**Boys and Geography:**  
an inquiry into student-led learning as a strategy for increasing engagement at GCSE

**Introduction and background:**  
Whenever GCSE results are released there seems to be a national debate in the media about the gender gap and a discussion about why girls appear to outperform boys at GCSE. This is evidenced by the 2014 GCSE results where 72.3% of girls achieved 5 A*-C grades whereas only 63.7% of boys did, this gender gap is even more evident in Geography GCSE where the gender gap is at 9% in favour of girls. The literature identifies a lack of motivation and engagement as a key reason for this underachievement and highlights the importance of making the topic relevant to the boys lives. Therefore this investigation aims to improve boys engagement through the introduction of student-led learning strategies to the GCSE Geography Curriculum in order to increase engagement and therefore reduce the gender gap for GCSE results.

**Research Questions:**
- Can student-led learning become integrated into the pedagogy used to teach the GCSE Geography Curriculum?
- Can student-led learning decrease the 'gender gap' in Geography?
- Can student-led learning improve the motivation of underachieving boys in Geography?

**Action Cycle 1:**  
**Problem identified**
- Gender gap between boys and girls at GCSE level.
- Analysis of ‘type’ of underachiever- characteristics and level of underachievement.
- Literature review to identify background and history of gender gap.
- Identification of student-led learning strategies.

**Action Cycle 1:**  
**Action**
- Implementation of student-led learning activities into Population Scheme of Learning.
- Targeting of underachieving boys into planning of lessons.
- Strategies: enquiry, group work, experts, discover the knowledge.
- Population end of unit test.

**Action Cycle 1:**  
**Reflection and new problem**
- Analysis of end of unit test results- reduction in male underachievement by 9.6%.
- Semi-structured interviews- students identified they enjoyed learning from each other but wanted more time to discuss and debate issues.

**Action Cycle 2:**  
**Action**
- Implementation of student-led debate into Tourism Schemes of Learning in response to semi-structured interviews.
- Teacher reflection on lessons and learning.
- Final semi-structured interviews with underachieving boys to identify which strategies they feel have been most engaging.

**Action Cycle 2:**  
**Continuing research**
- The next stages of this research are to analyse the final year exams will identify if there has been a decrease in the gender gap and in underachievement in boys.
- Collaboration with other geography teachers and staff in the department to continue striving to raise attainment.

**References:**

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