



A qualitative study of how to create supportive environments for the implementation of in-class activities in middle school

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Background

School physical activity and other activities with the body in focus hold the potential to benefit student's psychosocial well-being. These activities can positively influence mental health through social connectedness, physical self-perception, and improvements in emotions. For such reasons, in-class activities (ICA) (e.g. energizers, active breaks) have been given increased attention in the literature.

Purpose

If all students are to benefit from ICA, the right supportive environment is crucial. The purpose of this study was, on the basis of students and teachers feedback to an ICA-intervention, to impart practical advice for the implementation of ICA-supportive environments.

Intervention

ICA is one of three intervention components in the RCT-designed 'Move for Well-being in Schools' research program. During a full school year, ICA was to be delivered two times every day, focusing on four different purposes: social, energy, coordination and wellness.

Methods

Along the intervention period, a case study comprising 10 semi-structured focus group interviews were carried out with 37 grade 4 and grade 6 students. Furthermore, the involved class teachers were interviewed.

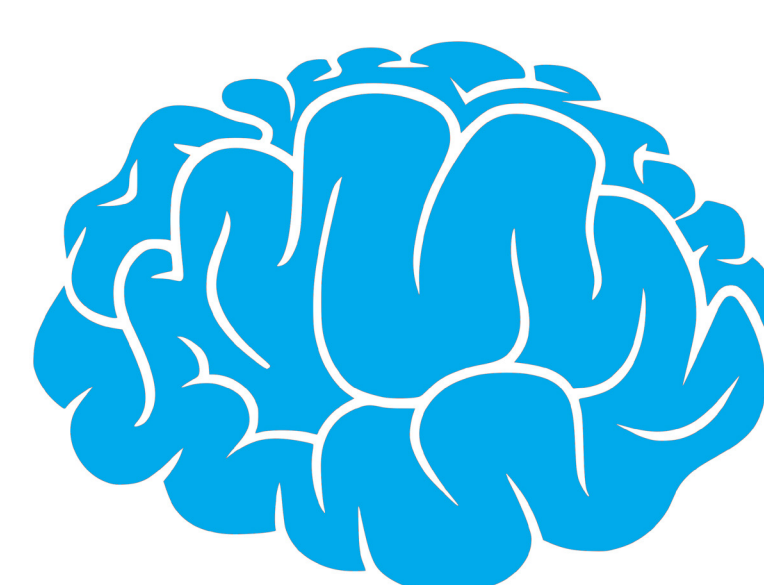
Findings and practical advises

ICA was well received by both students and most teachers. Based on students and teachers feedback, the following factors were found to be important regarding the implementation of an ICA-supportive environment:

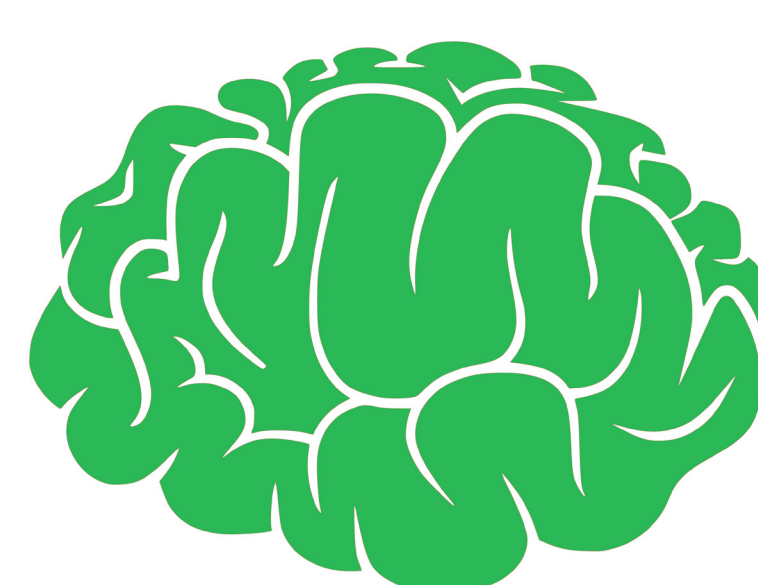
- ✓ It was necessary for the implementation, that ICA were planned and scheduled in the timetables.
- ✓ A good approach was to prepare students on the timing of ICA at the beginning of lessons and inform them about the following assignments to increase on-task behavior.
- ✓ The student's motivation increased if they were involved in choosing, developing and instructing the ICA's themselves.
- ✓ A variation in ICA was shown to be important to satisfy the different needs of the students.
- ✓ Focusing on social interaction and cooperation instead of competition was essential regarding the motivation of the less active students.

Conclusion

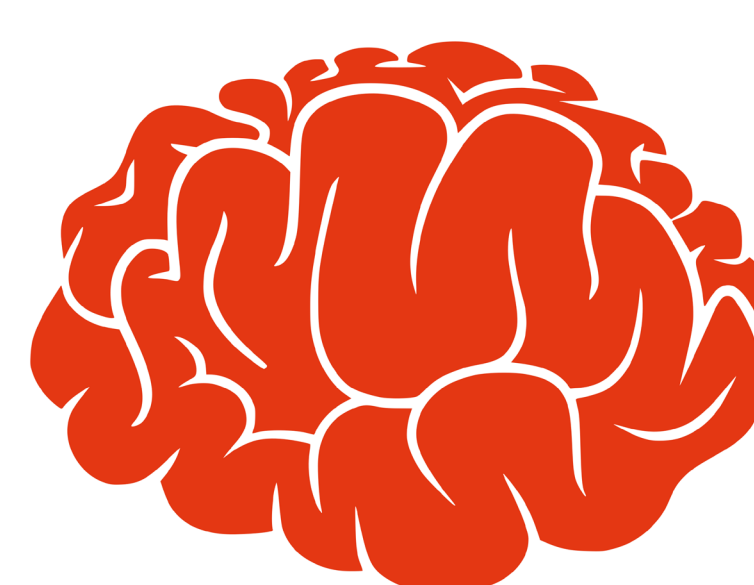
The aim of the current study was to increase the practical knowledge of pupils' and teachers' experiences of participating in an ICA intervention, in order to provide deeper insight into how to create a supportive environment for ICA. The findings points to important cornerstones in building a supportive environment and give some practical advises regarding the implementation of ICA. Furthermore, it is important to underline, that ICA has to be prioritised in the daily curriculum and that changing the existing culture requires time for both teachers and students.



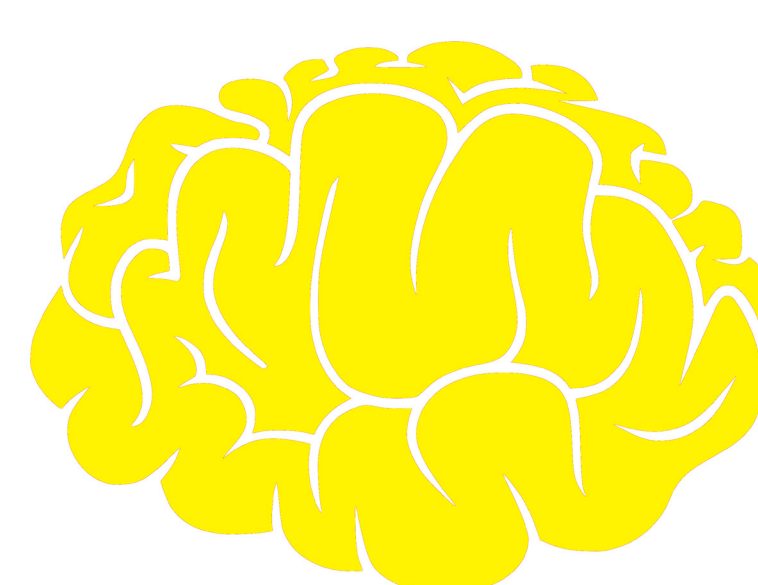
Coordination



Energy



Social



Wellness

Declaration of interest

The study is funded by a donation from the non-profit foundation TrygFonden, Denmark. The funder has no role or authority in conducting the research project, except acceptance of adjustments of the research plan.