

Methodological errors in conducting physical education and sports lessons at the primary level

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Abstract

Incorporating physical education and sports into the primary education curriculum is of paramount importance, as these activities contribute to shaping students' personalities across several key dimensions: the socio-emotional, the psychomotor, and the cognitive-perceptual—three domains identified by Bloom as fundamental objectives in motor learning. Undoubtedly, however, the introduction of physical education and sports at the primary level has encountered numerous challenges, particularly regarding the methodological and pedagogical structuring of the lessons. I therefore decided to conduct this study on methodological errors in the conduct of physical education and sports sessions, aiming to identify all potential errors that may arise during the session. The study was carried out on a sample of third-grade primary school students at Laour Rabah School in the Ali Mendjeli New City, Constantine, utilizing observation and interviews as data collection tools. The results were exactly as anticipated: the teachers lacked experience in dealing with primary school students; their initial training had not addressed how to work with this age group; they were unable to adapt the lessons and theories they had learned to suit these students; there was a severe lack of knowledge regarding differentiated instruction; and there was an absence of any pedagogical guide or supporting document to help teachers organize their ideas. Finally, there is a lack of necessary educational facilities—with reliance on merely a small, artificial-turf field—and a failure to utilize games that cater to students' enthusiasm and foster their emotional development, which is a particularly crucial aspect of the entire educational process at the primary level.

Keywords:

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Methodological errors; physical education and sports lesson; psychomotor, affective, and cognitive domains.

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, humanity has strived for self-development—physically, intellectually, and relationally—to forge a cohesive society. Such cohesion relies on cultivating upright individuals who are both receptive to growth and capable of contributing to society's development. Consequently, governments and nations have devised comprehensive educational curricula to pursue this aim, establishing both direct and indirect objectives for the upbringing of the youth. Key among these objectives is emotional, physical, and cognitive education. In this study, I will focus on emotional education through the lens of motor learning—a central element of the educational process at the primary level—alongside physical education, which serves as a fundamental pillar of primary schooling. Ever since physical education was introduced into the primary school curriculum, teachers have found themselves grappling with a significant dilemma: how do they manage pupils who are still in the early stages of childhood? How does one begin a PE session with a group of children who are sensitive to the slightest things and lack awareness of their surroundings—children suddenly given the freedom to vent and express themselves in an open-air setting? How can a teacher control a group of children who are essentially seeking a mother's tenderness and a father's fairness? Teachers have encountered numerous challenges in this regard and must find solutions quickly, as they are bound by a curriculum and have multiple classes awaiting them. What, then, is the solution? Many teachers began instruction using their own unique methods and approaches, yet they encountered various challenges—most notably, methodological errors in conducting lessons. Such errors might not have occurred had primary education been a long-established practice; however, given its relatively recent introduction, these difficulties and mistakes arose. Consequently, it became incumbent upon researchers, teachers, and academics to devise practical, scholarly solutions. The aim was to compile a database that the Ministry of Education could utilize to construct a sound curriculum tailored to the capabilities and nature of this student demographic. Against this backdrop, and having observed the difficulties involved in conducting the lesson, I was prompted to ask: what is the primary reason teachers make these methodological errors, given that their initial training was comprehensive and thorough? Consequently, I established specific study objectives—both academic and practical—as follows: developing a curriculum and accompanying guidelines that align with the students' cognitive and motor capabilities while fostering their relational and emotional development; and identifying all potential methodological errors committed by the teachers.- Develop a teacher's guide to assist in selecting exercises, scenarios, and activities; organize training sessions for teachers—led by specialists in educational physical activity and sports—covering developmental psychology, emotional education, and various pedagogical approaches; and allow teachers the freedom to work comfortably with students without administrative interference in certain activities, particularly those aimed at group building, cohesion, and psychological and social harmony.

2. Conceptual Framework & Literature Synthesis

Methodological errors: Operationally defined as a conceptual flaw on the part of the teacher that prevents them from applying a concept correctly—in a manner aligned with the students' mental, motor, physical, and emotional capabilities.

Physical Education and Sports Class: Operationally defined, this consists of the athletic and physical activities scheduled by the administration for students to cultivate their minds and invigorate their bodies, while fostering a cohesive group through mutual, respectful relationships grounded in fair competition and collective cooperation.

Movement education is operationally defined as any physical activity based on athletic movements and skills aimed at fostering specific emotional-relational, psychological, and social values—specifically, those values that national education seeks to cultivate through athletic movement activities.

Emotional education—defined operationally—involves fostering relationships among students through both cooperative and competitive activities. The aim is to instill sportsmanship, enabling students to compete honorably; they strive to win while maintaining a sportsmanlike attitude even if the desired outcome is not achieved. In this context, the teacher harnesses the emotions associated with competition and channels them in a constructive direction.

Cognitive development: Operationally defined as the development of students' knowledge by providing them with theoretical information that aids them in their academic and daily lives. It also assists them in resolving challenges they encounter by enabling them to conceptualize situations and apply that conceptualization to devise the optimal solution.

3. Analytical & Critical Methodology

Methodological Errors in Conducting Physical Education and Sports Sessions

A/ Errors in the design and use of pedagogical aids:

- Use of cones to mark distances and designate zones: Improper use of pedagogical aids negatively affects the flow of the physical education session, leaving a poor impression on the students.
- Very small artificial turf playing areas that do not allow the teacher to organize students effectively: In most schools, the artificial turf playing area is very small, while some institutions have only a small courtyard; in either case, it is difficult for the teacher to divide the class into groups—especially given the large number of students per class—preventing the teacher from achieving the session's operational objectives.
- Use of medicine balls instead of actual game balls: The lack of appropriate balls and pedagogical aids—which allow students to physically handle the ball and gain a sensory impression of its size and mass—hinders their ability to adapt to and understand the actual dimensions involved.

- Use of small-sized nets: The use of undersized goal nets negatively affects the students' perception of the actual dimensions of the hoop and net found in a real-game setting, making it difficult for the instructor to familiarize students with the authentic playing environment.
- Light back-and-forth running: Many teachers begin the session with a light warm-up run around the field. While it is true that the pace and the child's body temperature need to be raised to prevent injury, teachers can also incorporate stretching exercises—especially since young students are constantly active, meaning their body temperature and heart rate are already elevated.
- Muscle stretching, balance, and joint warm-ups: As mentioned in the previous point, incorporating muscle stretching, balance exercises, and joint warm-ups is crucial for this age group.
- Selecting activities or games that are beyond the students' comprehension: Teachers often attempt to adapt exercises designed for adults for use with young students; this negatively affects the students' cardiovascular systems, as such exercises are of high intensity.
- Relying solely on games like "Cops and Robbers," target-accuracy games, or soccer, while neglecting other sports: Limiting activities to these few options fails to foster the students' emotional and motor development. Therefore, we suggest incorporating activities that encourage group integration through cooperation—such as "One, Two, Three, Soleil" (Red Light, Green Light) or "Squid Game"—as well as competitive activities designed to improve precision, such as "Les Ministres" (The Ministers).

b/ Errors related to disregarding the developmental characteristics of this stage:

- Engaging in play without allowing students sufficient rest—such as providing only a five-minute break during a twenty- or thirty-minute exercise session. Children in this age group cannot maintain focus for more than five minutes and require a rest period of six to ten minutes following each motor or physical exercise. Furthermore, the teacher should select exercises that align with the students' mental, motor, and physical capabilities; most importantly, they must avoid pushing students to the point of exhaustion, which raises adrenaline levels in the body and consequently leads to a loss of concentration.
- Failure to respect physiological individual differences: While it is true that there are no significant physiological differences between boys and girls at the primary school stage—as they have not yet reached puberty—human nature dictates that the teacher should separate them into distinct groups. Boys are naturally more aggressive and tend to resolve problems through force, whereas girls are peace-loving by the very nature with which God created them.
- Despite the practice of grouping girls and boys separately, insufficient attention is paid to psychomotor development when organizing competitions based on morphological differences. Some teachers separate boys and girls into different groups but do not hold competitions between them—even though there are no significant differences between the sexes at this age. Furthermore, many teachers fail to account for individual differences when fostering their students' psychomotor skills; ideally, competitors should be matched in terms of height, weight, and age, as this promotes balanced and proper psychomotor development.

- Physically strenuous exercises—whether due to excessive duration or intensity—are often unsuitable for children. Many teachers mistakenly replicate exercises designed for middle and high school students and apply them to the primary level; this is a serious error that can negatively impact students' health, potentially leading to exhaustion, physical strain, muscle fatigue, or psychological burnout.

C/ Errors related to selecting content appropriate for the specific age group:

- Selecting physical exercises that could have been avoided because they place undue physical and psychological strain on the student: In the absence of the accompanying documentation and the specific primary education curriculum, many teachers fail to appropriately gauge the intensity and level of effort required for students—whether regarding the workload or the difficulty of execution.
- Complex or multifaceted exercises that students cannot grasp: As previously mentioned, such exercises can cause students mental and psychological strain.
- Pushing students to the point of physical exhaustion or psychological stress: Primary school teachers must ensure they do not push students to this level, as it triggers the release of high levels of adrenaline in the body, which affects concentration and other hormonal secretions.

d) Pedagogical shortcomings:

- Failure to utilize or adapt pedagogical theories: We observed that teachers are unable to apply the pedagogical theories learned during their university studies. This is attributable to a lack of field internships and a failure to engage with the university's scientific laboratories. Furthermore, they are unable to adapt these theories to the specific age groups they teach—issues that all stem from a lack of practical, applied pedagogical training.
- Failure to utilize beneficial psychological reinforcement: Many primary school teachers—across various specializations such as physical education, Arabic, English, and French—do not employ psychological reinforcement with their students. This may stem from a lack of familiarity with this pedagogical approach or a lack of conviction regarding its value. Yet, it is a simple method capable of fostering healthy competition and encouraging students to value their achievements, teaching them that what is earned through effort should not be easily squandered.
- Use of punishment and reward systems that harm the student's psyche: Many teachers rely on punishment and reward, even though such methods can be detrimental to a student's psychological well-being. While these tactics may sometimes prove effective, they can negatively impact the student's mental state. At the primary school level, the priority should be to understand and support the students' psychological needs, thereby fostering their emotional and relational stability.
- Avoiding reliance on assumptions or preconceived notions regarding students with motor, physical, or cognitive difficulties: Unfortunately, many teachers harbor—and act upon—preconceived judgments about students, which are detrimental regardless of whether they are positive or negative. For

instance, a teacher might form an opinion based solely on the praise or criticism voiced by colleagues during pedagogical meetings. In reality, this practice is a disservice to students, as it can unfairly elevate those who do not merit it while disparaging truly excellent students. Furthermore, many teachers struggle significantly to manage students with hyperactivity or those with motor and intellectual impairments; the relevant ministry must therefore designate specialized classes to ensure these students receive appropriate and effective education.

- Lack of familiarity with the characteristics of the age group: We observed that teachers working with this age group lack knowledge of developmental psychology and the specific characteristics of their students. This is a primary reason for their inability to interact effectively with the students, leading to conflicts with the administration and parents, and hindering their ability to manage the lesson optimally without making pedagogical errors.

4. Discussion & Construction of the Pedagogical/Didactic Framework

Table Standard Formatting (English Section):

Methodological errors	The proposed solution	Targeted Competencies (Cognitive/Skill-based/Affective)
Errors in the design and use of pedagogical aids	Utilize all available spaces, focusing on collaborative activities with first, second, and third-year students, and subsequently introducing competitive activities for fourth and fifth-year students.	Fostering cooperative behavior to ensure group cohesion, followed by cultivating a winning mindset to identify and improve each student's capabilities and self-awareness.
Errors related to a failure to respect the developmental characteristics of this stage.	Focusing on athletic competition between students of the same gender and similar physical measurements.	Psychomotor and emotional development
Mistakes related to precisely selecting content suitable for the age group.	Relying on simplified games such as Parody, Squid Game, "The Ministers' Game," and similar games.	Developing accuracy, focus, and balance in alignment with their motor and physical capabilities.

Pedagogical errors	It requires training in various aspects of pedagogy, an understanding of the characteristics of the specific age group, and the ability to apply scientific theories to that age group.	For a student to respond positively to a teacher, they must perceive that the teacher possesses a comprehensive understanding of their needs and knows how to support them—an approach rooted in a gentle manner that stems from an awareness of the student's specific characteristics.
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Table 1: Elements of the proposed pedagogical model for motor education in primary schools.

5. Conclusions, Practical Applications & Future Horizons

Based on interviews with stakeholders in primary education—including teachers, students, and principals—as well as observations regarding the educational process and activities employed, I have reached an inevitable conclusion: physical education and sports at the primary level are still in their infancy. This situation leads many teachers to commit the various types of errors previously outlined in the main text. Furthermore, the educational system must place significant emphasis on the training of physical education and sports teachers for the primary stage. While they certainly require field-based instructors for their practical training, emphasis must also be placed on pedagogical and academic training. This should be entrusted to specialists in fields such as pedagogy, educational sciences, developmental psychology, social psychology, educational psychology, movement sciences, and communication sciences. These experts can guide teachers toward the right path in applying their knowledge in a scientifically and methodologically sound manner. Furthermore, I believe that emotional education should be incorporated alongside physical education within the Bachelor's degree training curriculum—especially given the inclusion of physical education and sports classes in primary schools. I believe that the physical education and sports class at the primary level should be renamed "Physical Education and Movement Expression." Students at this age are naturally active and energetic, and their physical attributes are constantly developing; therefore, it is essential to focus on the movement aspect and skill acquisition, refining them through proper, systematic movement-based learning while avoiding levels of fatigue or exhaustion that could have a negative impact on the student. Developing physical attributes requires significant effort, which raises adrenaline levels in students—a factor that can negatively impact their concentration. This loss of focus leads to errors; ultimately, a failure to minimize errors means a failure to learn. In conclusion, the best way to acquire skills is through observation followed by practice, in accordance with the adage: "I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand."

* Activity 2: Sorting Balls by Size

Suitable Age: 4–6 years | Materials: Balls of various sizes and colors + two baskets

How to Play: Ask the child to collect only the small balls and place them in the first basket, then place the large balls in the other basket.

Objectives: - Distinguishing between sizes

- Developing sorting and classification skills
- Strengthening fine motor muscles during the act of picking up the balls

Activity 3: "Listen and Do"

Target Age: 3–7 years | Materials: None – verbal instructions only

How to Play: The teacher or supervisor gives commands such as "Touch your nose," "Raise your right hand," or "Jump in place."

The child carries out the instructions in the given sequence.

Objectives:

- Strengthening attention and concentration
- Improving the ability to remember sequences
- Developing the connection between hearing and movement

Activity 4: "Sensory Maze Race"

Suitable Age: 5–7 years | Materials: A winding path marked on the floor + simple obstacles (cushions, chairs, etc.)

How to Play: The child follows the path without straying and navigates around obstacles until reaching the finish line.

Objectives:

- Developing spatial awareness (right/left – up/down)
- Developing motor planning skills
- Improving balance and motor coordination

Activity 5: "Shape and Sound" Cards

Target Age: 3–6 years | Materials: Cards featuring a specific image and its corresponding sound (e.g., a picture of a cat and the sound "meow").

Objectives:

- Linking images with sounds
- Developing visual and auditory memory
- Encouraging physical expression

Note: Ensure activities are short and enjoyable (lasting no more than 10–15 minutes) and vary the activities to prevent the child from becoming bored.

(Adapted from the *Guide to Motor Education and Motor Reintegration for Childhood (Ages 3–12)*, prepared by Dr. Omeirat Yassine)

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