

Examining The Literature of Significant Experiences in Physical Education and Youth Sports

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to carry out an extensive literature review on the topic of significant experiences that teenagers encounter when participating in physical education and youth athletics. Experts in the field conducted a thorough analysis of fifty empirical research written in English and published between 1987 and the present. The quality of physical education and sport experiences of young people is influenced by several key themes, namely social connection, enjoyment, challenge, motor competence, and individually relevant learning. These main topics provide advice for the future progress and implementation of projects targeted at improving the quality of physical education and athletics provided to students. Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight the need of creating educational techniques that promote and motivate meaningful engagement in the domains of teenage sports and physical education.

Keywords: Curriculum; meaningfulness; pedagogy; students

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have extensively studied the significance and characteristics of meaning in the domains of juvenile sports and physical education for the past 50 years. Researchers have suggested that movement has inherent worth in enriching the human experience by serving as a means of creating significance (Arnold, 1979; Brown, 2008; Hawkins, 2008; Kretchmar, 2000; McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2001; Metheny, 1968; Rintala, 2009). This review primarily focuses on the diverse range of physical activities that are commonly included in the sports and physical education curricula for young individuals at academic institutions. These activities include a variety of games, gymnastics, dance, and swimming. Researchers have examined the understanding of various sorts of movements in the context of youth sports and physical education from multiple viewpoints. Quennerstedt, Almqvist, and Ahman (2011) conducted a study to investigate the practical uses and meanings attributed to objects, specifically spheres, in the field of physical education. They utilised a transactional socio-cultural framework to investigate the process of learning. Nilges (2004) used a transcendental phenomenological approach to study the importance of movement in creative

dance. Writers often use the general concept of meaning to clarify the experiences of participants or the results of studies. They have made multiple allusions to key connotations throughout this process. In his work, Kretchmar (2007) presents a comprehensive and traditional method for examining and understanding meaning. It encompasses various elements of the human experience, including emotions, experiences, goals, aspirations, and ideals, along with other cognitive processes (p. 382). According to the above definition, experiences that are considered significant can be distinguished from stimulation based on their "personal significance" (Kretchmar, 2007, p. 382). Furthermore, it is feasible to distinguish between experiences that hold meaning and those that do not. Kretchmar (2007) and Metheny (1968) give definitions that distinguish between two categories of meanings: notations, which are symbolic representations, and connotations, which are distinctive and diverse interpretations of meaning. These definitions are based on this distinction. Meanings are intrinsically subjective and dependent on an individual's unique interests, emotions, and perspectives, as well as their own interpretation of a given situation (Metheny, 1968). Therefore, people use the mental processes of combining and harmonising in order to assign meaning to a variety of experiences that occur over different periods of time (past, present, and future), including interpersonal relationships, material belongings, educational approaches, and information. Metheny (1968) argues that individuals achieve personal importance by active participation, internalisation, and a sense of engagement with a specific issue. The concept's pertinence and importance, along with its personal significance, are unveiled by the feeling of connection (Metheny, 1968, p. 5). In this research, the term "meaningful" is mostly used to refer to connotative meanings that have personal value. In order to prevent any confusion, this particular usage is chosen instead of the wider and more generic definition of "meaning." Participating actively in sports and physical education during adolescence is extremely important since it has a significant impact on a person's general well-being (Kretchmar, 2006). The quality of physical education experiences is impacted by the learners' pre-established learning goals and their own valuation of physical education (Chen, 1998). Therefore, the nature of life-changing encounters differs based on individual tendencies. According to the social constructivist perspective, emotional and sociocultural elements have a significant role in shaping and influencing people's conceptions of meaning, rather than isolating them from reality. According to Light, Harvey, and Memmert (2013), this approach proposes that the interpretations in

question can be easily shaped and affected by external variables, rather than being naturally inflexible or permanent. Our research aims to analyse the factors that promote meaningful engagement in various physical education and youth sport settings, despite the influence of social and cultural differences. We will investigate the relationships between individual experiences documented in previous scholarly works. The highlighted qualities - social contact, enjoyment, challenge, improved motor skill development, and exhilaration - suggest important experiences in the fields of juvenile sports and physical education. These criteria served as a framework for our efforts to achieve these goals. Identifying widely referenced books in the domains of youth sports and physical education that are considered relevant by participants, instructors, and coaches can provide invaluable help for designing and enabling meaningful experiences for their students. Furthermore, numerous conceptual studies have reinforced the significance of meaningful connection and the creation of meaning, as outlined by Kretschmar (2006). In the field of physical education, it is crucial to emphasise these characteristics in various settings, such as schools, communities, and academic institutions. Moreover, academic studies indicate that people are more likely to embrace and sustain a physically active lifestyle when they find personal fulfilment in sociable, demanding, rewarding, or naturally pleasurable activities (Teixeira, Carraca, Markland, Silva, & Ryan, 2012). Specifically, those who commit themselves to ongoing physical activity primarily do so for intrinsic motives such as personal fulfilment, challenge, satisfaction, and joy, rather than extrinsic motives like preventing illness or decreasing weight. Nevertheless, it is still unclear to what degree highlighting significant involvement can effectively encourage sustained physical activity in the long run. Pringle (2010), Thorburn and MacAllister (2013), and other scholars have warned against assuming a direct link between participation and more significant experiences because of the limited data available in this field. The aim of this essay is to thoroughly analyse the current research and data on the formative experiences of young individuals in physical education and youth sports. This assessment explores the crucial need to improve active participation in modern sports and physical education programmes for adolescents.

Methods

The basis of our analysis rests on the following essential question: Which sports and physical education experiences are important for young individuals? An analysis was undertaken to explore the similarities in policy, practice, and research approaches

between youth sports and physical education, despite their differences. This inquiry focused on the settings of participation in both domains (Cassidy, Mallett, & Tining, 2008). Moreover, academic studies have confirmed that the existence or nonexistence of impactful events greatly impacts the rates of drop-out or continued involvement in both areas (Crane & Temple, 2015; Lodewyk & Pybus, 2012). Research conducted by Kretchmar (2006) suggests that discovering effective strategies to offer valuable experiences could potentially counteract the decreasing trend in adolescent engagement in physical education and sports. The subject being discussed is a matter of concern in several situations, particularly in the Americas. The data demonstrates a decline in the percentage of students in Ontario, Canada who participate in physical education programmes when they transition from grade 9 to grade 10. Specifically, there was a decline in student engagement in physical education, with a reduction from 98% in ninth grade to 49% in tenth grade. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2016, p. 41), there has been a decrease in the percentage of secondary school pupils who are taking part in physical education courses. This discovery is comparable to a scenario witnessed in specific areas of Brazil, where the involvement of high school students in physical education is less than 35% (Tassitano et al., 2010). According to data from Canadian Heritage (2013), there was a 4% decline in the participation of individuals aged 15 to 19 in sports between 1992 and 2010. Simultaneously, sports engagement across all age demographics experienced a decline of 17%. The original research made use of three databases: Web of Science Complete, Education Source, and Sport Discus. We limited our search to empirical research publications published in peer-reviewed journals in English between 1987 and 2015. The main aim of our study was to investigate the level of active involvement of individuals under the age of 18 in these specific situations (Maivorsdotter, Lundvall, & Quennerstedt, 2014). Consequently, our analysis excluded research that examined how pre-service instructors or college-aged students perceive the significance of youth athletics and physical education. The study's authors acknowledged the extensive body of academic literature on meaningful involvement, referencing the works of Hawkins (2008), McCaughtry & Rovegno (2001), Kretchmar (2001, 2005a, 2007, 2008), and Hawkins (2008). They indicated a wish to incorporate a significant percentage of this body of study into their own comprehension of meaningful involvement. However, we believed it was crucial to gather the available empirical evidence to support these theoretical positions. Therefore, our review focused solely

on empirical studies. The decision to designate 1987 as the final year was motivated by the publication of a research monograph on the Process-Product Curriculum Framework (PPCF) in the Journal of Teaching in Physical Education. The PPCF, as described by Jewett and Bain (1985, p. 73), provides a thorough representation of a curriculum framework in the field of physical education that focuses on the importance of each individual. Scholars have extensively discussed the application of meaning-focused teaching methods, such as the PPCF (Pedagogy of Powerful Communication Framework), in many educational contexts that include both children and adults. Subsequently, there has been a scarcity of literature on the PPCF, which is unsurprising given the difficulties associated with implementing the model in educational settings (Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995). Since the monograph was published in 1987, most scholarly inquiries into significant experiences have primarily utilised small-scale interventions or approaches. The aim of our study was to do an analysis and present a concise overview of the results. Given the high frequency of the phrase "meaning" in written and spoken materials, we carefully included it in our search criteria. For instance, when conducting a search on Google Scholar using the keywords "meaningful" or "meaningfulness," the search yields almost three million results. When searching for "physical education," there are over one hundred thousand results, making the evaluation process difficult and impractical. For this assessment, we exclusively examined articles where the authors concisely and unambiguously expressed the objective and/or outcomes of their research regarding the identification of noteworthy occurrences. The authors' vocabulary and specific usage of phrases affect our conclusions regarding inclusion and exclusion. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the possibility of future study investigating particular activities or models that exhibit significant involvement without utilising the terms "meaning" or "meaningful." Therefore, in the first four stages of the evaluation process, it was essential to classify different combinations of flexible materials according to their structure in relation to population, importance, and context. The first category, labelled as "framing of meaning," included a variety of terms and phrases, such as "meaning-making," "sense-making," "personal significance," and "personal meaning." Based on the observations made in the existing body of literature, these terms can be regarded as interchangeable or synonymous with the idea of meaning. We initially attempted to include phrases such as "meaningful" and "meaningless" in our search. However, it was decided not to pursue further research on these expressions because

there were more than 50,000 relevant results, which was an overwhelming number. Various designations were assigned to individuals in the age range of childhood, studenthood, and adolescence within the population group. The terms included in this list are "child*," "student*," "pupil," "preschool," "elementary," "primary school," "middle school," "high school," "secondary school," "youth," "adolescent," and also "teen*." The terms used in the context category were "gym class," "physical education," "fitness education," "sport," and "games." A thorough search was performed in each database, employing the robust search capabilities and Boolean operators ("or" and "and"). Due to the limited vocabulary used in the study of the three databases, a thorough assessment could not be conducted with the sixteen findings obtained. After advancing to the next step of the evaluation and gaining information about additional investigations focused on important events, we carefully examined the reference lists of each article in order to uncover relevant findings. An additional inquiry was carried out utilising Google Scholar to locate each of the sixteen papers retrieved by the database search. Subsequently, we conducted an analysis of the journals that referenced each piece of work with the aim of identifying any relevant discoveries. The new findings were subsequently discovered using a Google Scholar search employing the same methodology. A grand total of 161 goods that fit the specific criteria were produced using the methods used in this investigation. After identifying a total of 161 papers, each manuscript underwent a thorough evaluation procedure to determine its empirical character, peer-reviewed status, and major contribution to juvenile sports and physical education for individuals under the age of eighteen. We excluded 111 publications after conducting a thorough examination of our original choices. The primary factors leading to their rejection were a lack of empirical proof and a disdain for school-age populations. Fifty papers have successfully completed the screening phase and are currently undergoing the final review. The three authors classified the main discoveries from each of the fifty publications in a clear and separate way. Following that, a comprehensive examination was carried out to compare and merge these components into an initial structure comprising several categories arranged on a monthly basis according to specific topics. In a study conducted by Jakobsson, Lundvall, and Redelius (2014), it was shown that the key factor influencing the ongoing involvement of young individuals in club athletics was their degree of pleasure. This article was designated as "fun". Over the course of their existence, the emergent categories, with a specific focus on 294 S. Benetial, underwent several stages

of growth, reduction, and alteration. Afterwards, we performed a detailed analysis comparing the meaning-enhanced experience, as defined by Kretschmar (2006), with the categories mentioned before. The last category, known as "social interaction," was supported by comparing our research findings on the roles played by peers, students, teachers/coaches, and other individuals with the requirements defined by Kretschmar (2006) for "social interaction." In addition, first context-specific categories were included. As an example, the phrase "competition" is categorised as a subset of the broader category "challenge" in our classification system. Kretschmar (2006) identified "delight" as the sixth criterion. The evaluated literature did not provide enough evidence to support the concept of "delight." However, there is a wealth of research that supports the idea that personalised learning is crucial for the formation of meaningful experiences. Therefore, this theme was included. The framework is segmented into five distinct sections: (a) motor skills; (b) enjoyment; (c) challenge; and (d) individualised, relevant learning.

Results

A total of fifty distinct studies were identified during the inquiry. It is crucial to note that out of all the studies reviewed, only 15 of them gave significant attention to meaningful involvement in relation to specific research concerns. This suggests that there has been a lack of clear and well-expressed goals in the past twenty-five years to collect factual information on significant experiences. Based on the information mentioned earlier, the four reviews consistently show similar patterns found in multiple small-scale studies. This supports the claims made about the importance of meaningful involvement in physical education and sports for teenagers. Our study indicates that a substantial number of scholars have acquired their understanding of crucial interactions in teenage sports and physical education mostly through qualitative investigations that employed limited sample sizes. This observation is unsurprising, considering that the phrase in question frequently emphasises the distinct and situation-specific importance of experiences. The most frequently used approach (41) for gathering information was revealed to be interviewing, which included focus groups, individual interviews, as well as both official and informal interviews. Subsequently, there were observations made in a cinematic or naturalistic manner (23). However, it is crucial to recognise that certain studies employed different approaches. The data gathering process also involved the use of many other methods, including student drawings (nine occurrences), photography (four occurrences),

student diaries (three occurrences), text analysis (four occurrences), and several other approaches (eight occurrences). Questionnaires were the main data collection strategy in eighteen investigations. Among them, three studies used open-ended questions, nine used quantitative instruments that measured responses on a Likert scale, and three used a combination of both approaches. Despite three investigations, the distinct attributes of the questionnaire were not adequately defined. The dearth of longitudinal studies and empirical research focused on exploring significant experiences underscores a significant gap in knowledge regarding individuals' understanding of these experiences and the most efficient methods of promoting them. Although the idea of prioritising significant experiences in physical education and sport settings is well-established, this inequality persists. This study not only identifies topics that require more inquiry but also combines scientific evidence that supports the importance of meaningful experiences. A personalised protocol and a meaningful dialogue should be promoted, as suggested. In a limited qualitative study, Nilges (2004) proposed a hypothesis that suggests sentiments and emotions have an impact on how individuals perceive the relevance of events reported in physical education. A comprehensive quantitative study was carried out to demonstrate the previously indicated premise. This involved creating and using a Personal Meaningfulness Scale. The current study included 698 high school students who were specifically enrolled in physical education classes. These students were selected from three different academic institutions (Chen, 1998). Chen (1998) presented empirical data that supports the idea that the process of creating meaning is a personal and subjective endeavour. The way in which the concept is communicated appears to vary among individuals, depending on their own life circumstances (p. 303). Hence, an individual's personal growth and assessment of their own advancement in physical education are influenced by their cultural heritage, communal principles, and life encounters, which encompass early involvement in sports and physical pursuits (Chen, 1998). Take into account a particular occurrence to act as an illustrative case. A study conducted in 2013 by Crance, Trohee, and Saury found that the previous extracurricular sports experiences of talented children had a significant influence on the effectiveness of the sport education (SE) season. The research analysis reveals numerous broad patterns that align with frequently held individual perceptions regarding the importance of physical education and sports engagement among adolescents. Clear patterns can be observed in relation to factors such as grade level, family structure, socioeconomic position

(SES), community affiliation, and school location. In a study done by Chen (1998), the impact of socioeconomic position, gender, and grade level on the perception of meaningfulness among high school students was investigated. Various research studies conducted in different geographical locations have consistently demonstrated that female students tend to derive more benefits from their physical education curriculum when they participate in non-sports activities such as self-improvement and dance. An investigation carried out in 2011 by Clark, Spence, and Holt included the involvement of eight female sixth-graders from Canada. The participants expressed their discontent with the excessive emphasis on organised sports in physical education curricula, stating a preference for activities that promote creativity and uniqueness. The choices made by female secondary school learners were found to be similar. Enright and O'Sullivan (2010) conducted a study which found that five female students from Ireland showed a predilection for participating in non-competitive activities and working autonomously. The students and their teachers worked closely together to create the syllabus for the physical education programme. Research conducted by Gibbons (2009) and Gibbons and Gaul (2004) suggests that incorporating relevant and practical activities into physical education curricula can enhance the probability of female students having meaningful experiences. Students' classification of events as noteworthy was influenced by social factors, including familial structure, financial status, and school location (Wright, MacDonald, & Groom, 2003). The study's findings indicate that parental engagement has a significant impact on children's viewpoints and interpretations of their physical education experiences. Quarmby and Dagkas (2013) interviewed children living in low-income, single-parent households to investigate how their parents' attitudes towards physical exercise would affect their own participation in such activities. However, the authors neglected to consider the perspectives of children from low-income homes led by a single parent or those from dual-parent households with intermediate financial resources. Studies indicate that cultural communities influence the perception of the benefit of physical activity among parents and children. Wright et al. (2003) interviewed students from three secondary schools in Australia who had different regional, social, and cultural backgrounds as part of their research. People who participated in physical exercise were used as examples to demonstrate how individuals display variations in the formation of their identities and lifestyles in connection to physical culture and activity, despite utilising similar cultural resources (p. 30). Although surfing continued to be the most important

activity in a particular area, football gained prominence as the dominant sport. In the aforementioned setting, it was considered socially undesirable to wear specific brands associated with football player culture. Therefore, people's evaluations of their own importance in physical education and adolescent sports vary depending on where they live and the dominant values of their communities. These ideals are influenced by a complex interaction of political, economic, and cultural factors. Our research repeatedly shows a monthly association between regular participation in teenage sports and enrollment in physical education courses, notwithstanding the subjective nature of the word "meaningful experience." Although the papers offer some insights and indicate patterns related to major events, there are still significant gaps in knowledge due to the constraints of the experimental settings and methods used in these investigations. Therefore, a more rigorous approach is available for studying the concept of meaningful involvement in various circumstances. The purpose of this study is to explain the monthly patterns observed in the perspectives of young individuals regarding the importance of participating in physical education and youth sports, taking into account the detailed descriptions and demographic trends that have been identified. The next sections will explore this issue in depth.

Conclusion

A total of fifty distinct studies were identified during the inquiry. It is crucial to note that out of all the studies reviewed, only 15 of them gave significant attention to meaningful involvement in relation to specific research concerns. This suggests that there has been a lack of clear and well-expressed goals in the past twenty-five years to collect factual information on significant experiences. Based on the information mentioned earlier, the four reviews consistently show similar patterns found in multiple small-scale studies. This supports the claims made about the importance of meaningful involvement in physical education and sports for teenagers. Our study indicates that a substantial number of scholars have acquired their understanding of crucial interactions in teenage sports and physical education mostly through qualitative investigations that employed limited sample sizes. This observation is unsurprising, considering that the phrase in question frequently emphasises the distinct and situation-specific importance of experiences. The most frequently used approach (41) for gathering information was revealed to be interviewing, which included focus groups, individual interviews, as well as both official and informal interviews. Subsequently, there were observations made in a cinematic or naturalistic

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