

Rita Casella

“Subjective theories and behaviours in physical education of Italian primary school teachers. Applying a superstructure model to study specialist-generalist teachers differences and the effects of a physical education professional development programme”

Electronic publishing of Goettingen University 2011, <http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl/?webdoc-3039>

List of Contents

Introduction

1 Research on Teaching in Physical Education

1.1 Historical Perspective on the Study of Teaching Physical Education

1.2 The Evolution of Physical Education Pedagogy

1.3 Changing Conceptions of Teaching and Learning

1.4 Reflection

1.5 Teacher Beliefs and Decision Making

2 Research on Teacher Education in Physical Education

2.1 Teacher Chang

2.2 Aspects of the Professional Development Process in Physical Education Settings

2.3 Developing an In-service Primary Physical Education Teacher Programme

3 Research Methodology

3.1 The Research Programme “Subjective Theories”

3.2 Semi-Structured Dialogue

3.3 Systematic Observation Methods

4 Instruments and Research Design

4.1 Developing a Semi-structured Dialogue for Primary School Teachers

4.2 Category System for Observing Physical Education Teachers

4.3 Method for Compiling Subjective Theories and Superstructures

4.4 An Integrated Research Approach to Teaching and Teacher Training in Physical Education for Primary School Children

5 Data Analysis

5.1 First study: Specialist vs. non-specialist Teachers

5.2 Second study: Pre- vs. post-trained Teachers

6 Results and Discussions

6.1 Preliminary Analysis: Calculating the Reliability of Observation Data;

6.2 First Study – ‘Qualified Teaching’ Question: Specialist vs. Non-specialist

6.3 Second Study - ‘Professional Development’ Question: Pre- vs. post-training teachers

7 General Discussion

8 Conclusions, Limitations and Outlook

8.1 Conclusions

8.2 Limitations

8.3 Outlook

References

Appendix

Abstract in English language

Relevance of the research. Important international organizations and educational authorities recognize the power of sport in contributing to healthy child development. Healthy lifestyles start from childhood, but the Italian school system gives insufficient support to motor development at the primary school age. We would like all pupils in primary school to receive quality physical education instruction through a well-designed curriculum taught by dedicated professional physical educators. We believe that helping in-service teachers to develop new understandings, beliefs, and perceptions (i.e. “in change” processes) can influence the operationalization of physical education curriculum in primary schools.

Research problem. The first aim of this study was (1) to explore the subjective theories and behaviours of specialist and non-specialist physical education teachers teaching in Italian primary schools. The questions were: What are the subjective theories of Italian primary school teachers? What are the differences/similarities between specialists and non-specialists in their respective beliefs about primary physical education? (*First study*). The second aim was (2) to assess the effects of a PD programme in physical education. The question was: Does the research process and teacher training cause any modification to the teacher’s initial personal practice theories (subjective theory)? (*Second study*).

Methods. Forty-three (43) in-service primary school teachers, thirty-six (36) without a specific

qualification in physical education (non-specialist) and seven (7) with a specific qualification (specialist) were interviewed and videotaped during their regular physical education class. Data were collected using observations and interviews and based on the Research Programme Subjective Theories. Behaviour analysis was facilitated by the use of the SIMI – scout software package. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, a variety of aspects dealing with teaching and learning were examined.

Main findings. In the first study, focusing on the comparison of subjective theories and behaviours of specialist and non-specialist primary school teachers, a description of how they implement physical education teaching was obtained. Few differences emerged between specialist and non-specialist teachers. They show that a specific qualification in teaching physical education helps teachers to use motor and methodological competencies better, such as giving feedback on skills verbally both to the class and individuals. In addition, experience has more relevance for teachers without a specific qualification in physical education, but it also has a moderate relevance for teachers with a qualification in physical education. The second study, aimed at verifying the effects of a PD programme, focused on the question concerning what aspects of the subjective theories can be modified through in-service training. Results show improvements in teaching effectiveness both in the increase of time dedicated to student organization and observation and in the decrease of time dedicated to environmental organization.

Implications for future research. Understanding the subjective theories and behaviours of in-service primary physical education teachers may help university teachers who are responsible for teacher education to develop training programmes that are better targeted to the change process.