



Teachers' Enactment of Contextualized Instruction in Primary Physical Education

Mr. Spencer Briggs

sb10cd@brocku.ca

Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2S 3A1, Canada

Dr. Tim Fletcher

Department of Physical Education, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2S 3A1, Canada

Abstract

Background: Physical education is frequently criticized for limited transfer of learning beyond school and for experiences that do not sufficiently reflect students' lives and communities. Grounded in sociocultural learning theory, contextualized instruction has been proposed as a pedagogical framework that supports teachers in being intentional in how they draw on students' identities and local resources. Silseth and Erstad ([2018]. 'Connecting to the Outside: Cultural Resources Teachers Use When Contextualizing Instruction.' *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 17: 56–68). offer five orientations for contextualized instruction: local community, everyday practices, personal issues, concrete objects, and knowledge from abroad. This research examines how a sample of four primary physical education teachers enact contextualized instruction.

Methodology: A generic qualitative design was used to examine how four primary school physical education teachers (ages 5-13) in Canada enacted contextualized instruction. Following a professional development initiative focused on contextualized instruction, in which teachers developed a unit of work, data were generated from 20 non-participant observations and 8 semi-structured interviews gathered over seven months. Data were analyzed deductively using Silseth and Erstad's (2018) five orientations of contextualized instruction and inductively through reflexive thematic analysis within each orientation.

Findings: Teachers most frequently enacted contextualized instruction by orienting their teaching practices toward students' local community resources, everyday movement practices, and personal issues related to students' interests and movement identities. Strategies included community mapping, photovoice tasks, partnerships with local organizations, and modifications to games using familiar or accessible equipment. Orientations involving concrete objects and knowledge from abroad were minimally evident.

Discussion and Conclusion: These findings suggest that contextualized instruction offers practical pedagogical pathways centred on and relevant to students' lived realities, particularly through making explicit connections to local communities, everyday practices, and personal interests. In doing so, contextualized instruction acted as a guide for teachers to create personally relevant learning experiences and conditions for transferable engagement with physical activity beyond school.

Keywords: instruction; sociocultural learning theory; qualitative; teaching

References

- Silseth, K., and O. Erstad. (2018). Connecting to the Outside: Cultural Resources Teachers Use When Contextualizing Instruction—*Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 17:(56–68) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2017.12.002>.