

Implementing a Physical Education Self-Responsibility Model for Delinquency-Prone Youth

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The process and impact of a self-responsibility model for delinquency-prone youth was investigated using a variation of the case study method. Ten 4th-grade boys referred by school officials participated in a 6-week special physical education program. Five of the six data sources suggested that (a) the model caused some affective, behavioral, and knowledge changes in the boys, especially in the special program; (b) the experience influenced the special program teacher's attitudes and values regarding both delinquency-prone youth and the applicability of the model for non-delinquency-prone youth; and (c) the model, with the exception of strategies for transfer, retained its validity throughout the case study. Premises and limitations of the research design are discussed.

The physical education literature is replete with claims about the contributions of sport and exercise programs to social development. These claims have been questioned by the results of several research studies conducted since the late 1950s, perhaps because the intervention process has not received systematic attention (Wandzilak, 1985). Recently, however, several theoretically sophisticated studies have shown intervention related social development changes (Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, & Shewchuk, 1986; Giebink & McKenzie, 1985; Romance, Weiss, & Bockoven, 1986). The possible deterrent and rehabilitative contributions of sport and exercise programs to juvenile delinquency have also been claimed, investigated, and debated (Collingwood & Gelsingierd, 1977; Segrave, 1983; Segrave & Hastad, 1984; Yiannakis, 1980).

Both lines of research are related to the 18-year development and field testing of a physical education model for teaching self-responsibility to delinquency-prone youth (Hellison, 1978, 1985) that is briefly described below. Although only supported by anecdotal evidence (Hellison, 1982, 1983b, 1985, 1986) and one set of case study data (Hellison, 1978), this model has been recog-

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nized by curriculum and instruction scholars as an exemplar of teaching social development through physical education (Jewett & Bain, 1985; Siedentop, Mand, & Taggart, 1986).

Self-Responsibility Goals¹

To help physical education goals make sense, they are presented . . . as developmental levels. This simply means that the goals have been organized into a step-by-step progression of attitudes and behaviors. . . . This progression is not fixed, since students are human and don't follow any strictly prescribed progression. However, the levels do provide a framework for planning, responding to specific incidents, and evaluating them, as well as providing a vocabulary for doing so.

Level 0: Irresponsibility . . . describes students who are unmotivated and undisciplined . . . Their behavior includes discrediting or making fun of other students . . . as well as interrupting, intimidating, manipulating, and verbally or physically abusing other students and perhaps the physical education teacher.

Level I: Self-Control [describes students who] . . . may not participate in the day's activity or show much mastery or improvement, but they are able to control their behavior enough so that they don't interfere with other students' right to learn or the teacher's right to teach.

Level II: Involvement [describes students who] . . . not only show self-control, but are involved in the subject matter.

Level III: Self-[Direction] [describes students who] learn to take more responsibility for their choices and for linking these choices to their own identities . . . they are . . . able to work without direct supervision, eventually taking responsibility for their intentions and actions.

Level IV: Caring [describes students who] are motivated to extend their sense of responsibility by cooperating, giving support, showing concern, and helping.

Self-Responsibility Strategies²

[Six kinds of] interaction strategies can keep the levels "in front" of students on a regular basis:

Teacher Talk [simply means] to explain [the] levels, post them, refer to them during a [teachable moment].

Modeling (Being) [is the teacher's level-related] . . . attitudes and behaviors.

Reinforcement . . . is any act by the teacher that strengthens a [level-related] attitude or behavior of an individual student.

¹Excerpted from Hellison, D. (1985). *Goals and strategies for teaching physical education* (pp. 5-7).

²Excerpted from Hellison, D. (1985). *Goals and strategies for teaching physical education* (pp. 9-10).

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Reflection Time . . . refers to time students spend thinking about their attitudes and behavior in relation to the levels.

Student Sharing . . . happens when students are asked to give their opinions about some aspect of the program.

Specific [Level-Related] Strategies . . . refers to those activities that increase interaction with a specific level. For example, student contracts may help students operate at Level III; and reciprocal teaching, whereby students pair up and teach each other, may help students to operate at Level IV.

Method

Premises of the Research Design

Alternative research paradigms are a topic of considerable discussion these days, both in education (Allender, 1986; Jacob, 1987; Smith, 1987) and physical education (Bain, 1986; Earls, 1986; Schempp, 1987; Siedentop, 1987). These discussions encouraged us to devise a research design that would more systematically investigate the utility of the self-responsibility model for delinquency-prone youth than the anecdotal approach, and yet be more sensitive to the intention of both the model (Hellison, 1985, pp. 161-168) and the process (Hellison, 1983a) than are designs based on either pre/post-psychometric tests or systematic observation. Because the body of work labeled qualitative, as well as that labeled case study (Yin, 1984), "is richly variegated and its theories of method diverse to the point of disorderliness" (Smith, 1987, p. 173), an eclectic research design based on the following premises was devised:

1. A case study format was adopted based to some extent on the work of Yin (1984), who argues that a case study is useful when "operational links [need] to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (p. 18), "when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated" (p. 20), and when "a contemporary phenomenon [needs to be investigated] within its real-life context" (p. 25).
2. The researcher's (first author) role in this case study was that of a teacher responsible for implementing the self-responsibility model in a special program. Support for this research strategy was drawn from several sources. Smith (1987, p. 175) argues that the role of the researcher is to "become situated in the subject's natural setting and study, firsthand and over a prolonged time, the object of interest and various contextual features that influence it." Moreover, the critical-theory literature emphasizes intervention in the research process—that is, the goal of research is "not only to describe the world but to change it" (Bain, 1986, p. 4) (see also Popkewitz, 1985)—and the influence of the research process on both researcher and subjects—that is, "both the researchers and the researched [are] 'the changer and the changed'" (Lather, 1985, p. 17). Allender (1986, p. 183) points out that the new research paradigms depart from the older paradigms in a number of ways, one of which is that research is viewed as a "passionately personal process." When the researcher takes charge of the intervention that is under investigation, he or she is not only situated firsthand in the subject's natural setting but is intimately involved in and influenced by the intervention process; he/she is not a dispassionate observer but a passionate doer.
3. The critical theory literature also clarifies the nature of the intervention process; according to Lather (1985), research ought to empower subjects to change

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activities . . . refers to those activities that increase self-reliance. For example, student contracts may help and reciprocal teaching, whereby students pair up to help students to operate at Level IV.

Method

Design

Designs are a topic of considerable discussion these days (Smith, 1986; Jacob, 1987; Smith, 1987) and physical education (Schempp, 1987; Siedentop, 1987). These studies use a research design that would more systematically test the self-responsibility model for delinquency-prone youth, and yet be more sensitive to the individual (Hellison, 1985, pp. 161-168) and the process (Hellison, 1985) than either pre/post-psychometric tests or systematic observation. The design is of work labeled qualitative, as well as that is richly variegated and its theories of methodology are "eclectic" (Smith, 1987, p. 173), an eclectic research design was devised:

The design adopted based to some extent on the work of Lather (1985) is useful when "operational links [need] to be made between frequencies or incidence" (p. 18), "when manipulated" (p. 20), and when "a contemporary investigation within its real-life context" (p. 25). The author's role in this case study was that of a participant-observer. The self-responsibility model in a special program was drawn from several sources. Smith's role as a researcher is to "become situated in the field, firsthand and over a prolonged time, to describe the actual features that influence it." Moreover, Lather (1985) sizes intervention in the research process—"not only to describe the world but to change it" (Lather, 1985, p. 17)—and the influence of the research subjects—that is, "both the researchers and the subjects are changed" (Lather, 1985, p. 17). Allender (1985) research paradigms depart from the older paradigm of which is that research is viewed as a process in which the researcher takes charge of the intervention or she is not only situated firsthand in the field but is actively involved in and influenced by the intervention. The researcher is also a passionate observer but a passionate doer. The design also clarifies the nature of the intervention and how the research ought to empower subjects to change

their own lives. This statement supports the self-responsibility focus of the model, although the self-responsibility model under investigation has been criticized for its failure to extend this empowerment concept beyond self-development (Bain & Jewett, 1987).

4. Multiple data sources were utilized to determine the impact of the model on researcher and subjects in order to counter the subjectivity of the data sources (Smith, 1987; Yin, 1984). According to Smith (1987, p. 175), the various data sources need to be employed "inventively and tailored to the situation . . . and [be] played off against each other."

5. Although much qualitative work does not begin with a theory, theoretical propositions are appropriate in some designs (Smith, 1987), and case study results are "generalizable to theoretical propositions [although] not to populations or universes (Yin, 1984, p. 21). This study does test a theoretical-philosophical model in a specific setting. Conclusions about the model can be drawn from the data as long as selected data are used "to illustrate the process the researcher used to move from evidence to conclusion" (Smith, 1987, p. 180).

Subjects and Program

Subjects were 10 fourth-grade boys identified by their teachers, playground supervisors, and referrals to the principal as behavior problems and likely to eventually get into more serious trouble. The special program was conducted during three 1-hour periods a week for 6 weeks during the noon recess. A variety of fitness and sport activities were taught during the 6-week period, with some emphasis on volleyball. However, the study focused on implementation of the model. The four levels and six strategies of the model were implemented as described by Hellison (1985), with only minimal adaptation. Daily teacher talk, student sharing, and reflection time sessions were held, during which the levels were taught, discussed, and reflected upon. Specific strategies such as the talking bench, emergency plans, a special station, student juries, the confrontation/negotiation process, choices, student contracts, and cross-age teaching were utilized; and both modeling and reinforcement as described in the model were emphasized throughout the program.

Data Sources

Approximately 200 pages of handwritten or transcribed data were collected from the following sources: (a) Pre- and postinterviews of each subject were conducted. Six open-ended questions related to self-responsibility were asked in both the pre- and postinterviews. In addition, seven new questions related to the boys' experiences in the special program were asked in the postinterview. (b) Office referrals for each subject were recorded throughout the program. (c) The teacher-researcher kept extensive field notes, which included a detailed account and interpretation of what he observed each day, an account of his feelings during this process, and an evaluation of his effectiveness each day and at the end of the program. (d) Postprogram open-ended narrative evaluations of each subject were completed by the boys' two classroom teachers and the two playground supervisors. (e) Postprogram open-ended narrative evaluations of each subject and of the program were completed by two volunteer teaching assistants, a man and a woman, who worked in the program every day. Both were undergraduate stu-

dents at a nearby university and had some previous training in the model. (f) Subjects made daily journal entries at the end of each class period as part of reflection time. In doing so, they responded to questions written by the teacher and two assistants about the levels and the boys' intentions and behaviors in relation to those levels.

Data Analysis

Subjects

Behavior Changes. According to office referrals, no changes occurred in any of the boys as a result of the special program. Each boy was generally referred about as often before, during, and after the program. There were some fluctuations but no trends.

However, the teacher-researcher and the two teaching assistants noted several behavior changes in the boys when they were in the special program, especially in self-control (Level I) and caring (Level IV). Similar changes were also noted by the teacher-researcher (who also taught the regular physical education class) when the boys were in regular physical education, apparently as the result of the special program. Many of the changes in both programs were described as slight improvements rather than profound behavior reversals. By the end of the special program, all 10 boys appeared to behave in more socially acceptable ways in the special program than they did in their regular physical education program, and better in the regular physical education program than they did in the classroom or on the playground, according to the teacher-researcher's field notes and based upon inference from evaluations of teachers and playground supervisors.

The two teachers described positive behavior changes in the classroom for 5 of the 10 boys, which they attributed to the special program, and the two playground supervisors described positive changes in self-control on the playground for 8 of the 10 boys. However, many of these changes were subtle and a matter of degree.

Affective Changes. Many changes identified by the various data sources concerned perceptions, feelings, and values related to self-responsibility rather than observable behaviors. The pre/post-interviews revealed that the boys preferred the special program to regular physical education, even though they had the same teacher and much less talk about responsibility, and that they especially liked the opportunity to talk about their problems. They said the special class helped them to learn more and to "be better." In fact, half of them rated the special class as better than recess! In the preinterview, all but one boy had responded to "Who is responsible for you?" by claiming minimal if any responsibility for themselves. In the postinterview, however, more than half said they were responsible for themselves and most of the others accepted some responsibility for themselves. Responses to questions about helping others were more positive at postinterview than at preinterview, both quantitatively and qualitatively (more boys said they helped others and described in some detail how they did so). The boys elaborated more on questions in the postinterviews, which averaged 20 to 25 minutes in length compared to the preinterviews at 10 to 15 minutes. However, there were more questions to answer in the postinterview.

According to the teacher-researcher's field notes as well as evaluations of the two teachers and two teaching assistants, some affective changes occurred

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