

Teaching games for understanding approach in high school: perceived enjoyment at different age groups

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Purpose: In physical education lessons, in which large groups of students participate at the same time to the activities proposed by the teacher, it is important to limit the idle time as much as possible and increase the students' motivation. Thus, the approach called “teaching games for understanding”^[1] may be of particular interest in this setting. This approach consists in leading students to learn sport skills and tactical aspects through playing games, rather than using exercises focused on skill development. The purpose of this study was to analyze how the teaching games for understanding method can affect enjoyment during physical education lessons in high school students of different grades.

Methods: 66 first and second grade students (57 males, age: 14.9 ± 0.8 years; height: 171.6 ± 7.0 cm; weight: 65.0 ± 11.7 kg; 9 females, age: 15.11 ± 1.1 years; height: 160.6 ± 11.5 cm; weight: 63.9 ± 13.9 kg), and 40 third and fourth grade students (33 males, age: 17.7 ± 0.9 years; height: 177.6 ± 6.1 cm; weight: 69.9 ± 11.4 kg; 7 females, age: 17.3 ± 0.8 years; height: 162.4 ± 4.0 cm; weight: 60.3 ± 14.8 kg) and 19 fifth grade students (all males, age: 18.4 ± 0.5 years; height: 177.8 ± 5.7 cm; weight: 76.2 ± 14.1 kg) were involved. All groups learned handball's base techniques (such as throwing, catching, saving, dribbling the ball) and the basic tactical components of the sport, practicing only games (variations of traditional games and facilitated versions of handball), with no specific technical or tactical exercises. After the last lesson, students completed an anonymous questionnaire based on a 7-point likert scale, corresponding to the interest/enjoyment subscale of the IMI scale.^[2]

Results: There were significant differences between all examined age groups in the interest/enjoyment subscale, in favor of the younger students (first and second grade students vs third and fourth grades: 5.19 vs 4.57, $p < 0.05$, $ES = 0.45$; third and fourth grade students vs fifth grades: 4.57 vs 4.13, $p < 0.05$, $ES = 0.39$; first and second grade students vs fifth grades: 5.19 vs 4.13, $p < 0.05$, $ES = 0.77$).

Conclusions: The results show that the teaching games for understanding approach, used to teach handball in high school physical education classes, is effective in motivating young students towards physical activity, while higher grade students, in particular fifth grades, do not seem to particularly appraise that teaching method. Possibly, a more analytical approach, based on technical and tactical exercises, may be preferable for students of that age group. A reason may be related to the fact that older students have already developed the basic techniques needed to play handball, and they feel the need for specific technique training in order to improve further. Thus, they do not

enjoy as much as younger students games focused on technique development, that are less complex than handball itself.

This study highlights that, during physical education classes in the high school, the teaching games for understanding approach is an effective strategy for teaching specific sports skills in younger students, while a different approach, such as the analytic approach, may be preferable for older grade students.

Key words: high school, students, teaching games for understanding, handball, enjoyment, competence, IMI scale, physical education, motivation

References:

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