

Building health-promoting schools together: the experience of an interlevel collaborative physical education teacher seminar.

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Background:

In the search for points of common interest, the collaboration of the school community helps to strengthen the whole-school-approach strategy (Hunt, Barrios, Telljohann & Mazyck, 2015). From this perspective, teacher training, above all others, is one of the key success indicators for achieving health-promoting schools (Lee, Lo, Keung, Kwong & Wong, 2019). In September 2019 the Project “Estilos de Vida Activos” (EVA Project) took its first steps with these key points in mind. The project originated from a research stay at the HAN University of Applied Sciences with Dr. Gwendolijn Boonekamp in 2017.

The EVA Project aimed primarily at stimulating a collaborative and reflective dialogue between researchers, teachers and students on important aspects of the social and physical environment for creating and/or maintaining healthy lifestyle habits. A secondary aim was to help schools to become autonomous in developing and leading curricular or extracurricular intervention programs as a sustainable strategy.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to present a collaborative intervention experience to promote the construction of health-promoting schools based on the results of 2 of the main actions of the EVA project.

Methods:

A Participative Action-Research process was performed to achieve the aims of the project. This research process was based on the following 4 strategic lines:

- Teaching & student training
- Identifying health assets
- The Health-Based Physical Education (PE) programs designed to mobilise them
- Assessing the sustainability process.

With regard to the first strategy, a teacher training course was carried out from February to May 2020. In this course 22 primary, secondary and university teachers worked together on physical activity and health-related contents.

At the same time a two-year intervention was carried out in two secondary schools, in which their PE teachers, who took part in the training course, worked on the other three strategies.

Clinical and participatory observation of the process was held by the research group and we are still analysing this information. Nonetheless, some of the insights and qualitative preliminary results were obtained.

Results:

The success of the training course, together with the need to continue working together stated by the participants, led to a commitment to create a Physical Education Seminar for promoting active lifestyles in schools. In this seminar 17 teachers were engaged, most of them from the previous teacher-training course that included the heterogeneity of provenance and profiles.

Moreover, the combination of these interlevel collaboration (teacher training and school interventions) has so far achieved the fulfilment of the second and third strategic lines with the creation and development of the following projects:

- Walking to school on Fridays
- Plan for the improvement of local cycling lanes
- Canteen business plan
- The 'Extra credit'
- Active playgrounds
- PA, Sport and Health-Promoting School.

Both results have converged as a multiplier effect on the confirmation of the 2nd edition of the PE seminar and the training course for the current school year, which is intended to consolidate and expand the collaborative PE network with the aim of achieving the fourth strategic line of the project, providing autonomy and sustainability of the emerged projects.

Conclusion:

The strategy of working at the interschool level, based on the whole-school approach thus seems to be effective in providing knowledge and tools to PE teachers and students to develop their own projects. This autonomy contributes to the sustainability of the interventions as a crucial step in building healthy schools and communities.

References:

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- Lee, A., Lo, A.S.C., Keung, M.W., Kwong, C.M.A., & Wong, K.K. (2019). Effective health promoting school for better health of children and adolescents: indicators for success. *BMC Public Health, 19*(1), 1-12.