

Physical literacy – a new educational goal

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Summary

The global trend of physical inactivity among adolescents has led to a shift of focus in the physical education curriculum to a new concept to research the benefits of physical literacy (Guinhouya et al., 2013). Physical literacy comprises persons' motivation, self-confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding of the value of a physically active lifestyle, and personal responsibility to keep healthy (Whitehead, 2007). Physical literacy is related to a persons' individuality, his/her different potentials, growth, and ability to achieve these goals through education. It aims to educate students on how to achieve a fulfilling life in adulthood (Whitehead, 2001). Physical literacy endeavours to maximise an individuals' potential regardless of the base level of a persons' skills (Whitehead, 2013b). The concept of physical literacy includes persons' motivation, knowledge, and individuality in the context of daily physical activity and healthy life (Lundvall, 2015). The concept of physical literacy comprises four core elements which are (a) motivation and behaviour, (b) movement skills, (c) individuality and social factors, and (d) rules and tactics (Dudley, 2015). The model shows that all these core elements are intertwined and complement each other.

The first component of the model is motivation and behaviour. Based on the framework of the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), social context such as perceived autonomy-supportive behaviour (i.e., adopting the perspectives and feelings of the students, and giving rationale, choice, and promoting self-endorsed reasons for acting) is related to students' intrinsic motivation via basic psychological needs (Kalajas-Tilga et al., 2020). These basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are universal, complement each other, and possess the key role in mediating perceived autonomy support to students' motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Recent research has identified three dimensions of autonomy-supportive behaviour such as cognitive autonomy support (e.g., understanding students' needs), procedural autonomy support (e.g., offering students hints on how to do better) and organisational autonomy support (e.g., allowing students to do exercises by

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using different methods) as promising predictors of basic psychological needs (Stefanou et al., 2004, Tilga et al., 2017). Also, recent interventions aimed at increasing the physical education teachers' cognitive, procedural, and organisational autonomy support toward their students have been effective (e.g., Tilga et al., 2019).

The second component of the model is movement skills. Different movement skills are necessary for a persons' everyday life. To be physically active, we need to know how to walk, run, jump, climb, throw, catch, and keep our balance (Graham et al., 2010). Physical literacy movement skills are treated as skills that allow kids and adolescents to move freely and confidently in the wide spectrum of activities including dancing and sports activities. Higher levels in movement skill allow humans to use the environment in the most appropriate way and use different circumstances offered by the environment (for example, keeping your balance on ice and slippery surfaces). Overall, there are four contexts in which all humans should learn the skills of how to move – on the land, in the water, on the snow and ice, and in the air.

The third component of the model is individuality and social skills, and both are important in supporting kids and adolescents' interests through teachers' behaviour and the environment. Social support from many other sources helps adolescents' physical literacy and provides them with increased opportunities to establish relationships with their peers (Edwards et al., 2016). Everyone should support these pupils by giving positive feedback and avoiding any negativity (Whitehead & Almond, 2013). In the context of physical education, the highest level of individuality is the situation in which a student takes responsibility for his/her health behaviour (Koutelidas et al., 2020).

Rules and tactics comprise the fourth component of the model. Understanding the rules, tactics, and strategies helps develop students' cognitive processes, the most challenging being the use of strategies, followed by using tactics and following the rules (Dudley, 2015). Different strategies are related to more long-term decision processes and are used to plan the activities according to the principles of the game and based on previous experience. Tactics are related to more short-term decision processes based on the current game situation (Stolz & Pill, 2014).

According to the physical literacy aim and construct, there is an ongoing process of rethinking the educational aims of physical education and pedagogical approaches in the subject and in school generally (Larsson, Karlefors, 2015). This is because there is too little connection between the activities in the lesson and their transfer to the free time context. Besides, fewer people are continuing physical activities after leaving school, a sedentary lifestyle is on the rise and the scope of obesity- and stress-related conditions is increasing (Kirk, 2005;

Roetert, Jefferies, 2015; Whitehead, 2013a). Estonia is one of many countries that have started to reform their physical education curriculum and focus on active schooldays for the pupils (Kilborn et al., 2016; Pihu et al., 2017; Larsson, Karlefors, 2015; Liikumisõpetuse ainekava tööversioon, 2018; Mooses et al., 2021; Pihu, 2017; Pihu et al. 2017). The purpose of this is strongly related to the physical literacy journey so that at the end of their compulsory education, they have the ability to enjoy, with competence and confidence, a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit their healthy development (Whitehead, 2007).

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