

DRAFT ONLY

Pursuing HPE outcomes through Sport Education and School Sport¹

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Introduction

For many people, sport is assumed to be a 'natural' central facet of a Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum in schools, and sustained participation in sport is proclaimed as a key curriculum aim. Experience of HPE is unquestionably linked to students participating in sport, during the curriculum and beyond it. For many people outside of schools but also many children themselves, sport is the defining characteristic of HPE. This chapter questions and explores the HPE-sport linkage. Specifically, it considers what sport has to offer as an *educational vehicle* in the context of Australian primary schools. What role should we be looking for sport to play in our pursuit of HPE outcomes in primary schools? How can we best utilise it as a context and medium for teaching and learning? What HPE outcomes can be effectively addressed in and through structured, focused experiences of sport? What might those experiences look like?

All of these are questions that we should be engaging with. For while sport has long enjoyed a central and dominant position in many physical

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education arenas, we might well question what has been achieved as a consequence. Media headlines and professional commentaries are claiming a crisis in relation to the current and prospective future health of young people. Frequently, the impression created is that too few young Australians are demonstrating that participation in sport and physical has become a valued, central facet of their lifestyles and one that is reaping rewards in relation to their personal health. A leaflet recently produced by the Western Australia branch of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation in collaboration with other stakeholders including the Western Australian Sports Federation and the National Heart Foundation, emphasised the urgent need for support for physical education programs in schools, saying that 'If we ignore the need for quality Physical Education programs in schools, the future health and well being of our young people will be compromised' (ACHPER WA, n.d). It highlighted that:

- The weight of Australian children has increased significantly since 1985. Unfortunately, obese children are more likely to become obese adults.
- Young people aged 9-18 years have very poor health related fitness.
- Male and female adolescents are less active now than they were when they were young.

(ACHPER WA, n.d)

Any consideration of the status and role of sport in primary schools and their curricula also needs to acknowledge that physical education is now

integrated into the HPE learning area (or state derivatives of that). Tinning *et al.* (2001) have previously highlighted that with the integration has come a need to revisit physical education's 'purpose and function' (p.182). I would add that in turn we need to review matters of curriculum form and content. Meanwhile, Taggart and Goodwin (2000) have commented that 'Sport-based PE, which remains the predominant form of PE across Australia in both primary and secondary schools, needs to change if *outcomes-based education* is to be an integral part of students' schooling in physical education' (p.4, my emphasis).

These opening comments are certainly not intended to imply that there is no longer a place for sport in Australian primary schools and their HPE curricula. Far from it. Rather, my emphasis in this chapter is that we need to be very clear about the specific envisaged *educational worth* of sport in schools and the HPE curriculum, and for those visions to be directly reflected in planning and provision. The following reflections were concerned with physical education in the UK, but could easily be voiced in relation to HPE in Australian primary schools;

At this point in the debate we need to take stock in deciding how best to rescue Primary PE without losing the part that matters, namely, the *educational part of it*, and the philosophy of Primary education of which it is a part. We need to focus on those values that are most important to us as *educators rather than simply as sport developers*.

(Wright, 2002: 38, my emphasis)

Could less be more?

Perhaps particularly in primary schools, where time and resources for HPE are acknowledged as invariably limited and teachers may well feel under pressure to prioritise other learning areas, an emphasis that 'less is more' (Siedentop and Tannehill, 2000) is well founded. Amidst ongoing temptations for HPE to be associated with many and varied outcomes (ranging from the production of the next generation of sporting elite to reductions in youth suicide and crime'), we need to consider the political, cultural and educational significance of various outcomes and consider:

- which outcomes matter most, to whom?
- which are we willing to prioritise and furthermore, capable of effectively addressing?
- what curriculum and pedagogical tools do we have to draw on to tackle the challenges of 'delivering' on any of the outcomes identified in national, state or school policy?
- what *exactly* are we hoping will be achieved in terms of student learning in and through the inclusion of *sport* in schools and the curriculum?

Only when we have a clear answer to this last question can we contemplate the format that sport should take within the curriculum, which brings me to the important distinction made in the chapter, between 'Sport Education' and 'school sport'. Much of the discussion that follows focuses on Sport Education; an established curriculum and instructional model, designed to achieve particular outcomes in HPE, originating in the USA through the work of Darryl Siedentop (1994).

Sport Education is thus contrasted with 'school sport' in primary schools, which is identified as having different, but nevertheless important role in the pursuit of HPE outcomes.

Sport Education

In Sport Education sport provides content and the context for teaching and learning. Siedentop and Tannehill (2000) explain that it is 'designed to provide students with an authentic, in-depth and educationally rich sport experience within physical education...The primary objective is the development of skilled and competent sports participants' (p.166). Sport Education has six characteristics (see Figure 1 below) that have come to distinguish it from other curriculum models and practices. The characteristics reflect the concern that the content and context of learning should be aligned with the participation and performance contexts and communities that we are hoping that students will progress on to, and have the skills, knowledge and understanding to enjoy being a part of. Having said this, it is important to note that the intention is *not* that Sport Education will completely mirror the practices of adult and particularly professional sport. Siedentop (1994), emphasised that within Sport Education 'practices that might harm either individual participants or the sport itself should be reduced or eliminated' (p.5), referring specifically to 'an over-emphasis on competition' and 'a win-at-all-costs philosophy'. He was open in acknowledging that 'there is nothing inherently positive about the influence of sport on developing children and youths' (p.3); 'sport, properly conceived and conducted, can teach important qualities of character, but these qualities do not come automatically, and

there are many negative qualities that poorly conducted sport also teaches' (p.3).

Figure 1: The defining characteristics of Sport Education (adapted from Siedentop and Tannehill, 2000, p.168).

- Organization of the curriculum experience in terms of **seasons of play**, lasting longer than usual units of work;
- **Affiliation** of students to a team for the duration of the season, with members of teams prompted to support each others' learning and value each others' contributions to the team;
- **Formal competition** as an important learning experience, with teams challenged to practice for their participation in competitions;
- **A culminating event**, festival or finale, that is designed as a celebration of the festivity of sport and the achievements of all students;
- **Record keeping** by students relating to various aspects of play and performance. This provides a reference point for the design of progressive learning experiences, individual and team target setting, and for documenting and publicising achievements;
- **Festivity**, with the aim of establishing a learning environment and relationships that celebrate and encourage improvement, personal effort and commitment, and fair play.

Sport Education is thus concerned as much with the *'how'* as *'what'* of curriculum. It features sport as content but also provides a specific framework for teaching particular skills, knowledge, understanding and values in and through sport. The format of students working in teams

that are sustained throughout a unit of work, taking on specific roles and responsibilities within those teams, monitoring their own performances and identifying individual and team learning needs, can mean that students are challenged to take personal and collective responsibility in the teaching-learning process. The intention is that they will be guided and supported in taking on roles such as team coach, linesperson and match reporter, thereby extending the skills, knowledge and understanding that are addressed in HPE beyond a focus on player / performer. Increasingly, the teacher is positioned as a facilitator of learning – and not only learning of physical skills associated with a particular sport. There is a remit to address and scaffold progress in relation to a wide range of skills and knowledge that relate to various roles in sport (coach, official, etc), being a member of a team, supporting others in one's team, evaluating how individually and collectively performance can be improved and organising sports competitions and festivals. The ability to design and implement learning experiences that facilitate this range of learning should certainly not be underestimated. The pedagogical knowledge and skills required for successful development of Sport Education have arguably not been given adequate attention in research to date, and remain a critical issue for further exploration if the rich educational potential of Sport Education is to be realised.

Addressing HPE outcomes through Sport Education

In Sport Education there is an explicit concern to be developing 'informed' participants (Siedentop, 1994). This means that teaching and

learning covers a spectrum of 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions that might be posed in sporting contexts, such as:

- What skills are needed in particular game situations, how to execute them but also why they are appropriate to the situational demands;
- What constitutes 'fair play' in sport, how it is demonstrated in sporting behaviour and exchanges and why we should promote it;
- What effective teamwork involves and demands of players, how roles and responsibilities within teams may be assigned, why we need to question assumptions (relating, for example to gender or physique) about who may be best suited to particular roles.

These questions reflect that there is an inherent concern to be advancing equity and inclusion through Sport Education. They also illustrate the prospective scope and depth of teaching and learning that may be pursued when adopting the Sport Education model. It is a model that can provide an effective means via which teachers may address a number of HPE outcomes. Table 1 below illustrates how Sport the five outcomes within the HPE learning area as outlined in the Curriculum Framework for Western Australia (Curriculum Council, 1998) might be addressed using Sport Education. Similar linkages can be made to outcomes identified in other state frameworks. However, progress towards any of the outcomes needs to be planned for and teachers will need to make decisions about which outcome(s) should take priority at any particular time, and design learning experiences and assessment tasks accordingly. In Sport Education as in HPE generally, there is a danger of assuming that progress towards multiple outcomes will be achieved purely by virtue of

participation in a team-based activity. Sport Education is a curriculum model well suited to development of personal and social aspects of learning, and advancement in knowledge and understanding of many aspects of game play, participation and performance in sport. But notable advances in relation to, for example, Interpersonal Skills, will not be achieved unless this outcome is a genuine focus of planning and teaching, and learning experiences and assessment tasks are therefore designed that foreground and seek to progressively extend inter-personal skills.

Table 1

HPE Outcome	Example of pursuit via Sport Education
Attitudes and Values	Individual and team focus on Fair Play (development of contracts, experiences such as playing without a referee)
Knowledge and Understandings	Focus on movement concepts underpinning skill competency; strategic principles in game play; principles of fitness and training.
Interpersonal Skills	Focus on IPS associated with various roles and related situations, including leading a team practice, peer coaching, officiating, interviewing for a match report.
Self-management Skills	Focus on SMS associated with adherence to a personal fitness / skill improvement program and individual responsibility within a team context.
Skills for Physical Activity	Focus on development of sport specific skills and tactical competency.

Sport Education is also a curriculum model that presents considerable potential for links to established in teaching and learning across learning areas. This potential is arguably greatest in the context of primary education, where teachers may be well positioned to design and implement Sport Education learning experiences that effectively engage students with learning outcomes beyond HPE, including numeracy and literacy outcomes. But as with HPE outcomes, the point to emphasise is the need for these 'other outcomes' to be an identified focus in planning, teaching

and assessment. Increasingly, it is evident that amidst much potential, we need to be highly selective about what we will seek to achieve in any single Sport Education unit.

School sport

Having presented Sport Education as being distinct from 'traditional sport' and pointed towards the significance of the characteristics of Sport Education for the outcomes that it may enable us to address in HPE, how should we then view school sport? Just as in the case of Sport Education, the *focus, form and content* of school sport experiences need to be recognised as having implications for the outcomes that can (and will) effectively be engaged with. Thus, in many instances school sport (focusing on skill practices and competitive sporting experiences) may be an arena that we associate with pursuit of 'Skills for Physical Activity', over and above any other outcomes. But as with Sport Education, there is rich potential for experiences to be designed to foreground other outcomes, such as IPS relevant to effective team play. Participation in school sport is also a key opportunity for learning in the curriculum context to be reinforced and extended. With this potential, perhaps the most important point to stress is that school sport should be an arena and experience that is inclusive of all students. In this respect, we need to note that:

Much of school sport is still premised on the 'elimination' model; that is, students are separated into winners and losers. The winners continue on to the next stage of the process, while the losers are left to seek other challenges, or as is often the case, fall by the wayside

and fade out of participation...While there have been calls for a new model for school sport (and sport generally), they have generally fallen on deaf ears. School sport, in its current, traditional form, will never disappear altogether. It does, however, run the risk of becoming somewhat marginalised by failing to enlist its main stakeholders, the students.

(Taggart and Goodwin, 2000: 30)

Arguably, there is a case for many of the characteristics and underpinning principles of Sport Education to be taken as a starting point for the development of a 'new model' for school sport, and for experiences beyond the curriculum to thereby support progress towards outcomes being pursued in the HPE curriculum. School sport would rightly be an arena for developing interest and skills associated with coaching, officiating, sports administration, sports commentary and journalism, as well as performance and participation. It would also be an arena that may be more justified in claiming significance and relevance for many students' future lives.

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ⁱ For further discussion of the association of physical education and HPE with many and diverse outcomes, see for example