



Creating Opportunities for Well-being in the Classroom: Understanding Teachers' and Students' Experiences of Yoga in Schools with Historically Marginalized Populations

Leanne Whiting

Contact Author: x2019ean@stfx.ca

Faculty of Education, St. Francis Xavier University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 4A5, Canada

Abstract

Background: This research will focus on the introduction of yoga into elementary classrooms, in schools with populations with historically marginalized groups and students experiencing economic exclusion and poverty. A second focus of this research is to understand how teachers working with these populations can be best supported in successfully integrating these practices of well-being into their classroom. Currently in Nova Scotia, yoga is offered as a physical education credit course in grade 11 (*Yoga 11*). This study will address the call of previous research (Robinson & Berezowski, 2016), suggesting the development of a yoga curriculum for younger students.

Methodology: Three teacher participants and six student participants in Nova Scotia from two schools in one urban regional centre will be invited to participate in a school-based yoga program. The yoga sessions will be offered over a period of three months, and include a breathing practice, followed by the reading of a children's book, and then a yoga practice. Critical narrative inquiry will be the methodology used to best understand the participants' experiences of the yoga program, while also considering how their experiences have been shaped by social, political, economic and cultural values that have been crystallized over time (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022). Data will be collected using three methods: student journals, classroom observations, and individual interviews.

Conclusion: This research aims to address the barriers (e.g. time, cost, transportation) that historically marginalized populations and students experiencing economic exclusion and poverty often experience, and to contribute to the gaps in the research; grade 11 is too late to offer these wellness tools to students. In addition, the intention is to gather evidence to support mental health and well-being for teachers and their students, while highlighting the need for the inclusion of yoga as part of the elementary curriculum in Nova Scotia, and throughout Canada.

Keywords: yoga; well-being; teacher well-being; teacher pedagogy;



References

- Pino Gavidia, L. A., & Adu, J. (2022). Critical narrative inquiry: An examination of a methodological approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21, 1– 5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221081594>
- Robinson, D., & Berezowski, K. (2016). The yoga 11 experience: A case study of an “alternative” physical education course. *Revue phénEPS-PEnex Journal*, 8(1).