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### **Sport Education in Physical Education: An exploration of place, purpose and pedagogy.**

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#### **Abstract**

Amidst the sustained international development of Sport Education it has frequently been stressed that Sport Education should not be seen as either equivalent to or a replacement for physical education. Yet, both research and professional debates have largely addressed Sport Education in isolation, such that how Sport Education should be developed and positioned *in pedagogical terms* within the subject (or learning area) remains unclear. This paper seeks to extend debates by critically exploring a number of key questions centring on issues of pedagogy that it seems essential to address if the potential contribution of Sport Education to physical education is to be realised. It specifically considers the parallel developments that Sport Education needs to inter-relate with if the physical education curriculum as a whole is to succeed in promoting the full range of learning that it is associated with and/or formally required to address. Discussion focuses on the proposal that Sport Education should be viewed and developed as one of a number of pedagogical frameworks that need to feature in teaching and teacher education in physical education, and the ways in which different frameworks may be most effectively combined.

## **Sport Education in Physical Education:**

### **An exploration of place, purpose and pedagogy.**

#### **Introduction**

This paper seeks to prompt reflection and debate about what is now recognised as a longstanding 'innovation' in physical education; Sport Education. Specifically we explore, from a pedagogical perspective, the role of Sport Education within Physical Education (or Health and Physical Education) 'as a whole'. For over a decade Sport Education, first developed in the United States by Daryl Siedentop, has been adopted and adapted by Physical Education teachers and teacher educators in many countries (see for example Alexander et al, 1996, Alexander & Luckman, 2001; Almond, 1997; Grant, 1992; Kinchin et al, 2001; Metzler, 2000; Siedentop, 1994). Yet amidst this sustained interest, little attention has been directed towards the contextualization (pedagogically) of Sport Education within Physical Education. Arguably key questions centring on issues of pedagogy remain essentially unexplored in relation to Sport Education and its relationship with Physical Education. Are we agreed on the learning that Sport Education developments should *primarily* be concerned with, and the ways in which the desired learning outcomes may best be achieved in the context of those developments? (posing questions, for example, about the pupil groupings and teaching approaches that can / should be employed within Sport Education). Furthermore, are we clear what developments need to accompany and inter-relate with Sport Education if the Physical Education curriculum as a whole is to successfully facilitate the full breadth of learning that it is associated with and/or required to address in the context of national or state frameworks? Exploration of these issues seems essential if the potential contribution of Sport Education to Physical Education is to be realised, and Physical Education 'as a whole' strengthened in that process. We therefore encourage a move away from the tendencies for Sport Education to be viewed in relative isolation, and to remain a development celebrated by some but simultaneously viewed with uncertainty and concern by others (Tinning, 1995).

Necessarily, we begin by raising questions about the nature of Sport Education, highlighting that it continues to mean different things to different people. These discussions provide a foundation for then considering 'what is pedagogy?' and from which to begin to debate the pedagogical contribution of Sport Education in Physical Education, and its desirable relationship with other pedagogical frameworks and practices. Before progressing, we should comment on our own terminology. Although we refer to 'Physical Education' we acknowledge the international variation in the breadth and name of the curriculum subject and/or learning area. In many states within Australia, and in New Zealand, curriculum frameworks and/or new syllabi have been developed for 'Health and Physical Education'. Clearly, discussion of Sport Education in relation to matters of pedagogy needs to acknowledge these contextual characteristics and therefore engage with discourses 'of health'.

#### **What is Sport Education? ...**

##### **De Facto Curriculum? Instructional model? Pedagogical framework?**

Existing literature serves to highlight that Sport Education has been developed differently by different people in different contexts. Various, it has been a prompt and focus for the reform of Physical Education curricula (or parts of them) and pedagogical practices. Interestingly, in his 1994 book, Siedentop avoided direct reference to the term pedagogy. Instead he identified Sport Education as "an excellent vehicle for reaching physical education objectives" (p.ix) and "a curriculum and instruction model developed for school

physical education programs" (p.3). Siedentop stated that the model had *particular* goals and objectives, that were compatible with established goals and objectives within physical education. His concern was that children should be educated "in the fullest sense" and that they should be helped to "develop as competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspeople" (Siedentop, 1994, p.4). He emphasised that addressing these goals and objectives demanded that physical education teachers adopt new strategies in curriculum planning, new approaches to the design and delivery of lessons and new assessment tasks and methods. A number of characteristics of the curriculum, teaching and learning have subsequently come to define Sport Education; namely:

- The adoption of a seasonal format for units of work;
- Pupils being members of teams that are retained throughout a unit of work and being provided with opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding relating to a number of roles associated with teams and competitive sport;
- Units featuring teaching and learning directed towards engagement in formal sporting competition, and therefore involving, for example, practice sessions, pre-season games and a formal competition phase;
- Units featuring a 'culminating event' or festival;
- Record-keeping relating to various aspects of team performances throughout the unit, with this used as a basis for feedback to individuals and teams;
- The celebration of the festive nature of sport, via for example, the use of team names and team uniforms.

(Siedentop, 1994)

It is easy to see that a focus on these characteristics can lead to a somewhat functional or mechanistic approach to the development of Sport Education, such that it may be presented as something of a 'de facto curriculum', within or alongside the Physical Education curriculum. Dugas' (1994) commentary on the development of Sport Education in a secondary school context is one of the few to clearly articulate such a relationship, with Sport Education positioned alongside 'Leisure' and 'Fitness' as 'three main organizing centers' of the 'total physical education program'. The 'organizing center' of Sport Education comprises a number of activities that distinguish it from the other centers, while also featuring the above characteristics set out by Siedentop. Adopting these characteristics has clearly demanded changes at a number of 'levels'; relating to the content and organisation of curriculum matter, the teaching methods employed, teacher and pupil roles and relations. Furthermore, the changes clearly relate back to the focus on the specific objective of developing students as "competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspeople" (Siedentop, 1994, p.4). Thus, we move towards a holistic view of Sport Education, associated with specific desired learning outcomes, and providing a framework for addressing these.

Metzler (2000) recently developed such a view, identifying Sport Education as one of seven 'instructional models', each of which is presented as a "coherent framework" for teachers to employ in helping students to achieve particular goals. He explained that;

*An instructional model* refers to a comprehensive and coherent plan for teaching that includes: a theoretical foundation, statements of intended learning outcomes, teacher's content knowledge expertise, developmentally appropriate and sequenced learning activities, expectations for teacher and student behaviors, unique task structures, assessment of learning outcomes, and ways to verify the faithful implementation of the model itself.

(p.14)

Metzler's emphasis is that "such comprehensive and unified plans for instructing Physical Education go far beyond the limitations of methods, strategies and styles, as part of an ongoing evolution of "ways to teach" our subject matter to students of all ages" (p.13). Metzler explained that "Each time a teacher instructs a different content, for different learning outcomes, to a different group of students, that teacher must change his (sic) way of instructing in order to help those students learn more effectively and enjoyably. Sometimes those differences will call for only minor changes - small variations in a few teaching and learning behaviors. At other times those differences will require major changes in how a teacher instructs, calling for the use of a completely different approach" - or what he terms "instructional model" (p.14). Metzler's notion of 'model' clearly goes beyond one of didactics. His emphasis is on "an overall plan and coherent approach to teaching and learning" (p.131), with each model encompassing six components and eighteen dimensions\*1.

Metzler's work directs us to pedagogical issues relating to both Sport Education and Physical Education more broadly that are central to our own current interests. Specifically, we are prompted to reflect upon whether we are clear what content and what learning outcomes Sport Education can legitimately claim to address, and what modes of organisation and teaching approaches may be drawn upon to do this. What developments need to then accompany and inter-relate with the development of Sport Education if we are to establish a comprehensive and coherent Physical Education curriculum? How should 'other' content and learning outcomes be addressed? It is issues such as these that we believe have remained inadequately explored amidst the development of Sport Education to date, but that may hold the key to fulfillment of what it has to offer to physical education. During the past decade the development of Sport Education and/or hybrid versions of it (such as Hastie & Buchanen, 2000) has featured variations in the learning outcomes being prioritised and the use of a number of teaching approaches. Arguably Sport Education has, in different places and in various guises reflected both what has been termed 'performance pedagogy' (Tinning, 1997) and 'critical pedagogy' (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997; Evans & Penney, 1996, Macdonald, 2001; Penney and Waring, 2000). It has featured both didactic teaching and less formal and/or 'pupil-centred' approaches.

Yet, while the scope for Sport Education to be developed in different ways by different teachers in different contexts is widely accepted, research has not pursued the ways in which different teaching approaches and pedagogical relations may best be adopted and combined in the context of Sport Education units or programmes. Nor has it focused upon how the pedagogical approaches and relations that are developed in these units should relate to (contrast, replicate or extend) those featuring in other aspects of the Physical Education curriculum. These limitations of research and professional debate mean that we remain unclear about how Sport Education should be developed in order that the Physical Education curriculum as a whole has pedagogical coherence and features the range and diversity of teaching approaches, teacher and student roles and relations, that are desired in the subject. Sport Education may well offer a framework within which various teaching approaches can be employed, each of which may be more or less effective in addressing particular learning, or engaging particular learners. But at the same time it is also recognised as something that we can not equate to the (whole) Physical Education curriculum and that will not be an appropriate 'vehicle', 'model' or 'framework' for addressing the full range of learning that the subject or learning area encompasses. Thus, we see a need to direct thinking, debates and research towards how Sport Education should be viewed and positioned in *pedagogical terms*. We suggest that there may be value in moving from the use of the term 'instructional model' (Metzler, 2000), to that of 'pedagogical framework'. We specifically consider:

- The range of learning outcomes that we associate with a comprehensive Physical Education curriculum;
- The outcomes that Sport Education can clearly be associated with and the various ways in which these outcomes may be addressed in contexts of Sport Education so as to also develop linkages with other learning in Physical Education; and finally,
- Parallel developments in physical education that Sport Education needs to be seen, positioned and developed in relation to.

Before pursuing these points we necessarily examine the concept central to our discussion; pedagogy.

### **Pedagogy**

Pedagogy has been described as "the missing ingredient" in the context of the development of Physical Education (Almond, 1997) but that is also acknowledged as meaning "different things to different people" (Tinning, 1992, p.24). As others have noted (Penney and Waring, 2000) neither the relative absence of discussion of pedagogy, nor the conceptual confusion surrounding it is unique to Physical Education. Watkins and Mortimer (1999) have stressed that while pedagogy may often be associated primarily or exclusively with teaching approaches, methods and associated teacher-pupil relations, "didactics" is arguably a more appropriate term if the focus is *only* upon the teacher's role and activity. They clarify that talk of pedagogy demands that we engage with more elements of curriculum development teaching and learning and also, the inter-relationships between elements. Thus, they prompt the adoption of "...an increasingly integrated conceptualisation which specifies relations between its elements: the teacher, the classroom or other context, content, the view of learning and learning about learning" (Watkins & Mortimer, 1999, cited in Penney & Waring, 2000, pp.5-6). This led Penney and Waring to suggest that we should view pedagogy as "a concept that simultaneously embraces and informs rationale, curriculum design, teaching and learning in and of physical education" (p.6). From this perspective "our pedagogy, or pedagogical stance, shapes our actions in every dimension of our teaching" (ibid, p.6, our emphasis), including the aims that we choose to pursue and prioritise, the activities, skills, knowledge and understanding that we privilege in curricula and lessons, the teaching approaches that we adopt, the relations that we seek to establish with pupils, the learning that we are concerned to develop, and that we recognise and value. This is consistent with Watkins and Mortimer's (1999) proposed definition of pedagogy as the *process for achieving defined or selected learning outcome*;, "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another" (p.17).

It is from this standpoint that we explore Sport Education and its pedagogical positioning in Physical Education, and that we propose Sport Education as one of a number of *pedagogical frameworks* that may be utilised in physical education. The notion of framework provides a structure for addressing the development process (and conscious actions) that is (are) linked to the pursuit of specific learning outcomes. The understanding that the process has several elements (relating to selection of curriculum content, mode of organisation, teaching approach and related roles and responsibilities for teachers and pupils, assessment tasks and methods) is central to acknowledging and exploring the potential and desirable inter-relationships between different frameworks. It is at the level of specific elements that linkages can be established with a view to ensuring coherency of the curriculum as a whole from both teachers' and learners' perspectives.

### **(Health and) Physical Education - Learning outcomes**

As a platform for thinking about Sport Education as a pedagogical framework within Physical Education, an examination of the learning outcomes from the Physical Education curriculum

is required. Even a cursory look at the theory and practice for curriculum in Physical Education suggests that there is no singular view of what it means for a student to be physically educated. The desired outcomes from Physical Education curricula are different both within and across national boundaries. These variations in focus and emphasis are alluded to by the nomenclature that is used to define the learning area in different educational contexts. While in some countries, (eg. USA and the UK), "Physical Education" is used to describe the area, in others (eg. Australia and New Zealand), "Health and Physical Education" is a preferred title. However, even within some of these jurisdictions, there are nuances that reflect the preference of state and local educational authorities. In this section of the paper we provide a necessarily limited commentary on the range of learning outcomes identified with or for the (Health &) Physical Education curriculum.

In the United States context, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (1995: p.v, cited in Laker, 2000) have identified five outcomes which define a physically educated student:

1. Has learned skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities
2. Is physically fit
3. Does participate regularly in physical activity
4. Knows the implications of and benefits from involvement in physical activities
5. Values physical activity and its contribution to a health lifestyle

These outcomes focused on learning physical skills, fitness and engagement in physically activity have provided the foundations for curriculum planning for physical educators across the United States (Siedentop and Tannehill, 2000).

By contrast, national curriculum initiatives in Australia identified a learning area which embraced outcomes focused on health interests, personal development, and physical education (Curriculum Corporation, 1994). The flavour of the outcomes for the HPE learning is exemplified in the following extracts from the nine goals:

- Develop the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, plan strategies, and implement and evaluate actions that promote growth and development, participation in physical activity, fitness, effective relationships, and the safety of individuals and groups.
- Be involved as a skilled participant in play, games, dance, gymnastics, aquatics, sport, outdoor activities, leisure and recreation.
- Develop the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions on nutrition and dietary practices.

While the principles of the national curriculum have been adopted by all state educational authorities, at least for the compulsory years of schooling, some states have developed curricula for higher levels of schooling with outcomes focused solely on Physical Education (for example, Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (1988) *Physical Education Senior Syllabus*, for year 11 and 12 students). The 'sole' focus is a necessarily narrower one, with some of the knowledge, skills and understanding incorporated within the learning outcomes for HPE now subordinated or excluded; deemed 'beyond the (legitimate) boundaries' of Physical Education. In these cases, there is little direct emphasis on areas such as health or nutrition which are profiled more highly in the HPE curriculum.

But parallel policy developments serve to highlight that these boundaries to legitimate knowledge are not fixed, nor consistent. The latest revision to the National Curriculum for Physical Education in England identified four aspects of skills, knowledge within physical education to be addressed throughout the 5-16 curriculum:

- acquiring and developing skills;
- selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas;
- evaluating and improving performance; and
- knowledge and understanding of fitness and health.

(DEE/QCA, 1999, p.6)

An eight level framework for attainment in the subject was also established. The following description of 'level 8' provides key insights into the learning that is seen as central to Physical Education and the 'physically educated pupil' in England:

Pupils consistently use advanced skills, techniques and ideas with precision and fluency. Drawing on what they know of the principles of advanced strategies and tactics or composition, they consistently apply these principles with originality, proficiency and flair in their own and others' work. They evaluate their own and others' work, showing that they understand how skills, strategy and tactics or composition, and fitness relate to and affect the quality and originality of performance. They reach judgements independently about how their own and others' performance could be improved, prioritising aspects for further development. They consistently apply appropriate knowledge and understanding of health and fitness in all aspects of their work.

(DfEE/QCA, 1999, p.42)

In addition, the revised National Curriculum made it a statutory requirement for Physical Education to contribute to the development of inclusion and Information and Communication Technology across the curriculum, and identified 'other learning' that Physical Education may play a role in developing amongst students, including language and communication skills.

Thus, Physical Education curricula are diverse in relation to the learning outcomes that they embrace. Policy statements and curricula frameworks are characterized by multiple outcomes. Surely it is unrealistic to envisage that any one pedagogical model or framework would be sufficient to meet all of the varied expectations in relation to the learning that Physical Education will facilitate amongst students. Rather, we suggest that a number of frameworks are needed to guide teaching and learning, but also that there is a need for some clarity about how such frameworks will/can link to one another. The remainder of our discussion aims to begin to engage with these complexities and throughout, retain a focus on learning. Our starting point is to therefore address how we may group learning outcomes as a basis for considering respective strengths and weaknesses of various pedagogical frameworks, and Sport Education specifically.

### **Learning outcomes: a framework for analysis**

In his 2000 text 'Beyond the Boundaries of Physical Education' Laker directs attention to four domains of Physical Education; psychomotor; affective; cognitive; and social. This provides a useful structure from which to explore the scope and focus of teaching and learning in Physical Education, with Laker making the point that "We need to look at the evidence to determine whether physical education really does all that is claimed for it" (p.20). Some of his further observations in this regard are:

that in the context of the National Curriculum in England, "Teachers are required to concentrate on the physical aspects and the evidence suggests that this is in fact what happens" (p.21); "Very few cognitive skills and abilities are expected of primary school

pupils. With such low expectations it is not surprising that the cognitive element is easily achieved" (p.21);

that in the secondary school context, but more specifically, within Physical Education examination courses, "physical education has a large cognitive element", that in Laker's view has "been keenly embraced" by teachers, "not only because they value that particular knowledge, but also because they value that particular type of knowledge and the effect it could have on the credibility of the profession: along with the practical components, it can be seen as valuable, it can be taught, it can be assessed" (p.22);

that while "There is a widely held belief that sport and physical education will inevitably produce good affective characteristics in the participants" (p.23), research findings indicate that "although teachers make some attempt to teach for affective outcomes in their physical education lessons, their pupils do not place much value on these" (p.24);

the very notable omission of social outcomes in the 'end of key stage descriptions' provided within the NCPE in 1995, indicating "a recognition that such outcomes may not be measurable, may not be achievable or may not be seen as important" (p.25).

It is in relation to observations such as these and a structured framework to articulate and 'organise' learning outcomes, that we contend we should be considering the contribution and 'position' of Sport Education to Physical Education, and its linkages with other pedagogical frameworks that currently, or may in the future, feature in the subject. The discussion that follows is intended very much as a starting point for debate and for further research, rather than any definitive statement upon the issues raised.

### **Sport Education: learning and pedagogy**

Taking the four domains of psychomotor; affective; cognitive; and social, we can usefully reflect upon a number of points. Sport Education may frequently be regarded as raising the profile of the affective and social domains, directing both teachers and learners to more explicit engagement with these (see for example, Carlson, 1995). But that is not to say that we can assume positive affective and social learning outcomes will be achieved by all pupils or in all contexts of Sport Education (Penney et al., 2002). The inherent complexity of Sport Education as a 'pedagogical framework', such that there can and will be variations in terms of many of the elements of the framework, means that any generalisations about the learning outcomes that are most likely to be achieved seems fundamentally flawed. Some observers may question whether the psychomotor domain can be effectively addressed in contexts of Sport Education, or more specifically, whether all pupils will see improvement in this domain. Also, to what extent does Sport Education develop the cognitive abilities of students? In its 'purest form' there seems to be little emphasis placed on the specific development of higher order cognitive skills. It could be argued that Sport Education does little more than develop students as consumers of *existing* sport knowledge.

The answers to these and other questions we may pose surely lies in the detail within the pedagogical framework, not the framework itself. With specific grouping arrangements and particular teaching approaches, we will alter the likelihood of effectively advancing learning in particular domains and amongst some learners. Didactic teaching and 'game sense' or 'Teaching Games for Understanding' approaches may both feature within Sport Education. We would expect the respective learning outcomes to be somewhat different and for anticipated differences to be the basis for selection of one of these approaches at particular points in time. With linkages emerging to pedagogy across Physical Education as a whole, we then face the questions of 'What is the basis for achieving comprehensive coverage of outcomes and coherency in a curriculum attempting to do so?'; 'How should we be

conceptualising 'the whole?'; 'What relationships can and should we be seeking between pedagogical frameworks and domains of learning?'; and 'What are the other pedagogical frameworks that we can similarly align with a process and 'multiple element' view of pedagogy, and that we should be viewing and positioning Sport Education in relation to?'

### **Conclusion. Sport Education in Physical Education**

As we indicated in our introduction, what, in pedagogical or even 'content' terms, should accompany and complement Sport Education, in what contexts and with what learning and learners in mind, are matters that to date, have been largely unexplored by both the proponents and critics of Sport Education. Considering potential accompaniments raises interesting issues and further dilemmas. Above we have pointed to the scope for TGFU/Game Sense to feature within Sport Education. But that does not preclude TGFU/Game sense being defined, identified and positioned as a pedagogical framework 'in its own right' in Physical Education. Similarly, some may see Sport Education as an arena in which there is important scope and potential to pursue elements of critical pedagogy, but we can nevertheless still envisage each (Sport Education and Critical Pedagogy) as a separate entity. In identifying seven 'instructional models', Metzler positioned Sport Education alongside "direct instruction"; "personalized systems for instruction"; "cooperative learning"; "peer teaching"; "inquiry model"; and "tactical games". We would suggest that not all of these suit the notion of a pedagogical framework as we have represented it. Some (such as peer teaching) are more obviously equated to elements that are integral to the framework, and that could therefore feature in a number of frameworks. They thus provide key points of potential connection and the means by which coherency in teaching and learning may be enhanced. But they leave us with the outstanding dilemmas, of how precisely we should be thinking of Sport Education in relation to Physical Education 'as a whole', and most notably, of what we should regard as key accompanying pedagogical frameworks.

#### **Endnote**

\*1 Each of Metzler's (2000) 'instructional models' is described through a combination of six components that incorporate a total of eighteen dimensions:

Foundations: Theory & Rationale; Assumptions about teaching and learning; Major themes; Learning domain priorities & interactions; Student learning preferences; Validation;

Teaching and Learning Features: Directness; Predominant engagement patterns; Inclusiveness; Task presentation and structure;

Teacher Expertise & Contextual Needs: Teacher expertise; Effective teaching skills; Student developmental requirements; Contextual needs; Teacher & student roles & responsibilities;

Verification of Instructional Processes: Verifying teaching & Learning benchmarks;

Assessment of Learning: Assessment timing & techniques;

Contextual Modifications: Decision points for systematic modifications.

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