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Running with Dewey: is it possible to learn to enjoy running in High School Physical Education?

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This study is based on an action research project labelled ‘Running with Dewey’ implemented in a second-year High School Physical Education (PE) class. The purpose of the project was to analyse students’ response to a running programme based on experiential learning. Eight students participated in alternative PE for 8 weeks. The action research project facilitated an autonomy supportive and reflection supportive climate, where students were individually given the freedom to choose their own form of running, and reflect on questions concerning the experience of running after each lesson. The data collection consists of participant observation and in-depth interviews. The findings show that many students have experienced running in PE as primarily unenjoyable. The education has to large extent been based on teacher instruction with no possibilities for individual involvement in, choice of, or reflection on the experience. Due to the possibility to choose a form of running they like, the students appreciated the autonomy supportive climate in the project. There are large individual differences in what form of running the different students prefer. The findings indicate that when personal needs guide the form of running, and the students are encouraged to reflect upon their experience, the students experience the running as more enjoyable.

Keywords: experience; physical education; running; enjoyment; autonomy

Most children seem to love running. Whenever given the opportunity, they prefer to run rather than walk. Compared to sitting and walking, running seems to be experienced as more exciting. Those of us who still enjoy running may recognize the euphoric, yet to some extent unexpected sense of well-being: 'the enchanted appreciation of nature, and transcendence of barriers of time and space' (Sachs 1980, p.274). However, observation of older children and adolescents in Physical Education (PE) classes and Sport Clubs suggests that many of them seem to not enjoy running at all. Rather, they show signs of pain and resignation, and sit down as soon as allowed to by the responsible adult. There is a striking contrast between young children, who run until you command them to sit and the older children, who sit until you command them to run.

Studies show that experiences of enjoyment and personal meaning in movement activities affect the development of attitudes to movement behavior. Also, PE in school represents one major context where experience of movement may be influenced (Hashim et al. 2008, Dismore & Bailey 2011, Säfvenbom et al. in review). Therefore, understanding how to make PE enjoyable and significant in the everyday-life of all adolescents is important.

However, literature shows that a competitive sports discourse dominates PE (Solesnes 2010, Vlieghe J. 2011), emphasizing physiology, development of technical skills and sports performance (Säfvenbom 2010). Tinning (2010) points out that the sequence of explanation, demonstration and practice (DEP-model), a pedagogy of maximum teacher control, is the dominant PE pedagogy, especially among new teachers.

Agans et.al (in press) have developed a concept called Positive Movement Experiences (PMEs) in order to understand and improve research and practice of involvement in movement activities. The Authors criticize the 'one-size-fits-all' approach dominating movement contexts, and underline that PMEs is dependent upon a climate in which the individual and the context regulates each other mutually. PMEs are reflected by the adaption of the individual to the context, and the adaption of the context to the individual. In order to facilitate a mutual individual-context adaption, an autonomy-supportive climate seems necessary.

The experience of running has been researched through different approaches. Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2011) investigated the experiences of long-distance runners through a phenomenological approach. They found that two key structures, heat and pressure, created the haptic experience of running. Allen-Collinson (2008) used an auto-ethnographic approach to research the challenges of running-together, and found that knowledge of the other was of great importance in order to produce effective and efficient running-together. Conboy (1994) used a psychological approach on runners, and found that runners reported more dysphoria on non-running days than on running days. Studies by Sachs (1980) and Lillefors (1978) have interviewed people about 'runners high'. They found that respectively 77% and 78% had experienced the "runners high". Xiang et al. (2006) have used a psychological approach to research fourth-graders' motivational changes through an elementary PE running program, and found that even though they achieved increased performance, their interest in running decreased. However, to our knowledge, there is no existing research that explores how running can be taught through PE in order to be enjoyable, and thus lead to a physically active life. Therefore, the aim of this study was to analyze students' response to a running program emphasizing student autonomy. Our lived experiences of running in combination with the lack of research facilitated the rather basic the research question for this paper:

Is it possible to re-learn to enjoy running in PE?

To investigate this question an action research project in a High School PE class was conducted. The pedagogical framework of the action research project was based on the basic principles of the origin of experiential learning as expressed by John Dewey

Theoretical framework

According to Dewey (1916), the concept of experience involves an active and a passive element. The active element involves testing different forms of actions with a curious attitude. Consequently, when we act upon something, it does something with us in return; 'we suffer or undergo the consequences' (p.146) of the action, which according to Dewey is the passive element of experience. The educative value of the experience lies in the connection between the active and passive element. Reflection is a useful and necessary tool to see the connection, 'the discernment of the relation between them' (Dewey 1916, p 151). Dewey emphasizes that there is always some reflection connected to action. However, the character and quality of reflections will vary. Often when students self-initiate reflection, the results may be coincidental thoughts upon own actions, which Dewey describes as a 'try and fail' method of reflection. The students are able to consider what happened as a consequence of action, but are unable to understand why that specific action caused that specific consequence. According to Dewey (1916), this is reflection on a low level. When guided reflection is implemented in the education, the student is more likely to see the connection between doing and undergoing, consequently it's possible to act with an end in view, the discovery of things as an evidence of something else.

Dewey (1938) emphasizes that experiences are necessary in order to learn something. However, experience does not necessarily lead to learning. Two basic principles constitute the educative value of experience. The first is the principle of interaction. An experience does not happen in a vacuum, but is always an interaction between the individual (i.e. the internal conditions), and the environment, (i.e. the external conditions). The internal conditions refer to the student's personal needs, wishes, intentions and abilities. The external, or objective, conditions imply the material that the individual interacts with. Dewey never wrote about running, but according to his writings running material would include the surroundings of the run, the pace and length of the run, the amount and intimacy of others and the expressed purpose of the run. Dewey (1938) emphasizes that when many students are guided through the same external conditions, only a few of them would learn something, since those few are the only students where the internal matches the external conditions. Applied to running in PE this would mean that the only possible way a whole group of students could be educated, is to let the individual conditions guide educative practice, and use external material that is considered to be a proper match with the individual.

According to Dewey (1938) a range of experiences is essential for the experience's educative value. Different experiences are only different because of the perceived changes from earlier experiences. Dewey (1938) emphasizes how the understanding of former experiences is crucial in the understanding of the present experience. As argued by Wilhelm Dilthey, 'lived experience is not merely something present, but already contains past and future within its consciousness of the present' (Dilthey 1985, p. 225). The experiences are integrated into a wholeness and constitutes the principle of continuum of experience. However, as the continuum of experience is connected to education, the educator is responsible to direct the experiences in a direction that is desirable according to educative goals. Dewey (1938) points out how a thief may grow in understanding and efficiency through continuous experiences, but the experiences would still be uneducative in a pedagogical context since burglary is considered destructive in our society. Every experience is a moving power and the value can only be judged according to which direction the experience leads to. The adult has a background of experiences which the student still does

not have, and should therefore be capable of understanding the student's experiences in order to facilitate new experiences. However, the adult throws his experiential maturity overboard if he fails to bear in mind the desired direction and the moving power of the experience, and 'forsakes the principle of continuum in experience' (Dewey 1938, p. 50).

An experience is a relation between the individual and the surrounding environment, and so it's impossible to fully grasp the depth and richness of the experience for a second person, such as the teacher. Anything is good and true to a student as long as the experience is perceived as good and true. However, the teacher can do his/her best to understand the student's experience by listening and observing, and facilitate new experiences that will lead the student in the direction of the educational aim (Dewey 1916).

Method¹

Action research comes in many shapes and forms, but a common denominator is its cyclical and non-linear nature, involving continuous processes of 'planning, acting, observing and reflecting on changes' (Noffke 1995, p. 2). Emerging from the works of Kurt Lewin, action research allows practitioners to test the adequacy of their own theories in a practical context (Carr, 2004). Action Research fits research approaches in which the researcher plays an important part. 'Running with Dewey' aimed to provide enjoyable running experiences through a didactic approach based on Dewey's (1938) thoughts of how to facilitate good and educative experiences. 'Running with Dewey' was based upon 8 lessons of alternative PE in place of the ordinary PE class. The term 'the Running Group (RG)', further referred to as RG, was used as a label of the context and provided an opportunity for the individual student to run as s/he wanted to. 'To run as you want' is another way of saying that you use your earlier experiences in combination with your present needs and intentions to choose how to run, and consequently 'slip into' the right intensity, length, and surroundings of the run. When the internal conditions guide the external conditions in a dynamic interaction, according to Dewey (1938) it is more likely to have enjoyable experiences. Through the process, I got to know the students better, which allowed me to suggest running material that could provide good experiences for them. However, my suggestions were always secondary in relation to the students own initiatives, because no matter how well a teacher knows a student, the student will always have the best understanding of his/her own experiences, and is consequently the best foundation to consider what kind of educative material to choose in order to enjoy running. (Dewey 1938)

The head of the PE Section at 'Furubotten' High School was contacted in order to get access to the field. The background and methods of the project were explained to her. Through discussion we chose a class appropriate for a criterion sampling (, Marshall & Rossmann 2006, Pitney & Parker 2009) of less active students in PE. This criterion is based on the overall aim of the project, to see if students can learn to like running better. It's probable that the less active students find PE and/or running less exciting, and will therefore be strategic participants in order to test an alternative solution to the existing methods of PE. In cooperation with the PE teacher, I observed one PE lesson, and discussed possible participants with the teacher. The cooperation with the PE teacher was done in order to increase the possibility for recruiting participants which fit the criterion mentioned. Based on the discussion with the PE-teacher and my observations, I invited 8 students to participate in the project. They were informed about the project and asked to participate. Five of them chose to participate, and 3 more joined on a proposal from the PE teacher. The group consisted of 4 boys and 4 girls, 16 and 17 years old.

¹ The practicalities of the action research was conducted by the first author. Through the 8 weeks of the program he was running and interacting closely with the students. As a consequence, methodological considerations and results are presented from an I-perspective.

RG lasted for 8 continuous weeks from September until November 2011. The PE class included two continuous school lessons, with approximately 70 minutes of possible running time. The surroundings of the school were varied, with large forest areas including smaller and larger paths, a small lake and also urban areas with tarmac roads. The first lessons we ran together. I decided the route. The next 7 lessons my message to the students was to run as long, as fast, where and with whom they wanted. When the students came back, the remaining time was available to respond to the reflection questions. The project involved no form of grading, testing, or feedback on achievement level.

After each lesson the students received 3-4 reflection questions to answer and return to me before the next lesson. They were given the opportunity to answer the questions in the remaining time after running, or do them later at home or at school. The questions were primarily concerned with different aspects of how they experienced the running, and aimed at leading the students to reflect on how factors like running speed, length, area, and presence or absence of other people affected their running experience. In addition to be a most significant part of the 'Running with Dewey' approach, the students' answers to the reflection questions contributed to the analysis of the data collection.

Examples of reflection questions:

- Can you describe the experience of running in the forest? Can you describe the feeling of running on roads in traffic?
- Can you describe the experience of running with others? How is this compared to running alone?
- Did you have a good run today? Can you recognize what made the run good or bad?
- What kind of running do you feel fits you and your interests? (what speed?, together or alone?, in what area?, how long?, continuous running or with breaks?)
- In what mood did you feel during running today? (Happy, angry, energetic, sad, relaxed, enthusiastic, impulsive, annoyed, comfortable, relaxed)

Data collection

Observation is a usual method in qualitative research in order to see how the participants act and respond in the real situations of the research context (Taylor & Bogdan 1984, Mason 2002, Marshall & Rossman 2006). In the process of recruiting participants, the students' reactions and comments concerning the project were observed. The first session of RG, I was running with all the participants, and could observe both the relations and the conversations between the participants. The rest of the lessons, observation of all students became more difficult, since the students were primarily running alone. I chose to run with different participants during different lessons, and thus managed to observe all the participants through the project. My participant observation (Taylor & Bogdan 1984, Mason 2002) of the students was a dilemma, since my presence may affect their acts and expressions (Taylor & Bogdan 1984), and more importantly their experience of running, which is the essence of the study. However, I still made the decision to participate in the running with different participants throughout the project, because the context of the study implied my participation in order to observe, and data gathered from observation could contribute to the overall understanding of the topic of study. When looking back at the classes, I feel the decision to run with the students was right. They seemed more willing to talk about their running experiences in absence of the other students, and the observation of the students' face expression during running strengthened their description of the running experience. Field notes were written down immediately after the running lessons. The field notes concerned relevant observations, such as conversations between participants and with me, the students' impulsive reactions, questions and moods, and which form of running the participants chose.

All the participating students were interviewed individually 4 weeks after the last lesson. In-depth interview design (Taylor & Bogdan 1984, Marshall & Rossmann 2006) was used to explore the participants' running experiences before and throughout the project. The interviews were based upon a general interview guide, containing questions like: 'Can you describe your relation to running during childhood and PE?' and 'Can you describe differences between RG and PE?'. In addition to general questions, each student received individual questions based upon observations during RG and answers from the reflection questions. Examples are: 'You said during the run 23rd September that 'this is actually quite nice'. Can you explain this comment?' and 'During the run 30th September you wanted to continue running when returning to school. Why did you want to do so?'

All the interviews started with a 'warm-up question' (Mason 2002, p.73): 'Why did you decide to participate in the project?'. The students were willing to share their personal experiences with me, and the interviews turned quite informal, where I used the narratives and topics expressed as a guideline for further questions. The length of the interviews varied in relation to how much interesting information the informants shared. In the process of transcribing the interviews, I discovered some central aspects that I was unable to recognize during the interview session. Those aspects led to subsequent questions sent to the informants after the interviews.

The analytical phase started as an ongoing analysis (Mason 2002) throughout the implementation; interesting acts, behaviours and expressions were remarked, field notes and reflection tasks were connected, in addition to observer's comments (Taylor & Bogdan 1984) right after and in between the lessons. After the implementation common patterns discovered between the individuals were used as a basis for creating guiding topics for the interviews. In order to strengthen the reliability, data has been cross-checked (Taylor & Bogdan 1984) between the reflection questions, the field notes, and the interview transcripts. The post-analytical phase started with a coding of the data material (Taylor & Bogdan 1984; Marshall & Rossmann 2006) into a few emerging themes. The themes were connected to the theoretical framework in order to justify and explain the findings, and tie the research 'to a body of theory' (Marshall & Rossmann 2006, p.193).

Findings

Running experiences cannot be understood separately, but need to be considered in the light of the totality of the students lived experience of running (Van Manen 1997). Despite many positive running memories from childhood, running memories for these students from PE are primarily unenjoyable.

The lived experience of running in PE

According to Dewey (1916) experience is a necessity in order to learn something. This may easily lead to the misconception that experience automatically leads to learning, a misconception which has developed the term 'Learning by Doing'. When education fails to facilitate learning, the mistake does not lie in the absence of experiences, but how the experiences influence the student. When there is an interaction between external and internal conditions, the experience is more likely to have educative value. When every individual is offered the same external conditions, the process of learning is coincidental. Students who match the conditions manage to learn from the situation. Others have to struggle through the lessons as best they can. (Dewey 1938, p.57)

Morten told me about his asthmatic symptoms during early adolescence. He experienced that running can have extremely painful consequences:

Once we had to run back and forth on the soccer field, it was not a warm-up, but more like a test, and after something like 15 laps I could hardly breathe, I occasionally had some breathing difficulties and could not breathe at all, I did not manage to talk, I remember it as something terrible... (Morten)

The described PE lesson implies a running test, a context in which exhaustion is facilitated and encouraged to, and there is an increased possibility that exhaustion for an asthmatic student will lead to a very painful and unenjoyable experience. Morten admits that it is “quite embarrassing to fall behind when running together ‘then I have to be ‘a man’ and run as fast as I can to catch up with them, then I often get too tired’”. The embarrassment set in relation to the asthmatic troubles indicates that Morten experiences an unpleasant choice in such a running context. He has to push his limits to avoid embarrassment among his friends. On the other hand, he is aware that asthmatic symptoms may appear as a consequence of exhaustion. Both experiences are unpleasant.

When I informed the class about the project, Milly looked at me with a skeptical expression and asked: ‘Is there going to be pain? Are there going to be any tests? Because I’m never able to perform those tests!’ I asked Milly if she could explain this reaction to me.

I feel that when you’re asked to participate in a running group, you have to be a good runner, I was afraid that we had to run a specific distance, and that you should decide how far we had to run, and a test in the end to see if we had improved. Because in PE you’re tested in everything...I don’t like competitions in PE. (Milly)

I asked Milly why competition and testing trouble her.

I remember a running test in the woods. We had to run a specific distance faster than a specific time...after such a lesson I’m just very irritated. I tried my very best, and never stopped, still I didn’t make the time. I feel that even when you try to achieve, you don’t get anything positive out of it unless you’re really good (Milly)

Several of the other students expressed similar opinions. The students’ experiences suggest that running implicates a struggle to achieve according to appropriate standards set by the teachers; standards they know are difficult or even impossible for them to achieve. The descriptions supports the literature suggesting that PE is largely dominated by a Sports discourse (Solesnes 2010, Vlieghe J. 2011) As the participants do not participate in competitive sports, this lends support to findings from other studies showing that students who are not participating in competitive sports are less likely to have a positive attitude towards PE, due to the sports ethos incorporated in the subject (Säfvenbom et al. in review). PMEs have largely been absent because the context have not adapted to the individual features to the same degree as the individuals have been adapted to the features of the context. (Agans et al. in press) According to the students in my running group, running in PE is primarily experienced as uncomfortable. The only reason to participate in the running is because the results on the tests are necessary to get a grade in the subject. Besides that, running has no benefit.

Mina told me that running was fun when she was a 4th grader, but that something happened when she started in 8th grade.

During Middle School we had a lesson in endurance. We were just running the whole lesson, and it lasted for 3 hours, it was quite sick, first we were just jogging to get warm, and then there were always commands, touch the ground, roll around, lay

down, all the time, there seemed to be guidelines for all the running, how we should run, how fast we should run, run fast forward and jog back, again and again...running turned into a hell. (Mina)

My interpretation is that Mina doesn't experience running in itself as something negative, because earlier she has experienced the fun and enjoyment running can lead to. However, it is the way the running is presented in PE that creates the bad experience. Mina described how this particular lesson can be experienced in rather different ways by different students.

For those who like running it is ok, because then you like running, but running was not an interest for me at that time, and when you're not interested in running and should run for 3 h, it is quite sick.

To enjoy 3 h of structured running demands internal conditions in the form of a very special passion for running that very few 8th graders express. Consequently, such a lesson implies that a large majority of the students have internal conditions that are far from interacting with the running material presented (Dewey 1938) and thus a very few would be able to enjoy such an experience. Even if a three hour running lesson might be a rare instance in PE, the experience of external conditions not matching internal ones appear to be common in the material.

Mons found the running education in Middle School much better than in High School. 'In Middle School there were many beep-tests² and similar running lessons, the teachers there were really rigid and pushed you really hard...I love that the running is tough'. I asked Mons why he has not been given the opportunity to run hard in High School.

Here we can only run 1 kilometer and then we're finished running. That's because it is a really big class, and some teachers are really concerned that everyone should run together so no one walks, and then there is always someone who gets tired so everybody has to wait. (Mons)

The way running was presented to Mons in Middle School matched his needs and resulted in enjoyable experiences. He expressed that he had similar running preferences in High School. However, those preferences did not match the running lessons exemplified above, and consequently, Mons did not enjoy these lessons.

There have been few opportunities for students to choose alternative forms of running. Dewey (1938) emphasises that it does not suffice that a certain material and method has proven to be valuable for other students at another time. The students are largely prohibited from influencing the context, which according to Agans et. al. (in press) diminishes the mutual individual context interrelation facilitating PME's. As long as the different students have different needs and intentions in relation to running, the teacher has a responsibility to facilitate different running material that relates to each particular student in order to follow the principle of interaction. We have to bear in mind that only the few students whose internal conditions match the running material and methods presented, would be able to experience the running as enjoyable.

² The beep-test is a standardized test to evaluate the participants' stamina. You run back and forth between two specific lines lying 20 meters from each other. You have to touch the line before the "beep-sound" in order to continue the test. Each level has approximately ten "beeps", and the necessary running speed increases for each new level.

First lesson of RG: a confirmation of the PE experiences

During the first lesson, I decided the route and speed of a joint run. Already after a few hundred meters, I struggled to keep the group together. Some fell behind, looking tired and frustrated, others were running in front, looking impatient. One of the boys in front shook his head in irritation and said: 'The usual whining'. Mona is the first one to fall behind and says, with a frustration: 'I hate uphill!'. When I decided to turn and run back, Mons looked disappointed. 'Already? I haven't even got sweaty!'. Those students who fell behind, on the other hand, looked quite relieved and happy about my decision. Not surprisingly, the students noted that lesson. Martin and Mons described the lesson as boring. They expressed a desire to run faster and longer. Maren felt a pressure during that lesson. 'When we had to run together, I felt I had to run as fast as them... It decreased my motivation when others were running faster than me' (Maren). Other students expressed similar views:

I remember especially the first time, I was still kind of skeptical, I wanted to try, but hadn't been training for a while and thought it was really tiresome. When we were running together in the forest, it was a real hell, we were running in a pace which... well the pace was ok, but not comfortable for me though, so it just was a real hell... I thought, oh my God, I just have to suffer. (Mina)

The observations and feedback regarding the first lesson confirm the findings from earlier running education in PE. The use of the DEP-model weakens student autonomy and is not being sensitive to the concerns of the learner (Tinning, 2010) The students experience the situation rather differently according to their internal conditions: boring, stressful and even painful. Similarly the situation doesn't allow each person to choose a form of running that matches his/her individual preferences.

Redefining running through the experience of autonomy

During the remaining lessons of RG the students were given the opportunity to choose form of running individually (e.g. pace, area, length, partners etc). I noticed a change in mood and attitude between the first lesson and the other lessons. Generally the students seemed happy and comfortable, which reflected the students' feedback. 'It was a good way of working, we could run as we wanted to, I could choose my own pace and run as I wanted' (Martin). All of the students expressed similar views: a gratefulness for the possibility to run without restrictions.

I didn't need to focus on being good at running when running in RG... It was really delightful to run for its own sake, there was no pressure that you had to run a lap faster than a specific time, you didn't need to think that you should run to burn so many calories, it was just running, I think that's much better. (Morten)

Other students expressed similar views. In earlier situations they experienced unenjoyable moments due to a struggle to run fast enough, long enough, and good enough. Differently, in RG there were no achievement standards to fulfill, no faster running classmates to struggle to keep up with, the former experiences of struggle slowly disappeared, and were replaced with thoughts concerning how running feels. The students experienced that running can be more than a struggle, it can be quite enjoyable: Running for me is challenging... it can be fun, it depends on the weather, the attitude and the mood... if I have managed to run long without being too tired, then I think it's fun afterward... It's a relief to run outside in nature, when you breathe fresh air (Morten)

Many students have needs which imply that a running context where it's possible to be 'just running' is necessary in order to experience the enjoyment of running.

Sometimes I get a kick when I'm running, then it's really, 'wow; training', and I got this kick sometimes when running with you, and then it wasn't like I wanted to stop, but more like I really wanted to run the next day and just wanted to continue running... Sometimes when I start running, it is delightful to run, and you can run at your own pace, then you can jog on your own, don't need anyone else, just jogging for yourself with music, then you get this kick, like training is really fun... (Mina)

The expression above shows the strong educative force of an experience. When Mina was given the opportunity to run at a comfortable pace, she experienced the enjoyment of running, creating a desire to run more. In order to learn to enjoy running it's logical to assume that enjoyable experiences are necessary, and thus Mina's experience of the 'kick of running' was highly educative

Simultaneously to one of the classes in RG, the ordinary PE class had a beep-test. Some of the students were quite relieved to be in RG that day and be allowed to run alone in the forest. However, others asked me whether they could participate in the beep-test. I had planned RG to be independent of the ordinary PE class, but decided to make an exception, because some of the students expressed a desire for tests and competitive situations. I remember a lesson where Mons expressed enthusiastically: 'Let us sprint from the bridge, the first one back to school wins'. Martin confirmed his competitive desire in the interviews: 'Competition makes me excited, I really want to beat the others, I'm kind of a competitive person'. Three male students participated in the beep-test. They seemed enthusiastic and happy afterwards, and the feedback was positive. 'I really appreciated your understanding when letting us run the beep-test. I really love to run beep-test, then I can push myself really hard' (Mons).

Some of the students experience the competitive contexts like the beep-test as fun and enjoyable. Although we earlier have argued that the competitive sports discourse can be problematic, those students who have competitive features would naturally adapt positively to a competitive context and most likely have MPEs (Agans, et. al. in press). The students express an understanding of how other students would experience the same context in a different way. 'The beep-test is not appropriate for everyone, because not everyone likes the beep-test.' (Mons) However, some students' bad experiences with a certain material, like the beep-test, should not be a reason to eliminate that material. Rather, a variety of choices should be offered.

During another class, I decided to give Mons an opportunity to explore his desire for pushing limits. He borrowed my GPS and expressed enthusiastically: 'At the end of the run I could see how fast I had been running, and I watched the speed when I was sprinting, and it was really fun'. One of the things I remember best from the running lessons is the observation of a big smile in Mons' face after this lesson, and the last comment before going to the wardrobe: 'Let us break the record next time!'

This situation illustrates how new material can be successfully given to students who are considered to have earlier running experiences that match the particular material. The GPS invites you to push your limits to exhaustion, and to monitor the objective features of the run such as speed and distance, a desire Mons clearly showed during RG. The good connection between his desires and the new material resulted in a very enjoyable experience. It's important to bear in mind that to invite or even demand the wrong students to run with this watch could be counterproductive in an educative sense. Students with a stressful relationship to measurement of running through pace, distance and external control, would most likely

experience running with this watch as uncomfortable and unenjoyable. The material would probably do more harm than good in an educative sense.

In RG the individuals have used their own needs and intentions as a foundation for choosing the running material considered appropriate for them, a coherence or interaction between internal conditions and external conditions (Dewey 1938). The context has adapted to the individuals in the same way as the individuals have adapted to the context, there is a fitting individual-context interrelation which facilitates PME. (Agans et al. in press) Since I was previously unacquainted with the students in RG, they knew their needs better than I did, and were somehow better able to find proper running material. The coherence has been fruitful, and many of the students have discovered enjoyable consequences of running which earlier have been absent. The findings strengthen other studies showing that an autonomy supportive climate increases students' motivation (Dahle, 2005, Rustad 2011, Mejdic 2012). Many of the students, which earlier had experienced running as something unenjoyable, have through the new experiences learned how running can be enjoyable, and redefined their relation to running (Dewey 1938)

An increased understanding of experiences through reflection

According to Dewey (1916), mindless activity is impossible, because there is no separation between mind and physical body, they are connected into a unified whole. However, there are large differences in the level of reflection, and thus the educative value of reflection connected to student activities. Without further reflective stimulation, many students would be unable to see why a particular form of running lead to a particular consequence, and how actions could be changed in order to facilitate desirable consequences. 'I have never thought of how I'm running before, it was a bit strange' (Mina). Other students expressed a similar view. We have already seen how earlier running experiences are described as fun, horrible or boring, implying some elements of thought. PE, however, has not facilitated high-level reflection, 'to make the thought explicit' (Dewey 1916, p.152). The systematic guidance of reflection that has been introduced for the students in RG is, according to the students, something never done in PE before. In RG the students have received concrete reflection questions after every lesson. These questions were formulated for the educative purpose of re-learning to enjoy running. The questions helped the students to reflect deeper on how the enjoyable moments appeared. 'New thoughts appeared to me, like the way I like to run, do I like to run alone, why do I like to run and such things' (Mina). Mons explained that the questions lingered with him through the lessons and made him think more about how running was good for him.

When I got those questions they stayed in my head, and a thought a lot about why do I want to do this at all, and then I speculated on that and found that I wanted to continue running, I have thought through what I think of running and have become more interested after RG. I run more in my leisure time now. (Mons)

Other students expressed similar views. The guided reflection has helped the students to recognize which running situations lead to enjoyable moments, and consequently gained a deeper understanding of how to run in order to enjoy the running.

Findings from 'Running with Dewey' in the light of recent research

This study has shown that the students involved in the project regularly have experienced running situations in PE as teacher-led with restricted choice. Many of the students have experienced running as primarily unenjoyable, because the form of running which has been presented through PE is not related to the way they like to run. It could be

suggested that the students have appreciated running in RG, because they have been given the freedom to run as they want to. Reflection questions have helped the students to be aware of why running is enjoyable to them. Some of the students have expressed a desire to run more as a consequence of participation in RG.

The findings from 'Running with Dewey' support recent research about PE experiences, emphasizing that enjoyment of physical activity is a relation between the individual and the presented content. Studies show that fun and enjoyment increases when the student likes the activity presented (Portman 2003), when the student experience that the content has personal meaning (Carlsson 1995), and when different activity choices are presented (Coulter & Woods 2011). A study by Olafsson (2002) shows that female PE students like being physically active, but they hate PE, because the way PE is presented does not relate to their personal preferences. The significance of the student-content relation has implications for the facilitation of enjoyable PE experiences. The PE teacher should be aware that even if many of the students express enjoyment of the present content, the expression is not necessarily shared by the entire class.

Students have different ways to express their feelings, from the extrovert to the introvert reactions. Consequently, PE teachers need to have a close relationship with each student in order to understand their relation to the PE content. To observe, to listen, and to ask questions could be useful methods in order to obtain knowledge of the student's relation to physical activity and to the PE content. The individuality of activity preferences implies that a teacher-led PE lesson without the possibility of individual choice can hardly be enjoyed by the entire PE class. Consequently, freedom to make individual choices seems necessary in order to facilitate enjoyment to the students. As long as a certain form of physical activity receives positive responses among some of the students, it's logically wrong to consider that form of activity as unenjoyable in itself. However, the student-content relation could make the activity unenjoyable for some of the students in that particular situation.

The importance of a physically active life is emphasized in the curriculum, and the PE subject aims to contribute to the students' creation of a physical activity identity. 'Good experiences in physical education may help form the basis for a health-promoting lifestyle of physical activity for the young people' (National Curriculum: Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008). As students who already are physically active through sport club participation seem to be the ones who are most likely to enjoy the PE presented (Säfvenbom et al. in review) it is justifiable to ask the question if PE generates polarization, in the sense that students who are physically active strengthen their desire for physical activity through enjoyable PE experiences, and students who are inactive decrease the intention to be physically active through unenjoyable PE experiences and learn that physical activity is something for the others.

Conclusion

People are running all over the world, regardless of national, religious or cultural backgrounds. There is something existential about running; small children seem to appreciate running impulsively around, a part of their exploration of the environment in which they live. To learn the ability to enjoy running appears to be an important purpose of PE. Students' experience of running in the subject will influence their relation to running in later life. Consequently, providers of PE have to consider how they want to present running, and what kind of experiences this presentation will lead to among the different students. Running in PE can be experienced as something you have to do, because of external benefits. It can also be experienced as something you want to do, because of perceived enjoyment. The former experience may lead some students to leisure time running. However, the latter experience is more likely to relate to the adolescents' internal desires, and contribute to their development

of a physical identity and a meaningful everyday life. This study has shown that PE students, of all physical shapes and leisure time activity levels, can learn to enjoy running. A facilitation of autonomy and reflection in the education may lead the students to experience the enjoyment of running, and thus facilitate students' lifetime involvement in movement activities (Hashim et al. 2008, Tao et al. 2009, Dismore & Bailey 2011, Wang et.al. 2011)

Limitations and further studies

RG is not a usual PE context. In this study, students were invited to leave the ordinary PE class, which many of them disliked, and join a context created for this research purpose. The students' awareness of the participation in a special context may have influenced the students' experience of running. In RG there were 8 participating students, in an ordinary PE class there can be around 30 students. The didactical method used in RG may give different results in PE classes with more students. RG lasted only for 8 weeks, and based upon this study it's difficult to consider how a longer period of PE following the method of RG will affect PE students.

Further studies are necessary in order to increase the understanding of how PE students can enjoy running. Studies implementing RG didactic and method in an ordinary PE class would increase the understanding of how an autonomy supportive climate influence the students' development in PE, and how this climate can be implemented even when the teacher is responsible for larger PE classes, grading, and achievement of competence goals. Studies researching a PE context similar to RG over a longer period of time are necessary in order to understand the long-term effects of participation.

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