

IMPACT OF SELF-CONCEPT OF DISABLED LEARNERS ON INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the conceptual foundations of self-concept, self-esteem and the self as they relate to disabled students in the context of physical education. Disabled school children experience severe discriminations in society and within the school system, especially if the school is the mainstream type. With increasing emphasis on inclusiveness in school to different groups of excluded children, the need to thoroughly examine the psychological frame of mind of these children is now more important than ever before. Consequently, this paper sought to uncover the fundamental tenets of self-concept of disabled learners and highlight the key characteristics of disabled children. The paper concludes by with an analysis of the major impacts that disabled learners self-concept has on participation in physical education activities.

Keywords: Self-concept, self-esteem, disability, inclusion, physical education

INTRODUCTION

The study of self concept is one of the most significant issues in the human sciences generally and educational studies in particular. This is because researchers have found that self concept has a strong influence in people's behaviour. Additionally, the self-concept has taken the attention of many psychologists and philosophers for more than 2000 years. It is one of the oldest topics that scientists and the philosophers have talked about (Hattie, 1992). Regarding the nature of self concept, Rogers (1989) points out that "the self is more than a subject and object. The self is an object in an environment, has a potential" (cited in Hattie, 1992:35).

Young and Mroczek (2003) also observe that self-concept is a controversial psychological issue that are unstable, and may influence, develop or change in different ways with the passage of time (cited in Sarah, 2011:74). As Marsh (1989) points out that it could be influenced or developed, if that is in a specific element of self-concept especially (cited in Mercer, 2011:74). Susan Harter (2006) describes six stages of self-development who a starts from early childhood till the end of adolescence. Although she described the self concept is developed in six stages, each stage is build on the previous stages. While some researchers (Marsh (1989) (2006); Shavelson and Bolus (1982) believe that self-concept is formed in early age and during the passage of the individual's life. Therefore, self concept would be more integrated, consistent and may be difficult to develop or influence as a whole when the time pass (cited in Mercer, 2011:74).

There are different definitions of the term self concept. However, all they all share a similar meaning.

Hattie (1992) points out that a lot of writers describe the self by attitudes, evaluations, affectations and so on but not regarding the knowledge. Rosenberg (1979) believes that self-concept is "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as object". Mercer (2011:13) states that "a person's self-concept consists of the beliefs one has about oneself, one's self perception".

Similarly, Hamlyn (1983) defines the self-Concept as "the picture of oneself" (cited in Mercer, 2011:14). According to Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) state that self concept can be broadly defined as a person's perception of him/herself. These perceptions are formed through experiences within the environment and are influenced by environmental reinforcements and significant others. Self concept is generally understood as a person's report of self, but it may also be deduced from a person's responses to situations. Thus, there is a difference between self concept and inferred self concept. Self concept is how a person sees him/herself, while inferred concept refers to how others see him/her.

Whereas, Pajares and Schunk (2005) refer to self-concept as "a self-description judgement that includes an evaluation of competence and the feelings of self-worth associated with the judgement in question in a specific domain" (cited in Mercer, 2011:14). Scholars like Lawrence, (1996) believe that the Self-concept is an individual's awareness of her/his own identity. There are three aspects of this concept: self-image (of what the person is), ideal self (what the person wants to be) and self-esteem (what the person feels about the discrepancy between what s/he is and what s/he would like to be).

There are many remarkable scholars e.g. Rene Descartes 1644, Freud 1900, Freud's daughter Anna 1946, Prescott Lecky 1945, Raimy 1948, Rogers 1947 and Shavelson For example, Purkey & Schmidt, 1987 pointed out that Roger's theory, one of the most influential self-concept theories has provided a complete system to help learn the importance of the self (cited in Purkey, 1988:2). While Shavelson sees that the significant tenets of the his model are that self-concept is multidimensional, hierarchical and that self-concept becomes increasingly differentiated with age. Shavelson's theory proposes a hierarchical model of self-concept with general perceptions of self as a person (i.e. global self-concept) posited at the top hierarchy of the structure. Moving downwards, the model becomes increasingly differentiated with general self-concept divided into two facets: academic self-concept and non-academic (i.e. physical, social, and emotional) self-concept.

These facets can be further divided into specific domains (e.g., mathematics self-concept and physical appearance self-concept) (Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976).

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF CONCEPT

In general self-concept is one of the most important targets of education, therefore educators and parents concur that children need to improve and develop high self-concept characterised by tolerance, appreciation and acceptance of others (Buang, 2003).

Self-concept at school seems to be affected by the image that other significant persons (teachers, parents, peers) have of the pupil (Harter, 1986). The pupils' self concept might be affected by social comparison with others in the same setting (Rogers, Smith, Coleman, 1978). Different social environments would therefore be expected to influence an individual's self-concept in different ways. Rohner's (1980) theory (reviewed in Mrug, Wallander, 2002) postulates that feeling accepted or rejected by one's significant others will affect the way a person views and evaluates oneself and the world.

Feeling rejected by others will lead to greater hostility, low self-respect, emotional instability and unresponsiveness, and a negative view of the world, whereas feeling accepted by others will lead to a lower feelings of hostility, higher self-concept, emotional stability and responsiveness, and a positive view of the world.

The importance of self-perception for the growth and development of children has been demonstrated in studies showing how self-efficacy can enhance or impair the level of cognitive functioning and performance (Bandura, 1989).

A child's expectations about his own capabilities determine his behavior and influence his motivation, effort, and persistence regarding both the difficulty of the task and task efficacy. Studies have clearly demonstrated how important the roles teachers have and how strong an influence on self-concept they have in creating relationships with students during school activities (Schweinhart, Weikart, Larner, 1986). The process leading to an enhancement of or decrease in the learner's self-concept begins with the interaction between teachers and students.

SELF CONCEPT AND DISABILITY

Self concept is determined by one's perception of the self, as well as, other significant other's perception of one. Therefore when we consider the experiences of disabled learners, we can recognise how their self concept may be influenced by this. A disabled person (for instance, deaf and hard of hearing) understands that she/ he is different from others who do not have a similar disability. However, it is the extent of his understanding of him/ her that will determine whether he/she would have a negative self concept about the disability. Though, it is quite likely that the perception of others who are not disabled about the disability would be different from his/her own perception of him/her self.

Researchers (Cambra 2002; Jambor, Elliot 2005; Montgomery 1994; Mrug, Wallander 2002; Van Curp 2001; Westling, Allodi 2000) have agreed that some factors appear to influence the self concept of students with special needs, and those factors include: severity or degree of disability, age of onset of disability, acceptance of disability by parents, type of school (regular or special) and special support. Others factors may be labelling and identification group adherence (cited in Schmidt and Cargan, 2008, p.9).

Schmidt and Cargan (2008, p.9) noted that earlier research conducted on the self-concept of deaf or hard of hearing students and their hearing peers in regular settings has shown inconsistent results.

Montgomery (1994) in Schmidt and Cargan (2008, p.9) reports a study of self concept of children with learning disabilities and reclining support in regular classes shows that those children have a lower academic self-concept than their peers without disabilities, but the two groups do not differ in global self-concept or in other dimensions of self-concept, like social competence, affective, physical, or family.

However, other researchers (Cambra and Silvestre, 2003) have suggested that significant differences between integrated students (students with hearing impairments, physical disabilities and learning disabilities) and their counterparts in the social and academic dimensions, which is lower in children with special needs, but the differences in physical self-concept dimension are not statistically significant (Schmidt and Cargan, 2008, p.9).

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education is a part of our education system, and one of the goals of physical education is to make students active and healthy during their lifetime. Physical education should be a part of the total education of every child. According to Ahmed (2005) Schools are an effective way to acquire children health-related behaviours, through childhood and adolescence. Physical education is a part of a general education and must be included in each day. Physical activity refers to "movement of the human body that results in the expenditure of energy at a level above the resting metabolic rate" (Anshel, Freedson, Hamill, Haywood, Horvat, & Plowman, 1991, p. 113).

Inclusive physical education stresses that each special needs student has the right to risk, try to win or no, autonomy, and choice, as his/her peers. AL-Matar and Hassan (2005) defined inclusive physical education as "a programme that it provides opportunities for all students regardless of their abilities or interests to participate in physical activities". In addition, the Inclusive physical education program is characterized as progressive in activities for all pupils, and it provides supporting by varying degrees depending on their needs and interests.

The activities could be adjusted individually, if necessary, so that the expectations of the program and be realistic and appropriate, giving the right choice, risk, and help students when they needed (P. 100).

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SELF-CONCEPT

Some Specialists in physical education believe that it is one of the most important parts of our general education system. As Ahmed (2005) points out "physical education is very important for the health and happiness students". It is a distinct and an essential part of general education programme, and it also could obviously enhance more than most elements of development including "health, physical fitness, movement knowledge, academic performance, goal setting, self-esteem, stress management, and social skills" (P, 30).

There are many benefits coming by doing physical activity, and psychological benefit of physical activity is one of them, and self-concept is one of this psychological benefits. Folkins & Sime (1981) points out exercise and enhanced fitness may positively influence mood and self-concept. According to Taylor & Fox (2005) studies has been pointed out a positive relationship between self concept and exercise. Diane & Williams (2008) point out three socializing elements (parents, peers, and coaches) could influence on physical activity-related cognitions, behaviours, and self-concept throughout life. Additionally, despite of the importance peers, particularly, in the field of sports and youth, studies are still at the beginning. Ullrich-French & Smith (2006) point out positive peer relations is associated with many psychological benefits one of them is a stronger feelings of self-esteem.

According to Kelly & Melograno (2004) physical education " though not alone in the responsibility to foster positive personal and social attitudes (e.g., cooperation, self-concept, responsibility, and best effort), provides a unique setting in which children can learn these key life skills and incorporate them into their daily lives"(P, 37).

Laker (2000) points out that almost all children could be encouraged to love and appreciate some element of sports, almost all children could be good at physical education. However, it might be that some children love to play football, and others might love to do other sports to continue their fitness. There is something good in physical education and sports for almost every person. Children have to take their opportunity to be able to get any benefit from their school physical education experiences to benefit their self-concept. School sport and physical education could help children to develop a good self-concept and in avoiding a negative images. Obviously, there is a positive relationship between exercises and self-concept (Biddle, 1995; Marsh & Redmayne, 1994; Sonstroem, 1984). Sonstroem (1984) noted that changes may be associated with improved understanding and physical fitness, although some studies have not demonstrated that lack of physical fitness changes in self-concept, exercise programmes appears to lead to increases in self-esteem, that started by low self-esteem.

Weinberg and Gould (2006) points out that in the same direction to the sport personality studies, the exercise and self-concept studies have seems that the best way to think of self-concept or self-esteem not just as a general trait (global self-esteem).However, as one includes many content elements such as social self-concept, academic self-concept, and physical self-concept. Moreover, it could find a participant's relationship between the exercise and physical education with self-concept, self-esteem and self efficacy (Fox, 1997).

Weinberg and Gould (2006) points out that some people consider self-concept is one of the most important measures of psychological benefit.

Recently, believed that changes in self-concept and self-esteem that could be as reason to changes in the body image by changes in the body as result of physical fitness training. Gruber (1986) found out those changes in self-concept and self-esteem related to a direct participation in play and physical education lessons.

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Deaf and DHH are suffering of linguistic problems that adversely influence their self-concept, and that linguistic has a clear influence on children growth, and there is a strong relationship between the linguistic and a mental development. Additionally, whenever, the amount of child linguistic increased and improved, and that would reflect on mind developed, and there is a relationship between a linguistic and ideas and where each of them affects the other (Burns, 1981).

Disabilities have an impact on self-concept for the disabled. In the same context, Rushdie (2007) points that self-concept is one of the concepts affected directly and clearly by Disability at Disabled generally and Deaf and DHH in particular that will be come through social, cognitive and developmental constraints imposed on disabled all that will be reflected in the ability of psychological adjustment and social and healthy growth.

AL Gaddafi (1994) noted that self-concept of disabled child is growing according to the kind of treatment he or she will receive from his or her parents and family members and to receive the reward or being exposed to punishment. Moreover, when disabled child feels rejected and not accepted by others, or when going through the experience of freedom is restricted or deprive them of opportunities to express his feelings, or prevent him from taking the requirements of environment.

In this case he or she will feel the whole world against him or her, and which makes him or her does not want others' company or integrate with them even if they were members of his or her family.

The experiences and feelings that child has been exposed to it during their growth has a significant impact on self-concept in this regard, Sheikh (2003) stresses that child expertises through the process of socialization play an important role in a formation of his or her idea about himself and the formation of his or her character through his interactions with parents and the interaction with them. Additionally, children who feel loved and accepted will have a positive feeling about them self. Jones (1985) Indicates disabilities individuals often show high levels of negative self-concept, the concern degrees, a reliability sense, and instability.

Self-concept is affected by other assessments, especially, people are interested in his or her life through a social interaction with him her. Dugan (2003) confirms that low self-concept in hearing-impaired the result of the belief that other people have negative feelings and negative thoughts against them, which in fact does not exist.

Gaddafi (1994) noted that self-concept upon disabled is not coming from nothings, but it is achieved as a result of person as a member of the community affected by their relations with individuals around him or her and their opinions and judgments they make of their behaviour towards him, and that without this social environment, self -concept becomes limited as far as the isolation of the person.

Several studies have revealed that, low self-concept at Hearing-Impaired compared Hearing students. Teri (2002) results in his results in his study that there is a negative correlation between self-concept and hearing impairment. Yatman (2000) also in his study the results showed low self-concept in hearing-impaired compared to ordinary students. John, Gerrard and Carolyn (1999) aimed to identify the effects of early language development, socialization, and models of the environment learning on the growth of self-concept of Deaf and hearing impaired, and the sample consisted of two groups of children: A group of children are deaf and hard of hearing to deaf parents, and the other group of children are deaf and hard of hearing for ordinary parents, and the study's results to the following:

- Deaf and hearing impaired with Deaf parents with a high self compared with their peers of Deaf and hearing impaired with ordinary parents.
- Deaf and hearing impaired in boarding schools have the concept of high compared to their peers of Deaf and hearing impaired in the regular public school classroom.

According to Martinez & Silvester (1995) study aims to identify the level of self-concept among students of adolescents deaf and ordinary, and the study sample consisted of (20) Deaf and (20) students from the ordinary, their aged between (14-19) years, and study results in that the concept of self in ordinary individuals was higher than Deaf student .According to Windle & Windle (1995) study aims to relationship study between the self-concept and poor psychological adjustment.

Study which examined four dimensions of aggressive behaviour of the social self and its relationship to poor psychological adjustment and social in a group of males, the study found the results to the presence of high levels of poor psychological adjustment and social disorder and depression, negative self-concept, in addition to, the study concluded in its findings that aggressive behaviour may appear in childhood may only does not cause problems in personal in adulthood, while the continuation of this behaviour from childhood to adulthood may lead to a personality disorder and self-concept, and the personal , social negative and poor psychological adjustment and social.

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