

Sound awareness interventions in class: Effects on pupils' self-reported attention and mood.

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ABSTRACT

In classrooms, pupils-generated noise can cover external sources of noise. Participatory approaches to regulate noise could be more flexible and empowering for teachers and children than physical acoustical solutions. We introduced a 4-months school-based intervention aimed at raising children's noise awareness. It included: (1) Four expert-led workshops introducing children to the concepts of sound and noise; (2) Visual panels showing classroom noise levels; (3) A daily 'silence game'; (4) A weekly estimation of noise levels generated by specific activities (e.g. everyone talking). Two classes were involved. Another two classes received a yoga and mindfulness intervention, designed to raise children's awareness of their body, senses and environment. It included four expert-led workshops and a daily mindfulness practice. Two classrooms were business-as-usual. Children liked the interventions, found them easy and useful. Self-reported changes in mood and attention after the daily practices were analysed with linear mixed-effects models. Children reported an improvement in their attention ($\chi^2(1)=13.56, p<.001$), which diminished over time ($\beta=-.023$). There was no effect of intervention group ($\chi^2(1)=.28, p=.597$) or interaction between time and intervention group ($\chi^2(1)=.01, p=.932$). Children reported a better mood after the activities, an effect which diminished over time in the noise awareness group ($\chi^2(1)=8.51, \beta=-.024, p=.003$) but not in the mindfulness group ($\chi^2(1)=.055, p=.814$). The most frequent unpleasant sound children mentioned was that of the canteen (26%) and the most pleasant sound was during the 'silence game' (21%). Children tended to underestimate noise levels generated by various activities. Implications for educational practice will be discussed.

Keywords (3-6): Noise, Silence, Classroom, Interventions, Children, Attention