Physical education in Sweden

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Abstract
A national evaluation of Swedish compulsory schools was undertaken in 2003. This evaluation covers 16 compulsory school subjects in Year 9, including physical education (PE). The PE study includes a sample of 6,788 pupils and 1,688 teachers in Year 9 for background data and school subject comparisons. A questionnaire was also sent to the parents of the 6,788 pupils, and register data was collected on pupils’ final grades and parents’ educational levels. A smaller sample of 2,407 pupils and 82 PE teachers has been used in order to analyse pupils’ and teachers’ attitudes towards PE.

The main focus of this article is the subject content in PE, with a particular focus on the teaching, the learning, and the teachers’ and pupils’ attitudes towards the subject. The results of the study show that PE is valued highly by both pupils and parents. Pupils active in sports enjoy PE the most, and the subject content is characterised by enjoyment in movement. The majority of the pupils are physically active during the lessons (85.2 percent), although at the same time a significant minority of the girls are present but inactive during PE. Of all the school subjects in Sweden, PE is the only ‘boyish’ subject and boys attain higher grades, enjoy it more and are more involved in and able to influence the content. The most important determining factors affecting grades in PE are leisure sport activity, parents’ educational levels, gender and cultural capital.

Key words: subject content, assessment, health, gender, learning

References


