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Physical Education Majors Experience in a Student-Designed Games Unit

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Introduction: Student-designed games (SDG) is the process in which students create, practice, and refine their own games, and where the teacher acts as a facilitator in guiding and establishing certain limits (Hastie, 2010). The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of a group of physical education majors as they participated in a teaching unit of SDG. More specifically, the study sought to identify: 1) what was their appreciation in this experience; 2) what were their learning outcomes; 3) what were their considerations teaching SDG in their future professional practice.

Methods: Participants were 45 first-year physical education majors (22F, 23M) from a Brazilian university, who were members of eight game design groups. The SDG unit lasted for four weeks. Data collection included: (a) field notes, (b) online discussion forum participation, c) post-intervention interviews. Data were analyzed through a systematic process of inductive analysis and constant comparison among the three sources of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When accumulated data confirmed similar findings, themes were generated.

Results: Ten themes were developed from the data, with these being located within the original research questions. In terms of appreciation, themes included (i) liking the freedom of choice, and (ii) appreciating different games. In terms of learning outcomes, themes included (i) learning about games classifications, (ii) how to work in groups, (iii) game appreciation, and (iv) SDG pedagogical methodologies. With respect to future adoption, students suggested they would (i) use SDG methodology to design other activities, (ii) use SDG to promote improved relationships among students, (iii) promote teamwork, and (iv) use SDG as they consider an appropriate practice for children.

Conclusion: The present study supports SDG as a meaningful experience that has the potential to teach content (e.g. teamwork, game appreciation) from learning domains that are often overlooked within physical education.