

A moment of reconciliation?

The current debate about good practice in physical education

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Introduction

Competing descriptions of good practice in physical education are typically framed as emerging from the paradigmatic distinctions of quantitative and qualitative origin. Although the degree to which paradigms guard philosophically antagonistic views is questionable (see Gage, 1990) they are consistently mobilised to discuss competing views of research on teaching in physical education (Hellison, 1988; O'Sullivan, Siedentop & Locke, 1992; Rink, 1993; Schempp, 1987; Tinning, 1991). The quantitative orientation is characterised as a technical or behavioural offering which has its roots in the natural sciences. This tradition seeks to describe pedagogy in terms of "empirically-based" research from which generic teaching behaviours can be established. Rink (1993) believes that this overwhelmingly process-product approach to research on teaching dominated physical education during the 1960's and 70's. In fact, there is considerable support for the belief that the quantitative tradition still provides the most commonly recognised characterisations of good pedagogy in physical education (Crum, 1993; Gore, 1993; O'Sullivan, Siedentop & Locke, 1992; Tinning, 1991).

Qualitative approaches to understanding the processes of teaching and learning adopt a more interpretative research design which acknowledges the context-specific nature of these complex process (Shulman 1987; Wolf, 1994). Seeking to describe the complexities of teaching within their ecological (interacting with the environment) setting this research tradition draws on a diverse range of investigative strategies including interviews, questionnaires, observational notes and reflective journals. In the spirit of this tradition Shulman (1987) believes that accurate portrayals of teaching and learning involve data that is rich in participant perceptions which reveal the "management of ideas within classroom discourse" (p. 1). Not content to describe teaching in terms of generic processes the qualitative tradition is more concerned with understanding and interpretation. Indeed, the complexities of teaching and learning are thought to transcend behaviour. Within physical education qualitative research has gained wide acceptance in recent years. Such has been their acceptance that Rink (1993) believes the qualitative tradition now dominates research directions in physical education. While this may be true of academic arenas it seems that this perspective has much less prominence with

practitioners (Gore, 1993; O'Sullivan, Siedentop & Locke, 1992; Tinning, 1991).

A further dimension of the qualitative tradition has been the emergence of a critical orientation which concerns itself with issues of fairness, equity and power in seeking to understand and interpret the processes of teaching and learning. As an extension of the qualitative tradition a critical orientation seeks to acknowledge the role of schooling in the (re)production of dominant social values and mores. While recognising the context-specific nature of teaching prominent critical educators, such as Giroux, Shore and Friere, recognise education to be an inherently political, moral and ethical act. Descriptions of preferred pedagogy that emerge from the critical domain

are largely framed from the critique of "mainstream" theory and practice (Gore, 1993). Accordingly, many of the practices and beliefs that characterise a critical perspective work to subvert or expose the inconsistencies, contradictions and contestations thought to exist in mainstream educational practice. Underpinned by a rhetoric of empowerment and emancipation critical educators acknowledge that the process of schooling often functions to reinforce dominant power structures and reproduce existing social inequities. From a critical perspective Dodds (1993) and Tinning (1990) question the value of a physical education that uncritically reinforces the able over the less able, male over female, the privileged over the less privileged and mesomorphic body shapes over others.

A number of recent reviews of research in physical education have focussed on the competing notions of preferred practice emerging from technical and qualitative research orientations. In most of these instances the qualitative descriptor is used as a generic title to represent alternative, radical, critical and/or postmodern perspectives. However, the clearest distinction in research on teaching in physical education is typically made between technical (systematic or science based) and critical (moral, ethical and political) offerings (Rink, 1993). While commentators such as O'Sullivan, Siedentop & Lock (1992), Rink (1993) and Tinning (1992) recognise the fundamental differences that distinguish these research traditions they also acknowledge a need to reconcile these differences in the interest of a more collegial and harmonious approach to understanding and improving pedagogy in physical education. This paper will begin by outlining the configurations of the ongoing conflict between technical and critical orientations that have occurred in physical education to provide the necessary conditions to support recent calls for reconciliation. The paper will then discuss the potential for reconciliation and the kinds of reconciliation that are currently on offer.

Competing descriptions of pedagogy in physical education

Grounded in a technical orientation "mainstream" descriptions of quality teaching in physical education have come under attack from a range of alternative or "radical" perspectives. Dodds (1993), Dewar (1990), Kirk (1990), Gore, (1993), Tinning (1990) and others, such as Fitzclarence (1990), from postmodern perspectives are critical of the way physical education in schools is constructed and practiced. Leaving aside whether alternative frameworks for understanding physical education offer accurate or reductive accounts of mainstream practice their critique is centred around distribution and equity. From these perspectives physical education can no longer be looked at as an unproblematic induction into health and sporting cultures. The dominant discourses of physical education, it is argued, constrain and restrict the learning potential of this subject and reinforce a range of historically and socially constructed ideological beliefs (Kirk, 1992). The technical tradition is thought to perpetuate an array of questionable values which privilege only a minority of the population. Critical commentators argue that physical education as a cultural practice in our schools can no longer be seen as self-evidently good but needs to be rethought to embrace a more inclusive set of values.

Epistemologically the technical tradition concerns itself with identifying and universalising the generic behaviours thought to be associated with good teaching (Schempp 1987). Drawing on a range of systematic observation tools Siedentop (1991) is able to provide a comprehensive account of the practices considered appropriate to become a good physical education teacher within a technical framework.

Emerging from research in this field are a range of behavioural relationships thought to underpin good teaching and, by association, attest to quality learning outcomes. Relationships such as; class climate and student achievement, clarity of instruction and student understanding, motor engaged time and physical development, brevity of instruction and time-on-task, quality of feedback and skill development, and positive reinforcement and student enthusiasm are central ingredients to technically competent teaching (Rink, 1985; Siedentop, 1991; Taggart, 1989).

Proffering the efficient management of time, by way of empirically-established sequence and order, technical descriptions of good teaching can be readily evaluated in quantitative terms. This feature has particular appeal to teacher educators and policy makers who typically welcome opportunities to describe teaching in terms of 'competencies' (Shulman 1987). According to Shulman (1987), these two influential groups have widely embraced 'research-based' descriptions of teaching and have therefore had a significant impact on the proliferation of this perspective. Indeed, there is wide acceptance that the behavioural relationships established within the technical domain form the basis of current pedagogical folklore in physical

education (Gore, 1990; O'Sullivan, Siedentop & Locke, 1992; Tinning, Kirk & Evans, 1993). While these descriptions of teaching appear heavily prescriptive Siedentop (1991) maintains that they are supposed to provide a framework around which individuality can be integrated.

Central in the conflict between technical and critical research orientations in physical education has been a tension between practical translation and theoretical conceptualisation. While neither orientation is forged in the promotion of a theory/practice dichotomy they position themselves quite differently within these domains. It could be reasonably argued that the technical tradition is overwhelmingly concerned with the interpretation of practice and the potential translation of research-based knowledge. Defending the primacy they give to practice O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992) justify their technical roots claiming that the majority of physical educators are "pragmatists to the core" and therefore request prescription.

Grounded in a strong theoretical base the critical tradition has concerned itself more with the development of a sound conceptual base from which it seeks to understand and interpret teaching and learning in physical education. To this end the critical tradition has its primacy in the examination and critique of values and attitudes. Critical educators, such as Dodds (1993) and McKay, Gore and Kirk (1990), believe that the way to improve and extend learning outcomes in physical education is to encourage teachers to explore the unexamined assumptions of their practice. These authors believe that claims made about the contemporary practice of physical education in schools are frequently unrelated to actual program outcomes. Recognising that there is no obvious prescription for achieving a more inclusive practice Tinning (1987) argues that physical education teachers are capable of critical self-reflection but are rarely invited to engage in it. In defence of their strong theoretical emphases critical educators argue that theoretical understanding is the basis of good practice (Giroux, 1986).

The admittedly sketchy accounts of preferred practice emerging from the critical tradition has drawn a degree of criticism. It is argued that the critical perspective is clearer about what teachers' shouldn't do rather than prescribing initiatives to improve practice (O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke, 1992). Expressing this concern O'Sullivan,

Siedentop and Locke (1992) warn against theoretical sophistication becoming an end in itself. These authors believe that for an innovation to be embraced in the field it must be accompanied by practical guidelines for its implementation. However, descriptions of an improved practice in physical education emerging from a critical perspective are more concerned with teacher enlightenment than prescribing discursive practices. For Gore (1990) an enlightened

physical education teacher would adopt a more "reflexive" approach to their teaching. She characterises this as a willingness to reflect on one's practice and acknowledge the social constructedness of the discourses that resonate through their teaching. Indeed, to prescribe practice would be antithetical to the qualitative nature of this tradition. Descriptions of pedagogy framed within the qualitative tradition do not seek to control and predict, but rather, to explain the situational nature of good teaching which might guide future decision making about pedagogy (Schemmp, 1987; Shulman, 1987; Wolf, 1994).

From a critical perspective authors such as Kirk (1989), McKay, Gore and Kirk (1990) and Tinning (1991) argue that technical or performative descriptions of good teaching are overwhelmingly reductive and ideologically naive. In their critique of the technical tradition they believe that mainstream descriptions of good teaching in physical education are overwhelmingly didactic, unreflective, subject-centred and authoritarian. Given that most physical education teachers are successful graduates of technical physical education and sporting programs Rovegno (1992) suggests that technical teaching approaches are both appealing and familiar. Drawing on Lortie's (1986) notion of an 'apprenticeship of observation' it is reasonable to assume that physical education teachers will uncritically embrace normative technical practices. Critical educators are concerned that the unproblematic reproduction of such teaching perspectives tends to propagate individualistic, technocratic and meritocratic discourses in physical education and sport. Further, given the proliferation of these discourses in the rhetoric of right wing political arenas Kirk and Spiller (1994) believe that such perspectives can readily assume hegemonic proportions and thus become extremely difficult to subvert. They believe that it is clearly no coincidence that the dominant discourses of physical education strongly mirror broader social agendas.

Critical educators, such as Kirk (1989), are further concerned that technical descriptions of the pre-conditions for 'skilling' the body frequently assume learning to be a value-free and apolitical process. Within this critique Kirk (1993) argues that the appropriation of the body as an 'independent and free-spirited' agent is very much a social and cultural process. Taking-up the critical ideal Tinning, Kirk and Evans (1993) and Evans and Clarke (1988) call for learners to be invited to think about and question their involvement in physical education rather than engage in what they generally characterise as mindless routine. A number of critical commentators (Bain, 1990; Dodds, 1994; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; Kirk, 1992 and Tinning, 1987) focus on the hidden curriculum to highlight a range of ideological blindspots thought to be inherent in technical descriptions of participation in physical education. For these authors, much of what takes place in mainstream physical education unwittingly reinforces mesomorphic, sexist and elitist values.

O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992) are eager to point out that while the technical tradition is guided by the pursuit of practical translation it is both incorrect and mischievous to assume it to be morally and ethically void. Citing evidence of social and ethical

dimensions of practice within technical programs in the United States they argue that much of the critique that emerges from the critical tradition is unfounded and divisive. In their own critique they, like others such as Peuckertruth (1993), question the fundamental assumptions of empowerment and enlightenment believing them to be overwhelmingly idealistic and inherently problematic. Believing that critical educators seek high moral ground these authors assert that beyond their largely captious position critical educators provide little evidence of how to enact their superior vision. They accost critical educators to 'put up or shut up' by suggesting that the critical tradition will continue to be bedevilled in physical education programs if its theories on improved practice are not accompanied by clear and decisive directions for implementation. They ask "what pedagogical practices are consistent with such goals for physical education and teacher education programs?" and "what evidence is there that such practices are indeed enlightening and liberating?" (O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke, 1992, p. 275).

Apportioning much of the blame for the current conflict in physical education on members of the critical perspective O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992) claim that it is to the mutual destruction of the field to build a research profile around adversary. They argue that, "there have been too many instances where arguments have been unobjective, assertions have been erroneous, and language and analogies have been destructive (p. 268). There is a warning to critical educators to soften or revoke their pejorative account of all that is thought to be technical. Drawing on a sporting metaphor O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke demonstrate their apparent strength in warning radical newcomers of dissension.

There are many an innings left to be played and all of the protagonists must remember that it is the pragmatists who own the field, and for whom the game is played. The silent, properly sceptical audience is watching and waiting. For both sides, technocrats and radicals alike, the ultimate problem is the conversion of those spectators into players; from listeners of our arguments, to doers of what new and better visions of physical education will demand" (p. 279).

Questioning the value of 'critique' as a worthwhile end in itself this ultimatum challenges critical educators to be prepared to enunciate their descriptions of better practice in such a way that those in the field can understand and transpose them.

A further problem for critical educators, based on the concerns of postmodern theorists such as Foucault (1972), are questions related to the legitimacy of their authority to legislate particular value positions. Within this concern there is a conflict between agency and structure and the extent to which critical educators have the right to speak for or represent the disempowered. As rational beings critical theory assumes that agents possess free-will and choice and given the necessary knowledge to interpret and liberate themselves. Taking up this position of rationality Giddens (1991) claims that "agents are normally able, if asked, to provide discursive interpretations of the nature, and reasons for, the behaviour in which they engage" (p. 35). However, Foucault warns against the assumption that individuals can occupy different positions and choose their values and ideologies and argues that changes in consciousness and/or position simply introduces a new set of power structures and ideological forces. This is not to suggest that postmodernists' advocate methodological positions that 'assume objectivity' as a means of understanding and regulating others but more that the critical tradition needs to be wary of the claims it makes about rationality.

In her review of teacher education Rink (1993) alludes to the existence of a postmodern perspective in physical education. However, she somewhat erroneously blankets all qualitative perspectives as being guided by the postmodern principle of an "individually constructed reality" (p. 312) which reject notions of a shared vision. On the contrary the basic principles of a critical pedagogy are forged in grand narratives which proffer a more equitable society. Indeed, drawing on Habermas' theory of 'communicative action' individual enlightenment and solidarity are seen as complementary concepts. In framing a critical pedagogy the interconnectedness of the individual and general are seen as centrally important (Giroux, 1989). Within a critical perspective the context specific nature of teaching can reasonably be associated with a broad vision of a more inclusive practice in physical education.

It is therefore inappropriate to characterise the individual and collective as binary opposites within the qualitative nature of a critical pedagogy.

Clearly the debate over what theoretical and practical frameworks should guide physical education is complex and vigorous. Both the technical and critical traditions provide very cogent and persuasive accounts of their respective interpretations of good pedagogy. However, in their efforts to promote their ideals and understandings they end up in dissonance. Recognising that continued antagonism between these competing frameworks offers little real progress to the field it would seem mutually beneficial for all concerned to reconcile their differences and build a more united effort. While this action has broad rational appeal, in light of the above overview it must be acknowledged as a potentially difficult undertaking.

The potential for reconciliation

Despite their philosophical differences and competing interpretations of good practice an interest in reconciliation between the two traditions has come from both sides. This discussion will focus on the potential for reconciliation between technical and critical traditions in physical education and their respective versions of an augmented practice. The current interest in reconciliation is probably indicative of somewhat of a contemporary crisis in the practice and purpose of physical education in the school curriculum. At the thrust of this crisis is a tension between technical proficiency and value formation or the apparent emphasis afforded to each of these dimensions. Currently, it seems, that providence is given to establishing a scientific understanding the conditions for 'skilling' to occur (Whitson & McIntosh, 1990; Kirk, 1990) while little resource is extended to establishing genuinely inclusive values during this process. Although the enhancement of technical skilling is rhetorically seductive in forming a national identity for the cultural practice of physical education it's value is questionable if it merely serves to perpetuate an induction into ideologically-suspect values. In the interest of improving the quality of physical education this discussion will look at the kinds of reconciliation on offer, the perceived space available for reconciliation and the shape any proposed reconciliation might take.

Calls for reconciliation are often framed in the creation of a dialectical approach to teaching physical education in which the practical concerns of the technical tradition are blended with the theoretical interests of the critical orientation. However, this seemingly obvious marriage is largely contradictory of the claims made by each tradition. Both the technical and critical orientations insist that they provide cogent accounts of both theory and practice. By

definition the process of reconciliation implies some degree of concession in the interest of harmony or collegiality. While the prospect of a dialectical approach is appealing such a process is inherently problematic and would clearly require either or both traditions to concede some of the foundational principles of their practices and beliefs. If such a process was to materialise one wonders what this augmented practice would look like and how would it be framed.

Commentators from each tradition recognise common features to their interpretations of good pedagogy; that is, a need for moral and ethical standard in a technical orientation (O'Sullivan, Siedentop & Locke, 1993) and technical proficiency in a critical pedagogy (Dewar, 1990; Tinning, 1991). However, rather than identify these features as places for a potential merger both traditions are reluctant to concede any of

the principles of their practice at any potential nexus. Instead, defending the foundations of their technical tradition O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Lock argue that their prescriptions for practice are already morally and ethically considered. Similarly, in calling for physical educators to embrace critical thinking Tinning (1991) states "it should be recognised that adopting a critical pedagogy does not, or should not, deny the importance and worth of technical competence (p.10). However, in describing the foundational principle of the critical mission he claims that "critical pedagogy rejects the discourse of science and instead uses a social justice discourse in which the key concepts are emancipation, dialogue, critique and student voice" (p. 9).

While the particular discourses that resonate within these two broad research traditions clearly offer different conceptual frameworks for describing good practice it would be foolish to foreclose any prospect of reconciliation. Given that both orientations are fundamentally in pursuit of the same goal, that is, to improve the quality of physical education a more collegial approach is worth more than just lip service. In fact, in their vision for appropriate pedagogy the technical and critical traditions share considerable common ground. Both orientations recognise that practice must be theorized. They also acknowledge that the need for technical proficiency and social justice in their descriptions of pedagogy. For the most part, it seems, that their conflict is one of emphases. That is, to what extent should practical translation determine the principles of pedagogy as opposed to the extent to which the principles of pedagogy determine the practice? While this distinction may seem a little trivial on the surface it would appear to have underwrite the very essence of purpose and practice.

Calling for a more eclectic approach to physical education teacher education Tinning (1992) argues for the acceptance of pedagogy as "praxis" as a means of blending technical and critical dimensions of teaching. From a critical perspective Tinning (1992) is optimistic that such an approach can provide salutary positions for both critical and technical orientations. Like Grundy (1987), Tinning believes that praxis offers a dialectical approach to pedagogy which he characterises as "informed, committed action" (p. 1). In his description of a praxis Tinning is careful to point out the need for a practical basis in teaching but argues at length the importance of introducing a critical perspective. Praxis pedagogy, as Tinning would have it, recognises the need to develop some of these technical competencies before going on to the more complex, and seemingly more important, issues of the social critical perspective. Other authors, such as Shulman (1987), have also characterised technical dimensions of teaching as largely the lower-order basis of competency. While Tinning's case is persuasive

his emphasis is unashamedly couched in the promotion of a cogent

critical position. One could reasonably expect technical educators to find this form of reconciliation unacceptable and reject the positioning of their work as simply providing some basic teaching routines upon which a cognitive, moral and ethical dimension is woven. Technical educators may feel that Tinning's account of their work is minimalist and /or reductionist and that in his view of praxis technical educators would have to relinquish their dominance in teacher education programs.

Coming from a strong technical interest O'Sullivan & Doutis' (1994) description of an expert teacher as a virtuoso attempts to blend critical elements in a technical interest. As an eclectic description of teaching O'Sullivan & Doutis suggest the concept of teacher as virtuoso "introduces a qualitative connotation to the more technical attributes typically applied to expertise" (p. 179). Within this model these authors extend a predominantly technical description of expertise in teaching to include social, political and moral dimensions of practice. However, in their discussion, recognising 'values' is largely restricted to acknowledging that they exist and using them to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. While these authors take seriously the critical need to challenge and critique values they reveal a degree of uncertainty as to how they should go about the promotion of critical goals in their role as teacher educators. They rehearse the concern of other technical educators that "there is a need for research in this area as many teacher educators struggle with these issues on a daily basis" (O'Sullivan & Doutis, 1994, p. 182). Like many others, these authors embrace the rhetoric of a reconciled approach to understanding and developing teaching in physical education but are not really sure how this ideal can be propagated and transferred into practice. Central to this problem is their intrinsic need to be able to prescribe and observe this enlightened or improved practice.

Other attempts to reconcile critical and technical interests are framed in the positioning of a critical perspective as a 'supplement' to a technical pedagogy. In discussing teacher education programs Rink (1993) correctly points out that very few of these programs are comprised of solely one tradition. Drawing on categories forwarded by Feiman-Nemser (1990) Rink argues that while different programs are sure to have different emphases most teacher education programs integrate aspects of technical, practical and critical orientations. However, while such eclecticism is encouraging it would appear that the emphases afforded to the respective traditions within physical education teacher education programs is overwhelmingly disproportionate. Acknowledging claims that very few teacher education programs are exclusively technical Tinning (1992) points out that coherent critical programs are particularly rare. If the epistemological base of physical education is to preserve its primal focus on the scientific principles of skilling the body critical issues will continue to be viewed as largely ephemeral to the principle goals its mission. Even though a critical

perspective may be present in such programs their contribution would, based on the experiences of Dewar (1990) and Gore (1990), probably be marginalised.

Critical commentators, such as, Tinning(1991), Dewar (1990) and McKay, Gore and Kirk (1990), appear to concede that a critical framework alone would not provide a sufficient framework for developing teaching in physical education. Previous attempts to develop a critical pedagogy in physical education have been extensions of or supplements to a sound technical base (Gore, 1990; Hickey, 1993). The important distinction that critical commentators make is the need to supplement their work

with a technical dimension, as distinct from the inverse, where a critical orientation supplements a technical framework. In this positioning of a critical pedagogy critical issues are seen as the origin of practice rather than as a set of concerns that are separated from or tacked-on to practice. After proffering the benefits of an augmented physical education program Rink (1993) acknowledges the complex and uncertain nature of transforming this rhetoric into programmatic guidelines. Rehearsing previously identified problems with translation Rink concedes, "the most difficult part may be to suggest the manner in which these concerns can be integrated and ordered" (p. 318).

Recognising that the technical tradition clearly dominate the practical world of physical education O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992) suggest that technical educators would be willing to consider critical categories if they knew what such a process entailed. Guided by the need to objectify their practice these authors infer their willingness to reconcile if they could be provided with some empirical evidence of how to undertake such a process and the potential value of it. Unfortunately, to reconcile on this ground requires critical educators to abandon their principles of rationality and educability (see Fay, 1987). The critical orientation assumes people to be fully rational, or at least potentially so, and therefore capable of determining their own discursive practices following their enlightenment. The difficulty, therefore, is the degree to which a critical orientation can be prescribed and the extent to which a critical theory can be enacted within a technical framework and still resemble or be true to itself.

Given their epistemological differences it seems that reconciliation is more likely to be to take the shape of a 'recognition of difference' rather than a unification of ideals. In recent times this has been represented as a call for mutual respect in an effort to minimise the damage being done through the perpetual and vigorous conflict between the two research traditions. Recognising that reconciliation is going to be fraught with difficulty O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992) advocate the value of collegiality. They clearly employ the concept of

collegiality as a form of damage control in stating, "there are too few of us in pedagogy to waste our collective energy and creative talents in finding ways to disparage each other" (p. 278). Highlighting the divisive nature of adversarial dialogue these authors claim that technical and critical traditions can co-exist to their mutual benefit if both sides are willing to accept each others 'differences'. They believe that while the two sides may never come to agreement on how to frame and interpret good teaching it is important to establish the conditions for each tradition to flourish and develop.

Future considerations

Despite current impasses the prospect of reconciliation between technical and critical interests for the development of a more complete understanding and enactment of pedagogy in physical education will remain appealing prospect. In this paper I have tried to illuminate some of the current problems facing those interested in reconciliation as distinct from the rhetorical claims made about the potential benefits of this process. Taking up Rink's point I concede the benefits of a augmented practice but like her I have difficulty framing the how these perspectives can be enacted. While there are a range of views as to how these perspectives can be blended they each have their own emphases according to the foundational principles they uphold. As

yet there doesn't appear to be an appropriate meeting place that is true to both perspectives.

A further problem with the issue of reconciliation is the extent to which either tradition is willing to concede ground in the interest of a more unified approach to the understanding and practice of physical education pedagogy. The versions of blended practice that emerge from either tradition are clearly grounded in the principles of their respective tradition. Be it "praxis" or "collegiality", offerings of an augmented practice are heavily weighted to guard the philosophical underpinnings of the reconciling perspective. Technical educators sternly reject criticism that their interpretations of good practice are ideologically flawed while critical educators preserve their belief that practice will emerge from theory. While I agree with Tinning's (1992) assertion that the two broad interests need not be seen as binary opposites it would seem reasonable to suggest that their epistemological backgrounds are central to their current stand-off.

For critical educators to gain greater prominence in the field they clearly need to offer a convincing alternative to practitioners. I agree with O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992) that theoretical sophistication tends to be exclusive and is clearly not the way to gain direct influence in the field in the current educational climate.

Critical educators need to learn from their technical colleagues and explore the extent to which the principles and practices of a critical pedagogy can be more clearly described and still be true to the fundamental values they embrace. While the offerings of Hellison (1985) and Tinning, Kirk and Evans (1993) go some of the way to achieving this goal more work clearly needs to be done.

Perhaps true reconciliation is unrealistic and indeed an unnecessary endeavour. Seemingly content with their current status in the field O'Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke are more interested in subverting the adversarial dialogue that has flowed in critical critiques of their practice and theory. "We do not call for an end to disputation. We do not call for design of compromise to resolve all our differences - quite the opposite! We say vive la difference !" (p. 279). In place of reconciliation it may be that both traditions can continue to grow in harmony to a point where they are both content with their contribution to the shape of physical education. On the basis of the information presented in this paper a unified praxis would seem an unlikely, or at least distant, end. Nonetheless, it leaves us all with some optimism.

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