

Melina Isabelle Schnitzius

# Teachers Matter

Developing Physical Education  
by Inspecting the Key Players

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## Summary

Physical education in schools is the only physical activity offering setting that reaches all school-aged children and by this receives special importance in conveying the joy and benefits of physical activity. Physical education is the only school subject involving bodily movement and by this benefits the healthy development of the whole person. Only with the aid of physical education, holistic education can be achieved. Holistic education in the physical education context involves two key players: physical education teachers as educators and students as the ones to be educated. Concretizing the educational process, physical education's curricula ascribe the subject a dual mandate: *education to sport* and *education through sport*. Students should experience the joy of movement, acquire relevant physical skills, find their meaning in sport, and within this ideally develop intrinsic motivation for physical activity in physical education and beyond. Further, physical education's contextual and contentual peculiarities promote learners' personal as well as social development through physical activity. In this process, physical education teachers receive an important role by making sure to align teaching offerings to learners' needs in order to support the aspired development process. Physical education teachers' effectiveness is thereby often measured by the teaching outcome student achievement and approached by teachers' professional competence. It is further closely linked to their own occupational well-being and by this related to society's health. Effective physical education teachers are neither born nor made but they may develop. This development process requires knowledge about personal characteristics determining teaching behavior but also knowledge about students' requirements in order to adapt teaching and accompanied development processes. The teaching and learning process thereby has been shown to be context-specific and dependent on teachers as well as learners interacting within a given context under accompanied conditions.

The dissertation thesis has taken on this task by analyzing physical education teachers' as well as students' personal characteristics in the physical education context. In its theoretical part it has summarized and analyzed studies considering the physical education teachers' or students' personality in the physical education context in order to detect applied personality understandings but also research questions and related outcomes within existing studies. In its subsequent and linked empirical part, the thesis has analyzed data of the self-executed *SuM PLoS* study, covering 1,163 physical education teachers of all career stages as well as their students of class seven to ten ( $N = 1,740$ ) across Germany.

The analyses relevant for the dissertation thesis' aim of describing teachers (main aim) and students (subordinate aim) in the physical education context by an aggregated examination of their personal characteristics comprise one part of *SuM PLuS*' encompassing examination. The study examined further person-related factors on the teacher and the student side, which supplement the data on personal characteristics. Within this, the study also links teachers and students by examining teachers' *provided basic needs support* and students' *perceived basic needs satisfaction*. In total, the study allows describing physical education's key players by various factors, which in turn implies impact on educational as well as PE research and consequently affects the subject's development. The thesis contributes to *SuM PLuS*' aim of analyzing person-related factors on the teacher as well as the student side determining student motivation in physical education by its analyses of personal characteristics. Further aspects of the study *SuM PLuS* and accompanied research possibilities will be explained in detail in the thesis' outlook.

The developed descriptions of different groups of physical education teachers and students represent new knowledge in educational research in general as well as research on teaching physical education in particular. Results and accompanied implications are discussed in relation to different stages of physical education teachers' career and therefore transferred to physical education teacher education, teaching in schools as well as teacher professional training. Involving all stages and initiating cooperation between stakeholders increases the results' meaningfulness and impact.

More precisely, on the teacher side, physical education teachers profit from knowing their personal characteristics by deliberately making use of them when teaching or regarding vocation-specific motivational characteristics develop within the possible range in e.g., teacher education or professional training. On the student side, the thesis offers valuable anchors, which influence physical education teachers' lesson planning and design in order to adequately address and by this motivate their students.

Overall, the thesis gains sensitivity for teachers' and students' personal characteristics – among physical education teachers but also teacher educators –, which should be continuously reflected on and deliberately applied in the educational process. The extend as well as profound and comprehensive character of the overarching study *SuM PLuS* further highlight the thesis' possibility to raise awareness for physical education's abovementioned outstanding contribution to society, e.g., considering health. It offers valuable anchors for stakeholders in the educational process as well

as future researchers in the educational context in general or in the physical education context in particular. A corresponding dissertation thesis focuses mainly on the students and by this represents a valuable counterpart to this thesis.