DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO STUDENTS AND ATHLETES BY USING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Lintunen Taru
(University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

This presentation defines the concept of authority and introduces social and emotional skills as empowering means for delegating authority to students and athletes. In addition, obstacles and supporting factors when delegating one's decision-making powers to athletes and students are presented. Authority means the type and frequency of participation in a decision-making process (Duda & Balaguer, 2007). Research in sport psychology and other fields shows that an environment that encourages athletes to take control of their athletic goals and participation is highly beneficial. Respectively, the participation of students in the decision-making process that deals with their school work is a central goal in Finnish schools. However, detailed strategies to support students and athletes to take responsibility for and exercise control over circumstances are seldom presented. Consequently, there is a need for research and practical suggestions to help teachers and coaches to deal with the questions of delegating authority and power to participants. Despite teachers’ and coaches’ intentions to transfer authority, there are often obstacles to it. The participants may be used to situations where someone else makes the decisions. They may perceive that the environment is not safe enough for the expression of thoughts and feelings, or that their initiations may have no effect on others. Social and emotional skills provide one set of means to overcome these obstacles. Teaching and the use of social and emotional skills (see Lintunen, 2006; Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007) are empowering agents in school physical education. By deploying social and emotional skills, e.g. active listening, clear emotional expression, and collaboration and problem solving skills, the teacher is able to create a safe and supportive learning climate which is empowering for all the participants. Through social and emotional learning, students experience a sense of self-efficacy and autonomy – important goals of empowerment.


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