**The Impact of Motor-Development Approaches to Teaching Physical Education upon the Self-Regulation of Primary 1 and 2 Pupils within the Scottish Education System**

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**Abstract (617 Words)**

*Background*

Throughout Scotland, self-regulation has been acknowledged as a fundamental function, critical to school transition, social interaction, and success within education (Education Scotland, 2020b). Yet despite this, many children begin school lacking self-regulation skills, impacting upon their development and engagement in classroom tasks (Cadima *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, in an attempt to support the self-regulatory capacities of children across Scottish schools, Education Scotland (2020a) has launched Better Movers and Thinkers (BMT)- a motor-development approach to teaching physical education (PE) which aims to develop the cognitive domain and foster self-regulation skills among children. However, despite such well-intended endorsements, there remains a lack of evidence surrounding the true effectiveness of motor-development approaches to PE upon self-regulation.

*Aim*

The aim of this practitioner enquiry was to explore the impact of motor-development approaches to teaching PE amongst primary 1 and 2 school pupils within the Scottish education system.

*Participants*

The conducted research took place within a primary school in South Ayrshire, Scotland. The participants who took part in the study were aged between 5-6 years old and were all situated across primary 1 and primary 2 (n=30). Moreover, within this study, four consenting classroom teachers assumed the dual-role of ‘observers’- gathering naturally occurring classroom data- and ‘implementers’- delivering the BMT intervention. It is imperative to outline that I, the researcher, also took part in the research (as one of the four teachers involved in the study).

*Intervention- BMT*

Throughout the intervention phase, all teachers, including the researcher (n=4), began delivering BMT within their classrooms for an 8-week period. BMT was delivered to all 30 pupils for 30-minutes, five times per week (20-hours total). All pupils worked on the same routine each week, practising this every day before starting a new routine the following week. Across the course of the 8-week intervention, all 30 pupils engaged in 8 different BMT routines.

*Methods*

Framed through a mixed-methods design, the study involved pre and post-intervention testing of three quantitative outcome measures- cognitive-regulation, affective-regulation, and motor-regulation- assessed through the Response to Challenge Scale (RCS) via a series of 8 challenging tasks. In order to examine the perceptions of teachers and pupils upon the implementation of BMT, qualitative data was gathered via three, pupil focus group interviews and through the reflective journals of four classroom teachers- assuming the role of reflective observers throughout the study.

*Results*

Quantitative data revealed an effect between pre and post-test conditions in the domains of cognitive-regulation (p=0.000) and affective-regulation (p=0.042) however, displayed no significance within the domain of motor-regulation (p=0.067). Analysis of qualitative data through both reflective journals and pupil focus groups identified three overarching themes: perceived skill level; pupils experienced a perceived improvement within both self-regulation and motor-skills which was corroborated by teachers, readiness to learn; both teachers and pupils expressed that the BMT intervention was an effective means of ‘settling’ into lessons and improving pupil concentration, wellbeing; as well as enjoying BMT as an intervention, pupils experienced further benefits such as improved wellbeing and confidence.

*Recommendations*

Moving forward, the potential that BMT holds to develop both cognitive and affective-regulation amongst children is encouraging, and must be further pursued in order to promote motor-development approaches as a more widespread and preliminary approach to PE in primary school as a means to build upon learner confidence, and to act as an eventual pathway towards encouraging a fuller engagement in traditional physical activity throughout the life-course. Moreover, the findings derived from the conducted study have revealed that BMT can serve as an effective tool in improving pupil wellbeing. Therefore, naturally, BMT could potentially function as a strategy towards Covid-recovery, developing emotional-regulation, learner confidence and promoting physical activity amongst children as part of an integrated process towards enhancing pupil wellbeing.

References

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