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Chapter 7

Hiding Techniques in Physical Education – Categories, Causes Underlying and Pedagogy

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

Previous research shows that some pupils find physical education (PE) demanding and difficult. Some pupils then use strategies to avoid participation in PE when this is the case. The chapter aims to illuminate and describe strategies used by pupils to avoid negative self-perception in difficult situations and activities in PE classes. This behaviour, called hiding techniques, arises out of the need to protect self-perception and save academic or social face in the PE subject. Research findings show that hiding techniques are experienced and practised in many different ways and that there is a wide range of causes behind them. Pupils' hiding techniques are categorized into main types, and the causes underlying them are summarized in the chapter. In the last part, pedagogical issues are discussed in the light of research findings.

Keywords: physical education, hiding techniques, participation, pedagogy, teaching, self-perception

1. Introduction

The aim of physical education (PE) in school is to help pupils experience moving their bodies in a positive way. Pupils should enjoy and be inspired by being physically active. The PE curriculum for the Norwegian school states that the teaching in the subject shall help pupils to experience joy, mastering and inspiration through taking part in various activities and interacting together with others (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). Contributors to international research literature on PE assert that the joy of movement is a value in itself in PE classes and that physical activity and body movement have a special experiential quality, for example, see [1–13]. Some researchers also claim that physical activity

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gives the basis for positive self-esteem, among others (see [12, 14]), and that motor competence strengthens self-perception [15].

The way pupils express joy of movement in PE classes contrasts other behaviours in class, such as in pupils who are not happy with the class or the teaching. This chapter discusses PE for pupils who may feel that the subject is difficult and problematic and who can exhibit other behaviours than pupils who the experience joy of movement and inspiration. Some of these pupils express a negative attitude to the subject openly and directly, and the teacher, who observes the behaviour from the outside, cannot misunderstand their behaviour in class. Other pupils may attempt to hide what they feel and experience, exhibiting another type of behaviour, which is not so obviously interpreted and understood. In this chapter, I call the behaviour of these pupils *hiding techniques*. Here this term means that pupils who find PE difficult and problematic may use methods to hide what they experience in PE classes, as it may not be to their advantage to acknowledge openly that they do not experience well-being, for example, when worried about their grade [16, 17]. These pupils may stage their position in the class and protect their own self-image by adopting a role as in a stage play [18]. The pupils stage their performance for teachers and classmates to protect a particular self-value and to avoid losing academic and social face in the PE class.

First, I will describe joy of movement and hiding techniques as contrasting concepts and then discuss factors that put pressure on self-perception in PE class, as well as circumstances that regulate a pupil's self-perception in the subject. Then I will examine and explain other concepts that resemble hiding techniques in PE before describing various forms of hiding techniques found in research literature. In the final section of the chapter, I will discuss pedagogical issues relating to hiding techniques, including strategies a teacher can use to prevent pupils from using these techniques in PE class. Here a self-protection perspective to understanding hiding techniques will be integrated in the discussion in relation to the teacher's role [18, 19], as well as I will include a constraint-led perspective on learning in PE [20].

2. The joy of movement

In contrast to the hiding technique in PE, pupils can also experience joy of movement in the subject. The pupils can express this in different ways. Some will reveal this immediately, unambiguously, and directly and are unable to avoid expressing their positive emotions. They feel PE is fun and PE activities are enjoyable [21]. The joy of movement may vary depending on the situation pupils are in and which activities they are participating in. In some situations, the joy of movement may be high, for example, when pupils learn new skills in PE class. In other situations, it may be experienced in ways that are more subdued. This is related to how physical activities and physical exercise offer different *subjective* experiences. The joy of movement may be perceived on a scale between relatively low and very strong emotions. For example, learning to swim is a special experience. To suddenly succeed at floating in the water, swimming forwards and actually mastering the water, compared to no floating or forward movement, is a special feeling. This swimming experience is an immediate bodily experience, arising at the instant when the swimming movement is successful and floating

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and moving forwards in the water are achieved. Learning to swim means mastering water in a new way and to feel a completely new sense of floating, moving and effortlessly gliding. Enthusiasm and joy of movement are experienced at the same time. For some pupils it is difficult not to express the joy of movement in such situations, simply because it is perceived so strongly [22].

This joy of movement is primarily an expression of the value of the skill itself. This means that bodily exercise and the acquisition of physical and sports skills are important *per se*, with no connection to anything else [23]. This is the intrinsic value of bodily movement. The typical movement experience in PE classes is an immediate and sensory exploration of the possibilities and limitations of body movements. Situations with body movements create more of an opportunity to acquire and utilize new insight about oneself and the surrounding world. The experience pupils have of bodily movement has strong non-verbal bodily dimensions [12]. When going deep into an activity in body movement, pupils generate power and become aware of their abilities and opportunities related to their body and physique but also their limitations. They realize and assert themselves at the same time-as physical, bodily subjects and individuals, but also as individuals in a greater social circle [14]. The pupils tackle something physical and master this and see themselves in the light of *being able to do* something while also gaining knowledge about the social world around them, as what they are able to do is captured, given importance and responded to by others, such as the teacher [23].

3. PE can also lead to other emotions

3.1. Hiding techniques in PE

Not all pupils in school experience PE as positively as above. Quite a few studies find that PE can be difficult and problematic for some pupils [24–33]. A study of approximately 2000 youths in Norway shows that 12% do not like PE, while 32% find PE good but that they do not like how it is taught [33]. Almost half of these youths thus appear to be uncomfortable with how the PE subject is taught in school.

A study by von Seelen in the Danish school system [29] suggests that pupils who do not experience PE teaching in a positive way are characterized by uncertainty, which becomes known in various ways. von Seelen observed that pupils who feel uncertain in PE class may resist participating, for example, when the activities feature games with body contact or when the focus of an activity is on winning. Uncertain pupils may also dislike participating in activities where other pupils may dominate or in activities where achievements are recorded, for example, using a stopwatch. They may also hesitate at participating if the teacher's instructions are imprecise and difficult to understand or if they do not get the opportunity or are unable to negotiate with other pupils and the teacher about which activities they will focus on or how they are to be carried out. These pupils may also resist participating if the values of fair play and being a good classmate are not embedded in the social environment and in the activity taking place.

Pupils who find PE difficult and problematic may at times use methods-hiding techniques-to conceal what they experience in PE class. When pupils choose to use hiding techniques, it is because their self-perception is under pressure in situations they find demanding [17]. In general, an individual may feel the need to protect his or her self-value and self-perception in the demanding social situations [18, 19] that may arise in PE class. A study by Fisette [28] illuminates how pupils in PE use methods to avoid pressure on their self-perception in difficult situations by making agreements with each other and operating together against the others in the class in ways that hide their discomfort in PE class. They may show that they are apparently enjoying PE, but in reality, the opposite is true. These pupils give a false impression of what they think about PE and who they actually are in class because they do not want to display that they are uncomfortable or do not like PE. Fisette believes that some pupils may conceal their entire bodily identity from trusted classmates in PE class to avoid pressure on their self-perception. Fisette observed that difficult situations could be experienced when changing clothes or showering. One strategy for reducing a negative experience may, for example, be that pupils help each other when changing into workout clothes. They may hold the towel to hide another pupil, and in the locker room, they may help each other to avoid being seen without their clothes on. Fisette believes that they do this not only to avoid being displayed without clothes but also to avoid being naked in a transferred social sense.

Pupils' self-presentation in PE thus varies according to how vulnerable or uncertain they feel in the various situations they experience in the subject. Pupils may experience the same situation in different ways and then act in each on their own accordingly. The perception and behaviour of girls and boys may differ even if the situation they experience may be more or less the same. Earlier research has shown that expectations as to how girls and boys should preferably behave in PE are different and that their behaviour is characterized by different expectations as to what it means to be a girl or a boy. Studies of hegemonic perceptions of what it means to be a girl or a boy in PE influence their participation, engagement and behaviour [27, 28, 34, 35]. Hegemonic perceptions of how boys should behave, for example, influence how they act with muscle strength and physical force and when it comes to sports skills and competitive attitudes in class [35], while girls may feel that they are restrained by dominant views of how girls should behave, such as not being sweaty in class, not wearing makeup and preferably not dressing in workout clothes in PE class [34].

Pupils thus experience that behaviour is regulated by external expectations, and they may feel that their self-perception is subjected to pressure in many situations in PE class. To counteract the sense of stress, the pupils play roles and act differently to avoid the pressure. Depending on the situation they are in, whom they are with and what they want to accomplish, or avoid, they play their roles. Their behaviour is regulated through the social interaction with the others in the class, and their self-perception may be supported, maintained and hurt in the PE subject. Self-perception is also influenced by what pupils believe others think about them. Another contributing factor is that pupils will see themselves in the light of characteristics in areas where they consider themselves skilled and competent, while self-perception is not regulated as much by reflections in areas where they consider themselves less competent [26]. However, it may be difficult for pupils to devalue important areas of the PE subject, such as sports, and disregard the importance of sports achievements in class, even if they consider

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themselves less skilled in this area. This is because sports achievements are an important part of the teacher's assessment and grading in PE. All of this makes the pupils vulnerable. It becomes difficult to overlook one's "weak" qualities. Some pupils will therefore go far to make sure that their weak qualities do not "surface" in the hope that they can avoid the discomfort one would feel from losing academic and social face when they feel that their skills and knowledge are inadequate compared to what the others are capable of.

3.2. Self-handicapping and defensive pessimism

In other earlier research literature, the constructs self-handicapping and defensive pessimism, which resemble hiding techniques, have also been used [17]. Self-handicapping and defensive pessimism are terms that also refer to protection strategies:

> *Self-handicapping involves drawing attention to a possible impediment to performance so that it can be blamed if failure should occur. […] By means of self-handicapping, in which failure can be blamed on a number of factors, such as having been up late the night before the test or that they were disturbed by fellow pupils before taking the test, pupils may manage to save face* ([17], p. 183).

Self-handicapping may be behavioural or self-reported. Behavioural self-handicaps are genuine obstacles that have been wilfully created by a pupil to restrict his or her performance. Self-reported handicaps refer to verbalized excuses for poor performance that are declared before or during performance [36]. Defensive pessimism involves evaluating possible worst-case scenarios prior to a performance and setting low expectations [36]. The two facets of defensive pessimism protect the pupil's self-worth by reducing the standards by which the pupil is judged.

Both self-handicapping and defensive pessimism allow pupils the opportunity to control the importance of possible unsuccessful attempts in PE or sub-standard performance, hence minimizing the perception of weakened self-perception and the accompanying low sense of mastering. In the short term, pupils may be able to maintain their self-perception using such strategies. In the long term, however, the effect will be weaker self-regulation and self-handicapping, and in much the same way as hiding techniques, defensive pessimism will stand in the way of engagement in the subject and constructive learning activities in the PE subject.

3.3. Descriptions from research literature

The concept of hiding techniques, which refers to pupils' techniques to protect their self-perception against external pressure, has been studied and categorized in earlier research literature. Some pupils act as so-called wallflowers [35] or skilled bystanders [37]. The terms wallflowers and skilled bystanders mean that pupils place themselves on the periphery of the activity that is taking place and let others be more in focus in, for example, a team game. Other forms of hiding technique have also been described, such as pupils clowning or joking to cover up the fact that an activity is too difficult or socially demanding [38]. An example of this is illustrated by the following statement from a teacher in a Norwegian school, which was told in a study where data was collected by means of individual interviews and focus groups:

> *I can remember some examples about the leap-frogging activity, that some don't dare or manage. Then they would do some cavorting or clowning instead, to camouflage that they could not manage. Then everybody laughs.*

This teacher was talking about pupils who find it scary to leapfrog in gymnastics, or who feel the activity is too difficult, and therefore try to mask it by clowning while the others watch. The clowning is seen as an attempt to make light of the issue and turn attention away from what is difficult. The teacher adds that at times it may appear that the reason pupils start clowning around is that it is easier to deal with a scolding for bad behaviour than it is to deal with attention on their inability to master an activity in PE class.

Another hiding technique is to play tough, rambunctious and somewhat violent in class when one's skills do not measure up [38]. Some pupils also pretend to be injured or to be in pain to avoid PE. Some may also bring a note from home to excuse them from having PE without having any real reason for not participating. Another hiding technique is to do what one is asked to do, apparently participating well, but without putting any real effort into the activity, for example, running along the wall bars-"rib-wall running". This means that the pupil will be running up and down the floor by the wall bars on the long side of the gym when the class is playing a ball game. (Norwegian gyms in schools usually have bars along the long walls of the gym.) The pupil will then run up and down as the game is played from one goal/basket to the opposite goal/basket but never anywhere else. The pupil thus appears to be in the game but is only pretending by being where the rest of the players are, in both offence and defence. The pupil follows along in the game like he or she is supposed to but, on the outer periphery of the game, rarely if ever touching the ball. These rib-wall runners do not want to demonstrate that they dislike ball games; they would rather show that they are being conscientious and performing the tasks the teacher has given them. They do not want to lose face in the social situation they are in, neither to their classmates nor the teacher. The construct "rib-wall runner" is similar to the "wallflower" and "skilled bystander" approaches [35, 37].

Another interview study elaborates on types of hiding technique [39]. Here, data were collected by means of individual interviews only. The following excerpt from this study shows that pupils may practice what is called reverse queue jumping. This is how it appears in gymnastics class, illuminated by a quote from an informant in the study, a former pupil in PE:

> *I felt that I managed the basic activities well, but when it came to doing somersaults, I needed to back out. I didn't dare to try. I didn't want to try them when I wasn't comfortable doing it. So, I rather snuck to the back of the line. […] I tried to be nice and let the more agile classmates go before me in line.*

Pupils may also use special techniques in team games. A pupil stated in one of the interviews in the study [39] that she used a special technique when playing cannonball. (This game is played by having players of two opposing teams in different halves of the gym try to hit each other with a ball, hence the name cannonball.) She made sure she was among the first to be hit, for a particular reason:

> *My strategy was to be hit as early as possible. My tactic was to stand close to the middle line (between the two halves), making me a simple target for the opponents. Then I would be hit early, and would be sent off and be able to stand outside the game for long stretches.*

She added:

> *I did not like being hit by the ball. When I got sent off, I would not be hit anymore […].*

She also said:

> *Nobody asked how I was doing in the PE class, because I pretended I was doing well.*

Another informant related about a technique where she would seek out the blind side of the other pupils and the teacher in PE class:

> *It was no fun when we were tested in something I was not particularly good at, such as agility, and would get poor results. I didn't feel very cool in those situations. I tried to wait until as few as possible were watching. […] If there were many of us to be tested, I tried to the best of my ability to disappear or get lost in the crowd. The teacher didn't always remember who had been tested.*

She felt that she did not have the skill to perform well in the tests, so she attempted to avoid attention and being called to do the test by moving on to her classmates' and teacher's blind side. She also stated that it was embarrassing to do the tests in front of classmates, particularly the boys who were good.

Another informant in the study related about a similar strategy she used in football. The teacher had instructed the class on how to get out of the so-called passing shadow when playing football (soccer). She attempted the opposite, to move into the defender's virtual shadow and to avoid eye contact with the player with the ball. Thus, she tried to do the opposite of what the teacher said. This also needed to be done discreetly to avoid being found out. When asked about the reasons for this, she stated:

> *It was because of the uncool reactions, which often came if I didn't perform well enough in the eyes of the others, for example when I lost the ball to an opponent. There was this huge focus on winning. I was petrified that I would hurt my team. So, I didn't like getting passes, because I might not be able to control the ball. […] Therefore, I tried to place myself strategically on the field so I wouldn't land in difficult situations.*

Another informant told us how she exploited situations where a classmate was injured in PE class. She wanted to escape from the PE class activity if an occasion turned up, and she offered to be the first-aid provider and caregiver when a classmate was injured:

> *There was this girl who fell down and hurt herself. […] I wanted to help her, because then I didn't have to be in the PE class, if I let this situation drag out.*

Often this strategy worked, and she was able to use it to trick the teacher-and her classmates-so she could escape the PE activity.

One of the informants (former PE pupils) who took part in this study told us that one of her classmates in lower secondary school was not as good as the others at football (soccer). This co-pupil participated in the activity, but not because he thought it was fun or because he was interested in learning something. He participated to avoid being bullied:

> *One of the boys was laughed at because he was not very good in football. He was more or less bullied for it […]. He didn't like football, but joined because he […] didn't want comments from the other boys.*

Hagen et al. [39] show, together with other research [16, 38], that pupils who use hiding techniques find it difficult to see themselves in a good light in PE class. They may be left outside the social interaction in class. Their learning processes in the subject are impeded. However, hiding techniques are not a general tendency among pupils. The decision to use a hiding technique is triggered in specific situations, such as when activities or ways of teaching are changed. The underlying causes of the use of hiding techniques appear to be that pupils do not master an activity, are afraid to perform an activity or are in poor physical shape. Other causes

may be that pupils are bored or simply not motivated for PE. Pupils also use hiding techniques to reduce the danger of losing social acceptance and to avoid social defeats in PE classes. They may also fear that some activities require much courage, toughness or effort, and they may fear experiencing pain in some activities, such as being hit by the ball in ball games. Pupils may also fear being bullied by classmates in PE and therefore participate to the best of their ability to counteract being pushed around or bullied. On this point, classmates play a key role.

3.4. Constructing a room behind the PE stage

According to theory of social becoming [18], pupils who use hiding techniques construct a space behind the "PE stage", i.e. private space which allows them to remove the "mask" and be completely themselves. Here they disconnect from the teacher and classmates and reflect in private on what goes on in PE classes. Such private space illustrates that their self-perception is regulated by the teachers' and classmates' opinions about PE or at any rate the perception teachers or classmates believe about PE. A constant underlying factor is the need for social recognition, which is important for most pupils. If there is a great discrepancy between public behaviour and reflections in the private space, there is reason for concern for a PE teacher. The reason is that over time this discrepancy may lead to a negative attitude to PE in the pupils. This may particularly occur if the discrepancy is present over a long time. Long-term discrepancy means that the pupil repeatedly feels uncomfortable in PE classes and covers the feeling of PE being difficult and problematic by using hiding techniques. For these pupils it may be demanding to develop-or preserve-a good self-perception over time, and they may exhibit a propensity for not taking part in PE.

Thus, this contrasts with pupils who exhibit joy of movement in PE classes, as described above. In PE classes, most pupils will feel a need to master activities and feel competent, and they wish to have positive experiences from the teaching. A pupil's perception of his or her own competence greatly affects self-efficacy and his or her actual participation. A pupil who feels that activities are difficult will often attempt to make the consequences of possibly failing as small as possible. This is especially the case if one expects to fail. Expectations of failing in achievement situations threaten one's self-perception [19], and this will affect how much one is really involved in the learning activities. Not making a real effort opens for the opportunity to attribute an expected poor performance to little effort rather than lack of skill. Psychologically it is better to fail in PE if this can be explained by lack of effort than by poor skills. This is linked to how effort normally is perceived as a controllable factor, i.e. a factor for which the pupil is in charge and which may be simple to regulate, while it is difficult to disregard poor skills.

3.5. Only unmotivated and uninterested pupils?

It is easy to believe that the reasons for hiding techniques originate in the pupils' poor performance in the subject and lack of motivation. It is also easy to believe that these pupils lack the resources to solve challenging tasks in PE and that they have inadequate strategies for dealing with demanding situations both at the school subject and social levels. Some may also claim that these pupils are somewhat lazy [35]. But there may be reasons to consider this from a different angle. Based on general social psychology theory, a pupil's behaviour

may be understood as an active endeavour to protect his or her self-perception in PE against assumed destructive forces [19]. The pupil resists experiencing failure and humiliation in PE classes because most pupils want to avoid failure and humiliation in this setting. The young person who uses hiding techniques may thus be perceived as a pupil who mobilizes and offers resistance against threatening situations in PE. In such a context, hiding techniques may be understood as actions taken to make it through PE class in some way or another where the pupil otherwise would have experienced failure and humiliation [16].

A pupil's behaviour may also be regulated by environmental constraints [20], such as social factors like peer groups and social and cultural expectations in PE. Such factors are of particular relevance for pupils, whereby their behaviour, learning and knowledge acquisition are strongly influenced by group expectations and the presence of critical group members such as the teacher and classmates. An important factor is also task constraints, which comprise the goal of the tasks in PE classes, rules of the activities, the learning location and the implements or equipment used during the learning experience [40]. Task constraints are typically controlled by a teacher in a professional role related to learning design. The proficiency with which PE teachers can manipulate task constraints like modifying the size of playing areas, setting relevant task goals in games or enforcing specific rules for performance can shape the emergence of pupils' behaviour in PE [20].

Thus, hiding techniques may be a reaction to demanding academic and social situations in PE class. Here it will be important for the teacher to analyse whether the behaviour occurs in situations the pupil has construed herself/himself or whether hiding techniques are used in situations construed by others. All pupils are expected to participate in PE, and teaching in PE relatively often consists of assigning activities where a pupil has no opportunity to choose another activity or to choose alternatively, because the class plan has been determined in advance. Hence, many situations are not necessarily construed by the pupil in PE but rather by the teacher himself/herself. At times, the activities determined by the teacher may be very difficult, even for pupils with good PE skills. Findings from earlier studies show that hiding techniques in difficult situations are often actions that are well thought out and practised, where the intention is to reduce the sense of inadequacy and prevent a potential failure [16]. Thus, hiding techniques should not necessarily be understood as expressions of poor subject skills, poor motivation and/or laziness, but may at times rather be construed as deliberate actions that permit the pupils to avoid involving themselves in situations where they will likely experience a defeat or lose face [35]. Behind hiding techniques there may be active agents taking control over the social setting in PE classes rather than passively allowing the oppressive social setting to overpower them. Pupils may have *developed* strategies for handling difficult situations and for making it through PE classes with their self-perception intact. Pupils may also have *developed* an ability to play a social game in PE, usually in relation to the teacher, to avoid losing face and to reduce the pressure on one's self-perception.

This may mean that pupils choose the type of hiding technique according to the teacher's behaviour in class and what a pupil believes the teacher knows about him or her. If the pupil suspects that the teacher is unmasking his or her hiding techniques-thereby revealing that he or she does not like PE particularly well-the hiding technique will be adjusted. Earlier studies show that some pupils may be good at varying their hiding techniques quickly, which makes it difficult for the teacher to interpret their behaviour [16].

3.6. Which pedagogical strategies are suitable for avoiding hiding techniques?

Researchers have also discussed the teacher's role in preventing pupils from using hiding techniques. Tischler and McCaughtry [35], for example, propose that teachers may contribute to student disengagement instead of engagement if they do not understand the underlying reasons for it. Teachers should therefore use a self-critical lens to understand better the underlying reasons for student disengagement. Enright and O'Sullivan [27] point out the importance of teachers relating to having compassion for pupils and having the ability to read their emotional connection to activities in PE classes to influence positively on their participation.

The findings from a study of PE teachers in Norwegian schools show that good didactic planning and communication with the pupils are important measures [38]. Here, data were collected by means of individual interviews and focus groups with teachers in elementary school. Findings in this study show that it is important to acknowledge the pupils well, speaking with them and motivating them. One teacher stated that she helps the pupils to dare to try and to join the activities even if something is difficult. It is also important to be aware of the need to find activities reluctant pupils will be able to manage, and this is usually quite feasible. The pupils must have a sense of mastering in class. Another teacher found it important to talk to the pupils in a positive way, to treat them well and establish a dialogue with them. Moreover, teachers must accept that pupils are different: "I'm of course unable to make them all love the subject. I never actually believed I could do this anyway", another teacher stated. One teacher said: "It's important to talk to the pupils about what they like doing, and build on this. Varying the activities is also important. Moreover, it's important that pupils who are good in the subject are not allowed to dominate, because this holds back the other pupils".

Another teacher also believed that participating in the physical activity together with the pupils could have a positive effect. The pupils communicate in a different manner when the teacher is active together with them, and the communication often works better than when standing on the outside. "The pupils find it easier to address me as the teacher, and the communication opens up, also to the benefit of those who are liable to use hiding techniques", he stated. Another teacher said that he tried to influence the pupils into becoming so-called positivity agents in relation to the other pupils in class. She wanted to encourage skilled pupils to act positively with those who were poorer in the subject and to support their learning processes, for example, in activities where some pupils are beginners. This teacher also emphasized that it is important to make classmates good in PE and that pupils should praise each other when someone does something good.

The teachers interviewed in the study of hiding techniques [38] also believed that it is important to have long-term aims when working with the class environment to limit hiding techniques. It may often be time-consuming to get pupils to participate with engagement and interest when the point of departure is difficult for them, and different pedagogical measures must be applied to prevent hiding techniques. One teacher mentioned a special case, which had nothing to do with PE, but it was rooted outside the teaching situation. One pupil did not want to participate in the teaching because he would need to change clothes in the locker room together with the other pupils. This pupil would often not bring training clothes with him to school for this reason. In reality it was not the activities in the classes, which constituted the problem; rather it

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was the dressing situation. The solution for this pupil was that he changed into training clothes before he came to school and that he would not have to shower after the PE class. This was a solution that worked well for the pupil, who participated more in PE after this decision.

Other scholars also discuss pedagogical strategies for preventing pupils from using hiding techniques. PE should be more focused on learning skills and less on achievements, according to Ommundsen [17]. Task orientation means that teachers should focus on teaching the pupils technical solutions and interaction skills and not attach so much importance to performance achievements in PE class. The teaching should feature stepwise progression in the learning. Other researchers similarly find that PE should focus more on the stepwise learning of skills, for example, Tischler and McCaughtry [35]. A good understanding of the concepts of decaying and emergent constraints can help teachers to construct PE lessons that are attuned to an individual's current developmental status, Renshaw et al. claim [20]. An important role of the teacher may be to manipulate task constraints through rigorous learning design to guide learners in adapting their movements to overcome specific learning challenges [40]. Task constraints should be manipulated so that information-movement couplings are maintained in a learning environment that is approximate to a real performance situation [20].

Moreover, importance should be attached to cooperative and interaction abilities, as well as effort and exertion in the subject, while competition and achievements on the elite level should have less focus. Focusing too much on competitive sports and elite achievements will be detrimental for some pupils because their needs, learning abilities and interests are pushed too far into the background. Focus on achievement and high skill levels puts pressure on self-perception and may result in a poorer self-image for the pupil.

Bearing all this in mind, it is still difficult to define and describe a particular method which would work better than any other at preventing hiding techniques in PE [38]. There is no ready-made, easy-to-use methodological recipe to help teachers to stop their pupils' hiding techniques. This is because the causes underlying hiding techniques vary from one pupil to the next and individual considerations must always be made when a teacher assesses measures against hiding techniques. However, a constraint-led perspective in pedagogy is promising, because working with-and modifying-environmental constraints (to shape a nonthreatening environment) as well as manipulating task constraints (e.g. setting relevant task goals for individuals, who tend to use hiding techniques) will reduce the pupil's feeling of not seeing him- or herself in a good light in PE and to be left outside the social interaction in class. It is also important that the teacher establishes a good relationship with the pupils and helps and supports them if PE classes are experienced as difficult. Another factor is that many things can complicate the social interaction between a pupil and a teacher in PE class, such as how pupils may send varying signals to the teacher without expressing what they actually think and feel. It may appear as if things are working well for a pupil in PE class, but in reality, the opposite is the case. Moreover, not all attempts made by the teacher to find the underlying cause of the pupil's problems will lead to a clear conclusion as to what he or she thinks and feels. Not even several conversations with the pupil and focused work over a long period will help the teacher to determine what needs to be done to alleviate a difficult situation for the pupil [38]. It is also often possible to misinterpret the pupil's actions even if the experienced teacher has

learnt to "read" the pupil's situation quite well. Some pupils are also good at varying their techniques, making it more difficult for the teacher to interpret their behaviour, and they may have a kit bag of techniques, a repertoire of sophisticated "social deception techniques".

4. Conclusion

Hiding techniques in PE are indicators of the pupil's poor self-confidence in the subject, which will adversely affect the learning process and learning outcome. The pupil may be more concerned with mastering a socially demanding situation in PE class than learning relevant knowledge and skills. For many pupils, PE is linked to a fear of displaying and presenting oneself to others. This is in contrast to the joy of movement in PE. Pupils who use hiding techniques probably experience little joy of movement, and they are at risk of underestimating themselves in the subject, developing a negative attitude to PE and possibly avoiding taking part in the teaching.

On the other hand, it is possible to prevent hiding techniques in PE with the teacher's good didactic planning and communication skills. The teacher will also have to practice other pedagogical skills to counteract hiding techniques used by the pupils and must strive to have good social interaction with the pupils. "Rib-wall running", reverse queue jumping, staying in the passing shadow and other forms of hiding techniques of course do not create good learning processes in PE, and it is doubtful whether the subject's intention of joy of movement, and learning versatile movements can be satisfied under such conditions. For some pupils the causes underlying hiding techniques are complex and deep-seated, as earlier research has also shown, not least when it comes to the social area. The research shows that some pupils may have relatively complex social problems that are the causes behind hiding techniques, while for others the causes may be more superficial. Insight into the causes behind the hiding techniques and the teaching skills to avoid them will thus be important knowledge for teachers.

Teaching PE in all school cultures and countries should be a safe area for all pupils. Pupils who use hiding techniques in PE should be seen and followed up in the class by the teacher at a deeper level than just to observe their physical-motor skills and sports achievements. The need for a pupil to use hiding techniques should be analysed and prevented. Different pedagogical tools must be considered-and used. Being seen also relates to how the teacher establishes a good relationship with the pupils, caring, helping and supporting them if PE classes are experienced as difficult. It is thus important to give concrete feedback to the pupil about developments and the learning of skills, but not least, it is also important to give clear signals to the pupil that she or he is acknowledged above and beyond the skills displayed. This may be particularly vital for pupils who are prone to use hiding techniques.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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