

**ICPEK 2018**  
**International Congress of Physical Education, Sports and**  
**Kinotherapy. Education and Sports Science in the 21st**  
**Century, Edition dedicated to the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNEFS**

**STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE PHYSICAL**  
**EDUCATION LESSON**

Alina Hora (a)\*, Corina Ciolca (b), Ioan Negulescu (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) National University of Physical Education and Sports, 140 Constantin Noica St., Bucharest, Romania

(b) National University of Physical Education and Sports, 140 Constantin Noica St., Bucharest, Romania

(c) National University of Physical Education and Sports, 140 Constantin Noica St., Bucharest, Romania

***Abstract***

There are many studies showing the importance of Physical Education classes in the future lives of children. Therefore, this class can shape the young children's attitude towards being active and adopt a healthy lifestyle. This attitude might be influenced by the opinion of their parents, but also by the curriculum and the teaching strategies. In this study, we examined student's enjoyment, engagement, the importance of PE for them and the parent's opinion about student engagement in the class, the characteristics of the program, the importance of PE and also their suggestions. Student and parent awareness of the important role of physical education can lead to positive change in their attitude towards this topic. Students were applied a survey related to their motivation and interest in physical education classes by observing their attitude towards PE, peer group perceptions, ability perceptions and also their intentions. The parents consider the physical education topic to be important, especially because it helps the mental and physical development of the children, promote teamwork and also the understanding that, even if some of them are not good at one sport, they can still have fun and try new things. Physical education teaches children to respect the rules, their peers and the environment, to be disciplined, to get used to competition and not least to develop their social skills.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Physical education, student engagement, enjoyment, importance of physical education.



## 1. Introduction

It is noticeable that many young people are not interested in physical education classes and do not engage in physical activity, which may result in an increased risk of chronic illness. Hence, adopting an active lifestyle is important for children and adolescents. It is widely accepted that physical education time plays an important role in encouraging children to regularly participate in physical exercise. There are many studies that have highlighted that physical education can make individuals exercise and follow a healthy lifestyle. Students who are motivated to participate in physical education classes are more inclined to do sports in their spare time. Physical education and sports at school provide students with opportunities to learn and practice the skills needed to develop and maintain their physical health status throughout their lives. In addition to physical development, these classes support students to acquire a type of knowledge and understanding based on rules and respect for social awareness of physical education, correlated with social interaction. The value of physical education should be understood from younger ages in order to make students active throughout their lives.

Physical education in Romania is facing some limits of which we notice: the modest position of this discipline in the national curriculum, including the low number of hours allocated per week, which is not in line with European regulations; inadequate school funding and material support for the required resources; lack of solutions provided by the system; lack of incentives for teachers; and limits in specialised knowledge. The pleasure of participating in physical activities is one of the most important psychological factors that can influence the attitude of the child. Along with pleasure, the child's performance efficiency or confidence in different sporting abilities is essential for the development of a positive attitude towards physical activity (Foster, cited by Stănescu, 2009).

As Bryan and Solomon (2007) state, teachers can use strategies that are based on the motivation and involvement of students in the classroom. Student behaviour can be influenced by strategies that encourage students' desire to participate without feeling controlled. Consequently, a teaching style in which students have the choice seems to have a positive influence on intrinsic motivation.

## 2. Problem Statement

Physical education teachers need to be open, willing to take risks and prepared to provide an educational environment that tracks the overall development of students. Teachers should not only think about motor development, but also about the development of cognitive, affective and volitional processes, in order to prepare students for society. The traditional approach focuses on the progression of motor habits that emphasise: isolation of execution, decomposition of elements during learning and the role of practicing motor skills to allow students to transfer them to the playing situation (Rink, 2005).

Bunker and Thorpe (1982) developed the Teaching Games for Understanding (TgfU) approach, which suggests that games should be taught through the game, as opposed to the technique-based approach, where technique is being pursued in an isolated environment. This approach places students in a game situation where tactics, decision-making and problem-solving are very important (Bunker & Thorpe, 1986b). In the constructivist approach, the learning process is maximised if students are involved in problem-solving situations and if they apply their knowledge in an authentic environment.

Butler et al. (2003) identified the basic concepts of TGfU: teaching games by playing games; the gradual complexity of the game ranges from easy to complex; the participants in the game are intelligent; each participant is important and must participate; it is necessary to balance the skills of the students with the degree of difficulty. This approach is a pedagogical method that generates a particular understanding of the game while increasing the level of physical activity, participation and motivation during the physical education class (Forrest, Pearson, & Webb, 2006). It is based on teaching the games using a conceptual approach, through tactical strategies rather than a skill-based approach (Wright, McNeil, Fry, & Wang, 2005).

After Thorpe (1990) and Hopper (2002), the emergence of this approach was determined by the following observed factors: the insignificant results obtained by the majority of students following the emphasis on motor skills; few students leave school with an understanding of the games; there is an increase in technique, but students do not develop their decision-making capacity; students were dependent on teachers.

For students with a lower skill level, the skill-based approach could lead to “failure, weakness, lack of pleasure, and ultimately inhibition of participation in long-term physical activities and also public disclosure of the lack of physical abilities” (Bunker & Thorpe, 1986a, pp. 11-12).

As described by Webb, Pearson and McKeen (2005), students benefit from the tactical approach by: developing critical thinking and the ability to solve problems in a variety of situations; experiencing the holistic approach to learning sports games; generating a good understanding and knowledge of the game; increasing their participation; promoting learner-centred teaching and the importance of the necessary tactics and motor skills.

The TGfU approach can lead to intense participation compared to the traditional approach and may consequently result in the improvement of academic results (Webb, Pearson and McKeen, 2005). Thinking and discussing tactics and strategies develops thinking, decision-making and tactical exploration, combined with the development of motor skills acquired through modified games, leading to the development of cognition (Light, 2002). The art of asking questions is very important and includes a wide range of rules, starters and techniques – even ones from the psychology domain. The quality of questioning and conducting activities that could lead to finding the answer are central to this approach (Light, 2003). The teaching process is student-centred and involves that application of problem-solving skills, so that, through questions, students are encouraged to analyse both individual and team actions. An effective questioning process helps them answer if there were problems with an activity. The problem-solving process develops creativity, imagination, analytical and decision-making ability, as well as a critical and self-critical spirit.

From the TgfU perspective, the teaching aims to combine tactics with the development of the technique and not the individual approach of one aspect or another, so the sequence of questions is from “why?” before “how?” (Hooper, 2002; Werner, Thorpe, & Bunker, 1996). Griffin, Mitchell, & Oslin (1997) state that “a tactical approach [...] lets your students experience the excitement of actual play before they begin practicing specific skills. [...] When they understand why each skill is important, students can apply the skills effectively during game play” (p. 1).

We believe that this approach could improve the way students see the physical education subject as they will be more motivated to take part in the class and to develop the habit of practicing physical exercise in their free time to improve their health.

### **3. Research Questions**

In this context, we will try a different approach to physical education and sport that will offer new openings with qualitative and quantitative approaches to the technical and rational way of meeting the middle-school course objectives. The starting point in carrying out this research will be to improve the quality of education by optimising the physical education lesson using strategy games according to the American International School of Bucharest.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Starting from the knowledge of students' motivation and degree of involvement in the physical education lesson, the aim of the paper is to find the most appropriate strategies and methods by which we could increase their interest in physical activities.

### **5. Research Methods**

A total of 60 participants are represented in the results: all are grade 7 students. 30 students are from Secondary School no. 280, Sector 5, Bucharest, and the other 30 participants are from the American International School of Bucharest (AISB). We applied two surveys with qualitative and quantitative questions. All quantitative questions were answered using a scale of 1-4 (4 - high level, 3 - medium level, 2 - low level, 1 - very low level). Each survey had different goals. The first student questionnaire had a total of seven questions that asked students about their enjoyment, engagement, the characteristics/ strategies used in PE, the importance of PE and their suggestions. The second student questionnaire included a total of 25 items that asked students about their motivation and interest in physical education classes, their attitude towards PE, their peer-perception, ability perceptions and also their intentions. The teacher questionnaire included 6 questions on teachers' opinions about time, student involvement, curriculum/teaching strategies and suggestions. In addition, teachers were asked what didactic strategies they used mainly in the physical education lesson, the formative curriculum valences and the possibilities of improving the lessons. Responses were collected from 15 teachers from Romanian schools and 15 teachers from different international schools around the world.

### **6. Findings**

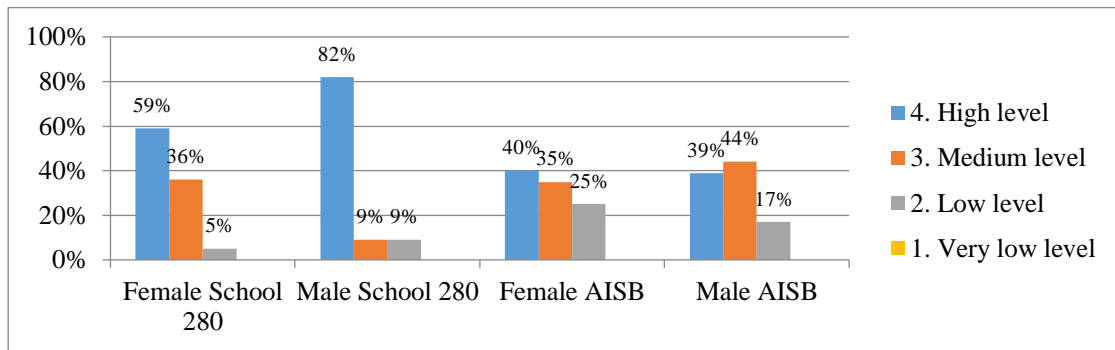
#### **6.1. Results obtained from the processing of questionnaires addressed to students from Secondary School no. 280 and the American International School of Bucharest**

Q1 - How much do you enjoy PE lessons? The boys' response rate is 100%, and among girls, there is a large percentage of a combination of 3 to 4, which shows that they also like physical education classes, but not entirely. The same responses are valid for AISB students.

Q2 - How much effort do you put into PE lessons? It is interesting to note that most girls and boys have scored this question with a level 3, with an almost identical percentage. There is an almost equal response between girls and boys in both schools.

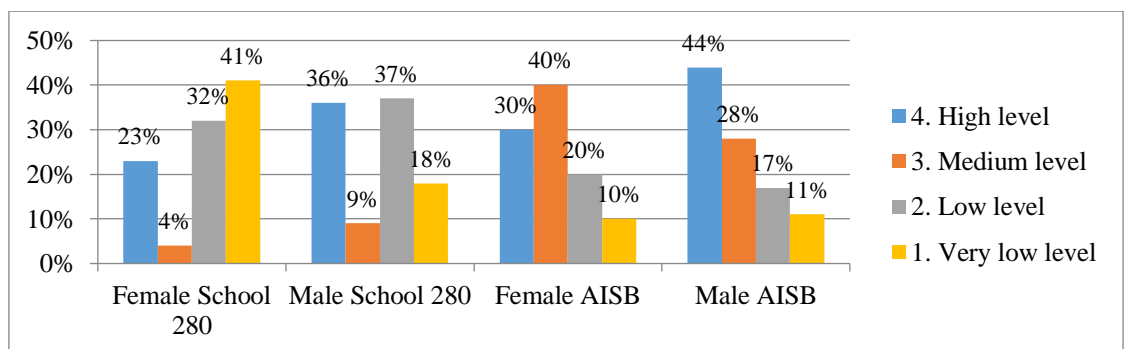
Q3 - How challenging do you find PE lessons? Only 18% of girls and 27% of boys from School no. 280 consider the class of physical education demanding and most of them have scored this question with a level 3. It is noticed that 50% of AISB boys and girls do not find the physical activity too demanding. For girls, 45% chose the response scored with a level 3, while for boys, 17% selected the level 1 (i.e. they did not feel that this class was demanding).

Q4 - How important do you consider PE lessons to be in your daily life? It is noted that 82% of boys consider physical education to be very important and only 59% of girls have selected a level 4, while 36% have selected a level 3. All AISB students consider physical education important. (Figure 01)



**Figure 01.** Importance of the PE lesson in daily life

Q5 - How much time do you spend doing physical activities outside of class? (Check one: 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, 5 hours or more). Among students from School no. 280, there is an equal response rate between the two sexes, who state that they participate in 3-4 hours of physical activity per week. However, 36% of boys and 23% of girls participate in more than 5 hours of physical activity outside of physical education classes. Among AISB students, 44% of boys and only 30% of girls spend more than 5 hours per week on physical activity. However, approximately the same percentage is obtained in boys and girls between levels 3 and 4. (Figure 02)



**Figure 02.** Number of hours allocated for physical activities outside of class

Q6 - Is the lesson of physical education useful in daily life? Explain your answer. All students responded affirmatively, and the vast majority have provided the reason that it promotes a healthy lifestyle and contributes to harmonious physical development. AISB students also mention the increase in fitness levels and the fact that they learn about different sports.

Q7 - If you could, what would you change in the physical education lesson you attend? Most students from School no. 280 referred to: the diversification of practiced sports, improving the materials or equipment used and playing more games and competitions during the class. AISB students consider that they should have fewer written projects and more emphasis should be put on the practical part of the course. Some students want to have longer units to be able to improve their performance, while others want shorter periods so that they can be exposed to more sports. Yet, most of them want to focus more on games and to be able to improve their performance during their playing time, and not to focus on isolated skills needed in order to play the game.

## 6.2. Descriptive statistics for the teacher questionnaire

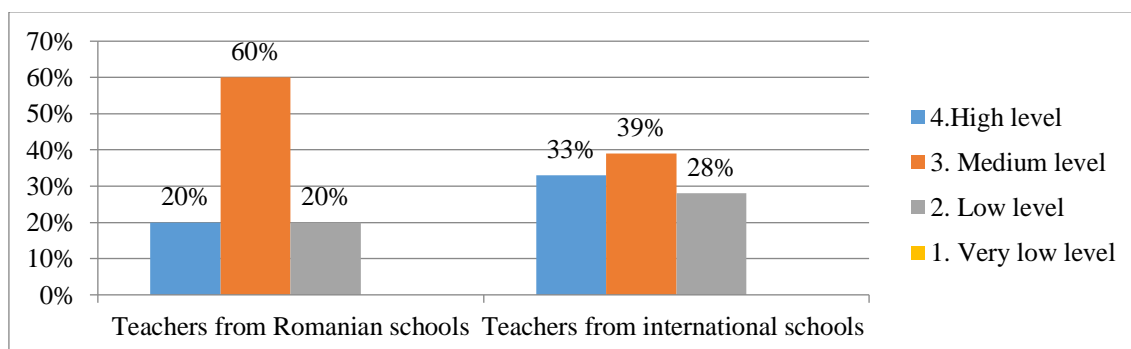
The questions were the following and were evaluated on a scale of 1-4 (4 - high level, 3 - medium level, 2 - low level, 1 - very low level):

Q1 - How much do you like to teach physical education in your school? It can be noticed that teachers, regardless of their seniority, like where they work. We think it is very important for teachers to enjoy their workplace. The majority of responses are between 3 and 4 in terms of the pleasure to teach in the school.

Q2 - How important do you think physical education is for students? 72% of respondents consider physical education very important to students.

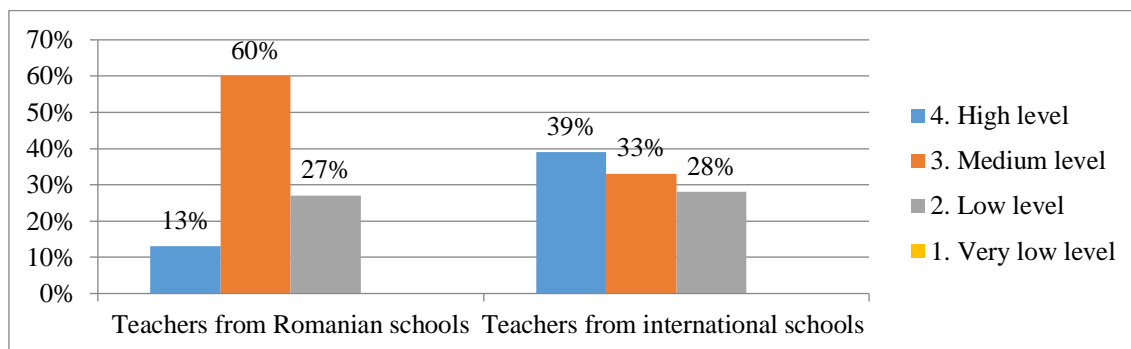
Q3 - To what degree does your school value PE lessons? 67% of respondents have rated 3 and 33% have rated this question with a level 2, so it is considered that the Romanian school does not value physical education as much as it should. In international schools, it is noticed that 50% of respondents have selected a level 3 and only 17% have rated this question with a level 4.

Q4 - How effective do you consider the physical education curriculum is in developing students' skills? In Romanian schools, 60% of teachers rated this question with a level 3, while an equal percentage (20%) selected levels 2 and 4. In international schools, 32% of respondents selected a level 4 for this question, 39% selected a level 3, and 28% scored the question with a level 2; therefore, it is a roughly equal division on the three levels. (Figure 03)



**Figure 03.** Effectiveness of the Physical education curriculum in developing students' skills

Q5 - How effective do you consider the physical education curriculum is in developing students' interest in physical education and a healthy lifestyle? In Romanian schools, it is noticeable that the great majority of respondents (60%) have scored this question with a level 3 for the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing students' interest, and only 13% have rated the curriculum as highly effective, while 27% have scored it with a level 2. In international schools, 39% of respondents scored this question with a level 4, 33% with 3, and 28% with 2. (Figure 04)



**Figure 04.** Effectiveness of the Physical education curriculum in developing students' interest in physical education and a healthy lifestyle

Q6 - How much do you think students enjoy physical education? In Romanian schools, we see that almost an equal number of teachers have selected levels 3 and 4 to represent the students' pleasure to participate in the class. 50% of international teachers believe that students are pleased to attend PE classes on a scale of 3, and 39% have given a maximum score for this question.

Q7 - Indicate what strategies you use and check, on a scale of 1 to 5, their effectiveness in lessons (where 1 is ineffective and 5 is very effective). Regardless of seniority in education, most of the respondents chose collaboration and teamwork as the most effective strategies, followed by differentiation and modelling. Among international teachers, the most selected strategies were student-centred, differentiation, scaffolding (instructional techniques that lead the learner progressively towards better understanding and learning independence), peer/self-/teacher feedback, teaching and learning methods that develop students' curiosity and encourages their involvement in research, critical thinking and discovery of knowledge, and Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU). Of all this, the most effective strategies are differentiation, strategies that provide student leadership, peer/self-feedback, peer coaching and TGfU. Teachers' arguments are that: students have the impression that they control the content of the lesson and better understand the work to which they belong; students need to be challenged no matter what level they are; students need time to practice, but also to fully participate in the class; feedback is important because it makes you reflect on your own effort and results. TGfU is an effective way to teach skills, because it is done during the game and also keeps students involved in the class. International teachers have identified that the least effective strategies are: teacher-centred strategies, direct teaching, too many reflections and too much talking from the teacher. These are considered less effective, because students quickly lose interest if they do not apply the skills they have learned during the lesson.

Q8 – What do you think are the strengths of the curriculum/program that you teach? The responses most often referred to the development of teamwork, collaboration and socialisation, followed by skill development. International teachers have responded that the International Baccalaureate (IB) is very open and the teacher can create curriculum and assessments; it is well structured and the teacher can use creativity; the benefit of the Middle Year Program (MYP) is that any student can achieve maximum results, because only 25% of the grades are performance; the curriculum teaches not only motor skills, but also skills to become a good citizen, to collaborate, to work in a team; there are a variety of activities offered for students.

Q9 - What do you think are the weaknesses of the curriculum/program that you teach? Romanian teachers noted an insufficient number of hours and the lack of materials. The biggest problem with MYP is that it requires a lot of writing; sometimes the evaluation is too complicated; the existence of a single performance grade; there is a lack/limitation of facilities, which means fewer sports (in some schools).

Q10 - How would you improve the curriculum or lessons that you have to teach? Teachers expressed their interest in increasing the number of hours allocated to this subject by using strategies to motivate and involve students, introducing new activities and having the freedom to adapt the curriculum. Additionally, some respondents stated that they would like to have more opportunities for leadership, collaboration with colleagues in the department, specific training and more competitions during activities, less or more challenge for students and attempting to make the written part mandatory in an interactive way.

## 7. Conclusion

As we have mentioned before, it is not possible to change the legislation, in the sense of increasing the number of physical education hours. Hence, positively impacting students can only be done by enhancing their active participation and streamlining teaching methods. Teachers expressed their views on the increase in the number of hours allocated to this subject, the use of strategies to motivate and involve students, the introduction of new activities and the freedom to adapt the curriculum. In open responses, AISB students mention the reduction of written projects as the main suggestion, followed by different views related to the duration of units, as well as the introduction of fitness components. What seemed interesting was the suggestion to focus more on tactics and strategies and less on isolated skills. The positive side of the MYP program is that the International Baccalaureate Organization provides the structure of the program, and teachers can use their creativity in developing the curriculum. At the end of each school year, teachers who teach the same year of study reflect on the efficiency of each unit and determine the directions to be pursued the next year. The teacher can influence the determination and participation of students in the physical education class by creating a motivational climate. If a climate is created to overcome personal results rather than competition, then students will be more interested in actively participating in physical education classes. The TGfU approach leads to an intense and active participation compared to the traditional approach and implicitly to an improvement in school results.

## Acknowledgments

### Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally to this study and should be considered as main authors.



## References

- Bryan, C. L., & Solomon, M. A. (2007). Self-determination in physical education: Designing class environments to promote active lifestyles (LSU Doctoral dissertations). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.26.3.260>
- Bunker, D., & Thorpe, R. (1982). A model for the teaching of games in the secondary schools. *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 18(1), 5-8.
- Bunker, D., & Thorpe, R. (1986a). From theory to practice. In R. Thorpe, D. Bunker & L. Almond (Eds.), *Rethinking games teaching* (pp. 11-14). Loughborough: University of Technology.
- Bunker, D., & Thorpe, R. (1986b). The curriculum model. In R. Thorpe, D. Bunker & L. Almond (Eds.), *Rethinking games teaching* (pp. 7-10). Loughborough: University of Technology.
- Butler, J. (2003). *Teaching games for understanding in physical education and sport*. Reston, VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education.
- Forrest, G. J., Pearson, P. I., & Webb, P. J. (2006). Teaching games for understanding (TGfU): A model for pre service teachers. In *The 1<sup>st</sup> ICHPER.SD Oceania Congress: Fusion Down-under* (pp. 1-10). PENZ Website: PENZ. Retrieved from <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.ro/&httpsredir=1&article=1642&context=edupapers>
- Griffin, L. L., Mitchell, S. A., & Oslin, J. L. (1997). *Teaching sport concepts and skills: A tactical games approach*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hopper, T. (2002). Teaching games for understanding. The importance of student emphasis over content emphasis. *Journal of Physical Education Recreation and Dance*, 73(7), 44-48.
- Light, R. (2002). The social nature of games: Australian pre-service primary teachers' first experiences of Teaching Games for Understanding. *European Physical Education Review*, 8(3), 286-304.
- Light, R. (2003). The joy of learning: Emotion and learning in games through TGfU. *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 36(1), 93-108.
- Rink, J. E. (2005). *Teaching physical education for learning* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Stănescu, M. (2009). Proiectarea în educație fizică adaptată și incluzivă. *Palestrica Mileniului III*, X, 4(38), 398-404.
- Thorpe, R. (1990). New directions in games teaching. In N. Armstrong (Ed.), *New directions in physical education* (Vol. 1, pp. 79-100). Leeds, UK: Human Kinetics.
- Webb, P., Pearson, P., & McKeen. (2005). *A model for professional development of Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) for teachers in Australia*. Paper presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Teaching Games for Understanding International Conference, Hong Kong, December 2005.
- Werner, P., Thorpe, R., & Bunker, D. (1996). Teaching Games for Understanding: Evolution of a model. *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 67(1), 28-33.
- Wright, S., McNeil, M., Fry, J., & Wang, J. (2005). Teaching teachers to play and teach games. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 10(1), 61-82.