

## **ENHANCING STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

An overarching aim of the school system is to “promote pupils’ self-esteem and emotional well-being and help them to form and maintain worthwhile and satisfying relationships, based on respect for themselves and for others, at home, school, work and in the community” (Department for Education and Employment and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 1999, p. 11). In the school PE context, Hein and Hagger (2007) have found pupils’ autonomous motivation towards PE to have a positive direct effect on reported global self-esteem.

Regarding self-esteem, SDT holds that autonomous motivation promotes an individuals’ true self-esteem (i.e., a stable and secure sense of self; see Deci & Ryan, 1995). As Deci and Ryan (1995) state “... one experiences true self-esteem, and this type of self-esteem will be enhanced only when one’s actions are self-determined— that is only when one acts with an internal perceived locus of causality”. Physical education teachers aiming to foster high self-esteem among children in their lessons may consider the following:

### ***Creating a mastery-oriented motivational climate***

In task-oriented motivational climates, personal mastery goals are highlighted and students tend to adopt a task-oriented situational goal orientation (Papaioannou, 1995). In this case, students will strive to develop self-referenced competence or gain mastery of the task. A mastery-oriented motivational climate fosters interest in the activity because the focus is on the actual task rather than external outcomes.

### ***Creating an autonomy-supportive learning climate***

Listen to students more and offer more empathic statements, to reduce apprehensions related to engaging in practicing new motor skills. E.g. try to give more encouragements and use more empathic statements such as “I can see that you are starting to get tired, you can have a break if you want”. Offer greater support for students’ autonomy by suggesting different possibilities and enhancing initiative taking. E.g. letting students decide the format of games in PE or offering several options for practice.

### ***Creating an environment of perceived competence***

Several authors have agreed that perceived competence is the most influential predictor of intrinsic motivation or interest among adolescent students in physical education (e.g. Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000, 2002; Ntoumanis, 2001; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2003). E.g. providing differentiated platforms for learning that challenges students but not overwhelm them. Present a well-structured environment that gives clear guidelines on tasks, provides optimal challenges, and offers contingent feedback on how to achieve desired outcomes may be successful in satisfying students’ need for competence (Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007). For example, provide positive feedback by praising students for the effort that they put in instead of just their successful performance.

## **KEY DEFINITIONS**

**Autonomy:** The degree of volition one feels in pursuing the activity and the need to feel congruence between an activity and one's values (Deci & Ryan, 2000). E.g. "I feel like I can make a lot of inputs in deciding how my job gets done"

**Perceived competence:** An individual's striving to experience effectance; e.g., "People tell me I am good at what I do"

**Performance/Ego goal orientation:** For individuals with ego orientation, competence is based on outperforming others and demonstrating superior ability.

**Self-Esteem:** Global self-esteem measures general perceptions of self-worth; "the awareness of good possessed by self" (Campbell, 1984).

**Task/Mastery goal orientation:** For task-oriented individuals the criterion for the evaluation of competence is self-mastery.

## **REFERENCES**

- Campbell, R. N. (1984). *The new science: Self-esteem psychology*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1995). Human autonomy: The basis for true self-esteem. In M. Kernis (Ed.), *Efficacy, agency, and self-esteem* (pp. 31–49). New York: Plenum.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*, 227–268.
- Department for Education and Employment and The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. (1999). *The national curriculum: Handbook for secondary teachers in England*. London: HMSO.
- Ferrer-Caja, E., & Weiss, M. R. (2000). Predictors of intrinsic motivation among adolescent students in physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 71*, 267 – 279.
- Ferrer-Caja, E., & Weiss, M. R. (2002). Cross-validation of a model of intrinsic motivation with students enrolled in high school elective courses. *Journal of Experimental Education, 71*, 41 – 65.
- Hein, V., & Hagger, M. S. (2007). Global self-esteem, goal achievement orientations, and self-determined regulations in a physical education setting. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 149–159*.
- Ntoumanis, N. (2001). Empirical links between achievement goal theory and self-determination theory in sport. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 19*, 397 – 409.
- Papaioannou, A. (1995). Differential perceptual and motivational patterns when different goals are adopted. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 17*, 18 – 34.
- Standage, M., Duda, J. L., & Ntoumanis, N. (2003). A model of contextual motivation in physical education: Using constructs from self-determination and achievement goal theories to predict physical activity intentions. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*, 97 – 110.
- Taylor, I.M., & Ntoumanis, N. (2007). Teacher motivational strategies and student self determination in physical education. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99*, 747–760.