study, the teachers' responses regarding training in school coexistence and the use of the rules in the classroom and school to improve it are analysed. This study is funded by Junta de Andalucía (Spain) under the context of the research project with reference PIV-069/08. The participants are 147 secondary education teachers of physical education (PE). The participants completed two questionnaires created 'ad hoc' to evaluate the students' problematic behaviours regarding coexistence in these classes. An analysis of qualitative and quantitative variables was performed. Likewise, a description of the characteristics of the sample and of the schools was performed, for which absolute and relative frequencies were described. Results. The experience of teachers is considered to be the most useful training in terms of teaching strategies, and most of the teaching staff answered that they "always" established a process of awareness of the rules with positive principles and values at the beginning of the course. Conclusion. The rules of operation of the PE class as well as of the school should be coordinated and agreed upon through the teamwork of the teachers. The results of this study help to establish guidelines for classroom management, as well as for the improvement of teacher training programs.

Keywords Adolescents, behaviour, classroom conflict, secondary education, discipline

Introduction

In recent years, pedagogical analysis has begun to reconsider the proposal that teachers and the way they perform their work are essential for any effective educational reform strategy (Montero-Carretero, & Cervelló, 2019). Educational environment is one of the contexts that affects student's training and education the most (Leyton-Román et al, 2021). At the same time, teacher is essential in the teaching process, and the students' perception of their teacher's competence can be important in explaining bad behaviours in the classroom (Granero-Gallegos et al., 2019). The teacher must prepare a sufficiently enriching environment with which the students can interact and become the architects of their own growth, as individuals and as social beings. The need for the academic community to assess the awareness of educators regarding their responsibility and role justifies an increasing interest in analysing their perceptions (Yot-Domínguez et al., 2019)

Sometimes it is observed that the same groups and students have behaviour and discipline problems only with some teachers, which makes us think about the possibility that correct teaching strategies could avoid such issues. An improvement project at schools implies the transformation and change of the teaching staff that has to implement these teaching strategies (Urbina et al., 2020). The phenomenon of school violence is not occupying an important place in the curricula for teachers; the knowledge they receive is very general and partial and is insufficient to understand the problem and intervene.

The above-mentioned issues highlight the need to ensure that the programs in favour of school coexistence are not isolated actions, but rather embedded in the structure of curricular designs, while at the same time trying to implement curricular innovations in pedagogical practice that lead to learning and experiencing friendship between the entire educational community and the construction of critical and universal citizens. In fact, two reasons explain why students enhanced their physical self-concept and diminished their problematic relationships: (1) increased need satisfaction and (2) decreased need frustration (Cheon et al., 2019); thus, curriculum designs should include training related to these issues. Similarly, in the Ombudsman's Report (2009), it is recommended that information related to prevention should be included in the curricular contents at the university teacher training schools and in the contents of the pedagogical qualification course. In fact, a physical education (PE) teacher will be considered qualified and "competent" only when he/she is able to positively and effectively affect the educational relationship with the students (Francesco et al., 2019).

Similar to teacher training, the rules are essential for the creation and consolidation of an environment presided over by coexistence; without rules, understanding between members of the school community is not

possible, and educational projects cannot be performed (Martínez-Otero, 2001; Fernández, 2007). The ambiguity of the normative context is present in many secondary schools where the formal rules, which the school relies on, are its weak point (Buccoliero, 2007).

In a social climate with clear rules, which are democratically chosen and assumed by all, in which teachers are clear about their socializing role and students have an opportunity to participate in the development of conventions and rules, it is expected that fewer problems of interpersonal violence will occur; however, unfortunately, such problems cannot be entirely eliminated because there are many sources of violence (Ortega, 2007). Innovative pedagogical technology strengthens students' independent work skills and reduces the time required by the teacher to explain the educational material (Mischenko et al., 2020), which can help better manage and control the class (Francisco Javier Gil-Espinosa, 2021a). Undoubtedly, there are many skills and knowledge that a physical education teacher must master, one of them being the understanding of social, relationship and affective characteristics of the students (Francesco et al., 2019). That is why the study on the initial and continuous training of teachers regarding school coexistence could provide strategies to improve the teaching-learning process and the school climate. In this study, the responses of teachers regarding training on school coexistence and the use of rules in the classroom and school with the objective of improving them are analysed. This research is funded by the Educational Research Project with reference PIV-069/08 (Junta de Andalucía, Spain) and complements the previously published studies (Gil-Espinosa et al., 2016a; Gil-Espinosa et al., 2016). The aim of this study is to evaluate the teachers' perception of training in school coexistence and the use of school rules.

Materials and Methods

This study was based on a cross-sectional design through the application of two questionnaires addressed to PE teachers who teach compulsory secondary education (CSE) levels in public schools in Andalusia (Spain); the inclusion criteria and population characteristics have been described in previous publications (Gil-Espinosa et al., 2016a; Gil-Espinosa et al., 2016b; Gil-Espinosa, FJ, 2021a; Gil-Espinosa, FJ, 2021b). The development of these questionnaires began with a bibliographic review with the objective of identifying similar investigations and the conditioning factors of coexistence at educational schools. Then, an initial proposal was prepared to be reviewed by seven experts, who have training and profession related to school coexistence. Specifically, the list of experts includes two university professors of education sciences, a university professor of physical activity and sports sciences, a doctor and inspector of education, a doctor and counsellor of secondary education, a director of the school of teacher training, and a teacher of secondary education of physical education. It was decided to establish five dimensions in questionnaire 1 in addition to the data related to the characteristics of the school and teacher. A definition of the terms used is included in each dimension (Table 1).

Table 1. Dimensions of questionnaire 1

DIMENSION	HEADING	DEFINITIONS
I	Didactic strategies in physical education class; training as prevention and treatment of coexistence problems	Didactic strategy is understood as the art of directing teaching operations (Delgado, 1991). Coexistence is understood as one of the fundamental contents that the teacher must develop through their actions inside and outside the class, not as the discipline of students (Bardisa, 2007).
II	Rules	A rule is understood to be "the rule to be followed or to which behaviours, tasks, activities, etc., must be adjusted." (RAE Dictionary, 22nd edition)
III	School participation and organization	The Real Academia la Lengua (22nd edition) defines "participation" as "taking part in something" and in another sense as "sharing, having the same opinions, ideas, etc., as other people". Therefore, we understand school participation as the action or effect of taking part in the life of the centre and in the teaching-learning process by the students, sharing ideas with the rest of their classmates and teachers. Organization is understood as the action and effect of organizing (RAE Dictionary, 22nd edition). Thus in the school context, we can define it as the normative structure, adapted by each school community, which seeks the establishment and constant reform of the elements of the process of teaching-learning to achieve better school results, among which is the correct atmosphere of coexistence.
IV	Methodology in the area of physical education in CSE	Methodology is understood as the "science of method" (RAE Dictionary, 22nd edition); method is a set of moments, activities and techniques that are logically coordinated and direct student's learning towards certain objectives.
V	Prevention and treatment of conflicts	Conflict is understood as "situations of dispute or divergence in which there is opposition of (tangible) interests, needs and/or competing values" Cascón (2000); in addition, conflict is "a natural fact of life. They are neither positive nor negative, but it depends on how we respond to them" (Bardisa, 2007).

Regarding questionnaire 2, and in consideration of bad and disruptive behaviours and measures applied by the teaching staff described in the bibliographic review, a table is created, which lists the most frequent disruptive behaviours (Table 2).

Table 2. References for the questionnaire design

	Authors
Behaviors contrary to Coexistence	Bardisa (2007) Defensor del pueblo (2007) Martínez-Otero (2001) McCormack (1997) Rodríguez et al. (2004)
Measures applied by the teacher	Akin-Little et al. (2007) Defensor del Pueblo (2007) González (2005) McCormack (1997)

The procedure to define the questionnaires continued with the following phases: (1) review the proposals of the group of expert teaching staff, (2) application to teaching staff as a pilot study and analysis and application of the improvements. Finally, the questionnaires were sent to public schools in Andalusia, where there were three or more secondary education centres. The data were recorded and processed using the statistical program "Statistical Package for Social Science" (SPSS) version 15.0 (IBM Corporation).

Results

Sample The sample consisted of 147 secondary physical education teachers (101 women) with a mean age of 40.03 years (+/- 9.59).

Teacher training Table 3 shows the results for teacher training in relation to the prevention and treatment of coexistence problems. A total of 62.6% of the teaching staff consider didactic strategies to be "very important" to perform a PE class with fewer problems of coexistence. A total of 51.3% "quite agree" or "totally agree" that the social context, its organization and curriculum are important causes of conflict. A total of 58.9% stated that teachers were the key to avoid conflicts. In addition, the obtained results indicate that 55.10% of the teaching staff consider that behaviours contrary to coexistence are lower in PE than in other areas, and only 16.30% consider them to be higher. Teacher's experience (94.5%) is considered the most useful training in terms of teaching strategies, followed by reading books and articles (80.6%). These results highlight the low valuation of courses at teaching schools (50%) and university training (50.4%).

Table 3. Results regarding teacher training

		n	%
To what degree do you consider that didactic strategies are important to perform a PE class with fewer coexistence problems?	Not important	1	0.7%
	Slightly important	2	1.4%
	Important	52	35.4%
	Very important	92	62.6%
	Do not know	0	0.0%
Degree of agreement with the following statements in relation to coexistence			
Violent students often have pathologies of biological, psychosocial and social origin.	Disagree	7	4.8%
	Slightly agree	20	13.7%
	Pretty much agree	67	45.9%
	Completely agree	47	32.2%
	Do not know	5	3.4%
Violence is inherent to human nature and therefore avoidable.	Disagree	80	54.8%
	Slightly agree	55	37.7%
	Pretty much agree	7	4.8%
	Completely agree	1	0.7%
	Do not know	3	2.1%
The school context, its organization and the curriculum are important causes of conflict.	Disagree	21	14.4%
	Slightly agree	47	32.2%
	Pretty much agree	57	39.0%
	Completely agree	18	12.3%
	Do not know	3	2.1%
The teachers, as those responsible for the internal organization of the school (in terms of hours and spaces) and as a guide to the curriculum, are the key to avoiding conflicts.	Disagree	9	6.2%
	Slightly agree	49	33.6%
	Pretty much agree	71	48.6%
	Completely agree	15	10.3%
	Do not know	2	1.4%

Rules Table 4 shows the results relative to the standards.

A total of 75.2% of the teaching staff answered that they "always" established a process of awareness of the rules with positive principles and values at the beginning of the course. A total of 84.9% answered that "many times" or "always" there are logical, educational and graduated consequences for non-compliance with the rules in PE class. Finally, of note, 75.2% answered "never" or "sometimes" that parents/guardians actively participate and coordinate with the teaching staff in the development of the school's norms.

Table 4. Results relative to the standards

		n	%
Do you establish a process of awareness of its importance, necessity and coherence with positive principles and values at the beginning of the course for the PE area?	Never	1	0.7%
	Sometimes	4	2.8%
	Many times	31	21.4%
	Always	109	75.2%
	Do not know	0	0.0%
Are there logical and educational consequences in case of non-compliance with the rules, graded according to severity and frequency for the PE area?	Never	2	1.4%
	Sometimes	19	13.1%
	Many times	43	29.7%
	Always	80	55.2%
	Do not know	1	0.7%
Does the Management Team act as a guide and coordinator to establish norms and procedures that favor Coexistence in the school?	Never	0	0.0%
	Sometimes	23	15.9%
	Many times	65	44.8%
	Always	57	39.3%
	Do not know	0	0.0%
Do parents / guardians participate actively and in coordination with the teaching staff in the elaboration of the centre's rules?	Never	38	26.2%
	Sometimes	71	49.0%
	Many times	21	14.5%
	Always	2	1.4%
	Do not know	13	9.0%
Do you use an individual or group self-control system at EF that includes respect for the rules?	Never	20	13.8%
	Sometimes	31	21.4%
	Many times	37	25.5%
	Always	52	35.9%
	Do not know	5	3.4%

Discussion

Teacher education and training are essential for improving the quality of teaching; however, it is difficult to identify expert teachers. Granero-Gallego et al. (2019) have proposed strengthening both the coordinated work between teachers and using tutoring when addressing bad students' behaviours. Literature sometimes does not clearly differentiate between expert, experienced, competent, and effective teachers. Binaburo and Muñoz (2007: pp 15) have stated that "teacher training is necessary for conflict resolution as well as assimilation of new roles by them." Teachers need to receive training and support to implement cooperative organization in their classes because cooperative work can be one of the ways to constructively solve problems (Moliner and Martí, 2002). If teachers perceive that there is pressure from school authority regarding the way they teach, their psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness may be thwarted, which may affect their resultant motivation (Liu et al., 2020). Once teachers learn how to provide structure in an autonomy-supportive way, they will be able to generate benefits both for themselves and their students (Cheon et al., 2020).

The subject of teacher-student relations is essential for all teachers, new or senior (Szymanska and Timmermans, 2007). Cohen et al. (2019) concluded that students' self-esteem, sense of autonomy, and emotion regulation were positively correlated with each other. Del Rey and Ortega (2001) believe that continuous change in school conditions requires permanent training for teachers. However, when these changes are focused on the socio-affective field, the training must be centred on the group of teachers themselves so that they can adapt to the context of different intervention proposals that the scientific community proposes.

Regarding the rules, Rincón (2002) advises that in the context of few conflicts, it is necessary to establish few but fundamental rules, which are developed with student participation; thus, students are involved in the development of these rules, as proposed by Aznar et al. (2007). More explicitly, a study by Ciudad (1996), which is cited by Martínez-Otero (2001), provides pedagogical recommendations for the proper use of the rules and the steps required for their establishment and implementation. Leyton-Román et al. (2021) highlight the importance of both the application of strategies by teachers that promote autonomy and decision-making by students. When teachers support students' expression and pursuit of their personal interests and goals, students become increasingly engaged in classroom learning activities (Reeve, J. & Shin, S., 2020).

In secondary education, an educational team consists of many teachers, i.e., approximately 10 or 11. Thus, it is essential that prior guidelines and minimum agreements are established, which the teacher tutor can assemble to establish the procedure. In PE or other specific areas, the teacher should provide the conditions and particularities that recommend the establishment of specific regulations. Taking into account the importance of the unity of criteria and teamwork of the teaching staff, it is advisable to propose that, in the first week of class, appropriate mechanisms should be established so that the entire educational team is presented to the group.

Conclusions

Under the current situation of coexistence in the schools, the concept of teacher training should expressly include training on the use of strategies that improve coexistence. Thus, the preparation and professional emancipation of the teacher will allow him/her to critically, reflectively and effectively develop a teaching style that promotes meaningful learning, improves coexistence. It is clear that the current system of initial and permanent training does not meet these objectives, at least in relation to school coexistence. Thus, it is necessary to update the current training system to achieve useful, team-oriented, compulsory training at the school. Likewise, the teamwork of the teaching staff must result in a coordinated procedure to establish and apply the norms.

Didactic strategies are important to conduct a PE class with fewer problems of coexistence. Furthermore, it is advisable to establish a process of awareness of the rules with positive principles and values at the beginning of the course. It will be convenient for teachers to implement a system of logical, educational and gradual consequences for non-compliance with the rules in physical education class.

Data Availability

Readers can access the data by writing to javiergil@uma.es

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest

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