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A Defining Time for Physical Education Futures?

Exploring the legacy of Fritz Duras

The 22nd Fritz Duras Memorial Lecture, University of Melbourne, 27 November 2013

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Introduction

As an historian of school physical education and sport in Australia and the UK, it is an especially meaningful experience for me to be invited to give the 22nd Fritz Duras Memorial Lecture and to give it here at the University of Melbourne where Dr Duras worked. It has been my conviction for some time, and something I have argued in public (Kirk, 2010), that most of us in health and physical education do not know the history of our field particularly well, and that this places us in a very precarious situation in terms of our preparedness for change. So it is a delight for me that ACHPER has continued to support this lecture in honour and memory of a great physical educator. I want to take the opportunity this evening to talk about this current time in health and physical education in its historical context and to give you a sense of why it is that Fritz Duras thoroughly deserves the accolade of a memorial Lecture.

Dr Fritz Duras is often called 'the father of physical education in Australia' (Kentish, 1983). I will not dispute this description, but I will argue that if he was indeed 'the father', (and to

stay with the family metaphor), he was greatly assisted by Ma, the kids, and many of the uncles, aunts, cousins and grandfolks, indeed much of the extended family. I will argue that he was able to contribute to making a defining time for physical education, between the late 1930s until the late 1940s, to developments that continue to have a profound impact on what we do in the name of physical education today, because he was able to make the best of the people, the events and resources around him. If I can communicate one message through this lecture tonight it is that we must all be involved, collectively and with one shared purpose, if we are to make the implementation of a new curriculum a defining time now for health and physical education that could have profound effects, for the better, for years to come.

I want to begin the lecture by asking what we might mean by the phrase 'a defining time?', before elaborating on an earlier defining time, which focused on the national fitness campaign of the mid to late 1930s in which Dr Duras was a key figure and which among other things produced a new physical education that marked a distinctive break with the former regime of drilling and exercising based on gymnastics and military drills. Returning to the present, I want to then ask who can do what to make this a defining time and what might be the role of ACHPER and of individuals in this process. Finally I will discuss how we might realise the legacy of Duras et al and argue that there are at least five things the new curriculum must facilitate in order to contribute to a defining time for physical education.

A defining time?

With the theme of the conference 'a defining time', it might be appropriate to begin this lecture with some reflection on what this phrase might mean and in particular what we might hope for at such a time. Clearly the phrase anticipates the implementation of a new national curriculum for Health and Physical Education (ACARA, 2013). To what extent is this a 'defining' time and what is it defining? To what extent can a curriculum document 'define' a field of study for example?

As far as the document itself is concerned, if it is well written, visionary, and forward looking then I think we can reasonably argue that it might, especially since it has as its reach the whole of Australia, offer a definition of what health and physical education *can* be. This was very much the case with the 1946 syllabus *Physical Education for Victorian Schools*, otherwise known famously as 'the Grey Book' (Education Department of Victoria, 1946). 'The Grey book' presented a radically new vision for a whole generation at another defining time for Australian physical education, something I will come to shortly. In this sense, a curriculum document can be aspirational since it seeks to bring into being something new, something that without it we would not be doing. It is a statement of what we *will* do rather than what we *are* doing currently, though of course it is presumably seeking to build on the best of current and past practice.

So the document itself can offer a definition of Health and Physical Education, but by itself it is unlikely to bring about any profound shift in practice. We know this from countless other curriculum development exercises over the years. Needless to say the implementation of any new curriculum is complex - this we *know* both from the research literature in health

and physical education and beyond, and from professional experience (Macdonald, 2003). So while a visionary curriculum document can facilitate this particular period of history as a defining time, there are other forces and factors that need to be in alignment.

Just what it takes to make the aspirations expressed in the curriculum document a reality we will come to in the course of this lecture. But there are some related issues around the notion of 'a defining time' that we might wish to address now. While it is in my view appropriate and necessary for a curriculum document to be aspirational, we must be wary of the kinds of hopes we might reasonably expect it to hold for the future of health and physical education. We need to accept, I think, that there is no 'bright-new-tomorrow' to which this curriculum will lead us; there is no future Utopia for health and physical education. As the philosopher John Gray (2002) has shown, Utopianism is a source of much of the misery afflicting millions of people across history. In my view we need instead, when approaching questions about the future, to take a firmly anti-Utopian stance which in contrast to the 'bright-new-tomorrow' style of thinking seeks to take small steps to improve the life situations of specific groups of young people in specific contexts. We must ask the pragmatic questions of this curriculum, 'can we make the situation for young people better than it is currently?', 'what would better be?' and 'how might we go about this task?'

If we are to ask what can we reasonably hope this document might hold for the future of health and physical education I propose it should be that all young Australians will come to value the physically active life (Siedentop, 1996). This notion of lifelong physical activity, as I have shown elsewhere (Kirk, 2010), has been a commonplace aspiration of physical educators around the world since at least the 1940s and indeed has been the *raison d'être*

of physical education's place in the school curriculum. It is an aspiration that, if we are to trust the many surveys of adult physical activity, we have spectacularly failed to achieve. Despite its ubiquity and our very poor track record in realising this hope for physical education, I want to argue along with Daryl Siedentop that, if we could actually improve on the situation that currently exists, in small increments, this would be a truly *radical* aspiration that could provide significant benefits to individuals and society.

It is worth looking a little more closely at what Siedentop's original formulation of this notion involves. Siedentop explains this notion of valuing the physically active life as follows:

Valuing physical activity is most clearly revealed not in what we say or write about it, but in the decisions we make to arrange a daily or weekly schedule so that activity participation is possible even though there are other important or attractive alternatives. Although participation may be the key component in valuing physical activity, we must attend to a second component of valuing: willingness to participate in the sport, fitness, and leisure activity cultures in ways that are literate and critical.

By *literate*, I mean that persons are knowledgeable and activist cyclists, volleyball players, hikers, and the like. People should be knowledgeable about sport, fitness, and leisure, and be willing to use that knowledge as activist participants in helping to preserve, protect, and improve the practice of their activity.

By *critical*, I mean that persons should understand the structural inequities in their local, regional, and national activity cultures that may limit access to activity based on

irrelevant attributes such as race, gender, age, handicapping conditions, or socioeconomic status. Individuals should *value* fair access to participation so much that they are willing to work at local, regional, and national levels to make that activity more available to more people. (Siedentop, 1996, p.266)

Those of you who know Siedentop's work on Sport Education will immediately recognise two or the three learning outcomes from that model. For me what is important about this definition is that it focuses on *valuing*, a verb that implies something deeper, more committed and longer lasting than mere knowing or doing. Valuing the physically active life is also, according to Siedentop, dispositional. Part of what it means to value the physically active life is to habitually and routinely make time to be active, even in the face of attractive alternatives. And his notions of literacy and criticality are also important. Literacy points up the fact that there are things to know *as part of* the act of valuing. Moreover, criticality suggests valuing is not an individualistic act, focused solely on the self, but recognises social and physical cultural conditions, locally and more universally, and the need for a collective understanding of barriers and opportunities to be active.

Valuing the physically active life is highly consistent, on my reading, with the new curriculum. The rationale for the curriculum states Health & Physical Education 'provides opportunities for students to develop the skills, self-efficacy and dispositions to advocate for, and positively influence, their own and others' wellbeing in creating a sustainable future' (ACARA, 2012a, p.1) . In the Shape document, students are to 'value learning in, about and through movement' (ACARA, 2012b, p.4). Throughout the curriculum,

competence, literacy and criticality are stressed as major learning outcomes in this field of Health & Physical Education.

I think it is important that we are able as a diverse professional community to have a clearly stated and shared vision for what we wish to achieve. To optimise the possibility of as many young Australians as possible valuing the physically active life provides an easy-to-communicate aspiration. But the notion of valuing also reveals that this is a complex process, as the new curriculum itself testifies, that cannot be reduced to simplistic ideas, for example, that moderate to vigorous physical activity should be the main outcome of physical education lessons.

The aspiration is radical, I believe, not just because it has been hard to achieve, but because of the significant benefits it could bring to so many people in terms of the quality of their lives. Is it Utopian? It is not Utopian if we are clear that this is an aspiration *to work towards* rather than an endpoint to be reached. Moreover, 'Progress' is not about finding the common essence, "something true and deep" (Rorty, 1999, p.86-7), that binds people together. The notion of valuing the physically active life is a point of focus, a touchstone for our professional community, but it is no more than this. As circumstances change in the face of global warming, worldwide financial crises, armed conflicts and pandemics of incurable disease, our focus may well change. It is a touchstone, no more, a priority for now and as far as we can foresee the short to middle term future. It is also a complex, many-sided process that might move us towards a tomorrow that is better than today. American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty (1999, p. 86-7) has described humanity's pursuit of moral progress as "more like sewing together a very large, elaborate, polychrome quilt",

which involves using “a thousand little stitches”, equivalent to the many and various practices we as professionals in the field of health and physical education deploy to eliminate barriers to young people valuing the physically active life.

So what are the thousand little stitches that might be sewn around the new curriculum if it is to assist us to make life better for as many young Australians as possible, perhaps to assist them to value the physically active life as a lifelong commitment? If this is indeed a defining time for health and physical education, what other factors come into play that would indicate to us that there is an opportunity to hope, pragmatically, for a better future than the present? In the next part of the lecture I want to turn back the clock to another defining time for physical education, to the late 1930s through to the 1950s, in which Dr Duras was a key player.

An earlier defining time? National fitness and the new physical education¹

Fritz Duras arrived in Melbourne in 1937 at a time of considerable ferment around the topic of national fitness. Indeed his post at the University of Melbourne was a direct outcome of a survey of physical education provision in Victorian schools that was an important early contribution to the push for a national fitness campaign, sponsored by the National Council of Women in Victoria and the Australian Council for Educational Research. The report, published late in 1935, strongly supported the establishment of a specialist training course for teachers of physical education, a recommendation that the University acted on promptly.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the majority of material from this section is an adapted version of Kirk, 1998

The Carnegie Corporation was in 1936 attempting to find employment for Germans exiled by Hitler's regime. Following considerable negotiation, Dr Fritz Duras, a medical practitioner and sport scientist who had been dismissed in 1934 from his post at the University of Frieberg due to his Jewish ancestry, and had since relocated to London, was appointed Director of the new course in physical education, his salary to be paid for two years by the Corporation. The course began initially as a one year certificate program but it was so popular with students that midway through 1937 Duras successfully negotiated with the University Council for a further year of study towards a diploma. This initiative, the coincidence of circumstances that made Dr Duras available, and the fortuitous appointment of a man of his calibre to this post was a defining moment for the establishment of Departments of Physical Education in Australian Universities, as we shall see, which in turn, along with a range of other events I am about to describe, created a pathway towards a new form of physical education in schools.

In addition to this early initiative in Victoria, there was a wide range of other groups and individuals agitating the Federal Government to act on the question of national fitness. In 1937, William Hughes, former Prime Minister and now federal Minister for Health, set aside funds for health research to be administered by a newly created National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC). The first grants to the NH&MRC were approved late in 1937 and in 1938 the Council endorsed a series of resolutions concerning national fitness. There were other organisations pursuing national fitness goals too. The New South Wales government had formed a Physical Education Advisory Committee in 1937. In Victoria, the *Age* newspaper was vocal in promoting the need for a national fitness campaign and went as far as proposing how a campaign might work. Some of the other individuals and

organisations expressing views on the topic of national fitness at this time were the Australian Natives Association, the Baptist Union of Tasmania, the Council of Churches in Victoria, historian C.E.W. Bean, the Australian Youth Council, physical culturist Mr T.A. Langridge, the Recreation and Leadership Movement, the Australian Teachers' Federation and the Health Association of Australasia, among many others.

Given the diverse range of interests joined in debate, we should not be surprised that there were competing views on where the emphasis might be placed in any campaign for national fitness. One view expressed in Parliament by Prime Minister Lyons in 1938 was that national fitness should focus on nutrition rather than physical activity. Eugenicist ideas, which had somewhat gone out of fashion between the turn of the century and the late 1930s, were all of a sudden being taken seriously again. Meanwhile in 1938 both the Returned Services League and the Australian Natives Association argued strongly for a military focus for national fitness and a return to compulsory military training in schools.

The Federal Government response to this ferment was the establishment of a Commonwealth Council for National Fitness which began its work in January 1939. By the time war was declared in September 1939, State Councils for National Fitness had been established in New South Wales, Victoria (to which Dr Duras was appointed), Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania, with South Australia following suit one month later. Funds were made available to appoint national and state Organisers of National Fitness. Grants to establish lectureships in physical education were readily accepted by the University of Melbourne, which no longer needed to rely on the benevolence of the Carnegie Corporation to maintain Dr Duras, and the Universities of Queensland, Adelaide and Sydney, while

Tasmania and Western Australia accepted the grants as scholarships to send local students to courses in the other universities.

The State Councils were very quickly busy reviewing existing facilities and services, organising camps, volunteer training courses and flying squads of teachers to tour schools and offer instruction in physical education and sport. Dr Duras's membership from the late 1930s of the boards and councils of a range of organisations including the Victorian Association of Boys' Clubs, the Youth Hotels Association Committee, and the Victorian Physical Education Association, would have greatly assisted with the integration of this work across the State.

The National Fitness Act passed by Federal Parliament in 1941 merely confirmed developments in mass physical recreation that were by then well under way. At the second reading of the Bill in June of that year, Minister for Health Sir Frederick Stewart noted that although in war time fitness for survival was a prominent concern, he acknowledged the pre-war origins of the Act in his comment that 'we must not forget the ultimate goal of fitness is in order to enjoy life'.

A number of liberalising trends had already been underway in school physical education prior to Dr Duras's arrival in Australia, trends that were provided with additional momentum by the national fitness campaign. Between the first and second world wars, women such as Rosalie Virtue in Victoria and Ella Gormley in New South Wales worked hard to establish forms of physical training that involved less regimentation, especially for younger children and girls. In 1933 Virtue was emphatic that 'quick and informal methods of organization

should be employed. Drill has no place in the daily physical training lesson for school girls'. She was especially keen to utilise music to enhance the rhythmic qualities of movement, and she was a strong advocate of folk dancing as a key part of primary school physical education. Such was the popularity of folk dancing in primary schools across Australia that the State Councils for National Fitness began from the early 1940s to collect and print folk dances for use by teachers, and there were regular folk dancing radio broadcasts to schools from the late 1940s.

This sort of innovative work of Virtue in Victoria and female physical educators in the other states chipped away at the orthodoxies of drilling and exercising during the 1920s and 1930s. It is no coincidence given Dr Duras's membership of the Council for National Fitness in Victoria that late in 1939 the Council was asked to investigate the status and efficiency of physical education and to furnish recommendations concerning future practice. Following its study the investigating committee took the view that physical education was an essential part of general education, and emphasised a need to shift from a perspective of education *of* the physical to a perspective of education *through* the physical.

One of the clearest expressions of the new physical education that was in the making was provided by L.G. 'Huck' Hamilton in a series of articles that appeared in the 1941 edition of the Victorian Education Gazette and Teacher's Aid. Hamilton was at this time Assistant to Rosalie Virtue and later was to become Organiser of Physical Education in Victoria. He was in addition a member of Dr Duras's third cohort of students at the University of Melbourne. In one article titled 'Games Practice: its place and value in the school', Hamilton advocated the idea that games were the means by which *every* child could be given an interest in

physical activity, not just the socially privileged. He proposed that children should be taught to gain satisfaction from seeing their own improvement in performance and not necessarily from competing. He argued for a humanistic approach to physical education where 'it must not be thought that the object of games practice is to produce champions in sport ... There is a tendency in many large schools to concentrate on the instruction of the few already competent and gifted children allowing this limited number to represent the school in inter school competitive games ... One of the chief aims (should be) to ensure that each and every child is given an opportunity to learn games and to become to some degree skilled in them. In this way he is assured of a healthy physical exercise with a definite motivating interest'.

This rationale for a new physical education built on humanistic, child-centred principles that had games and sports at its core was expressed in some detail five years later in the publication of a new syllabus for Victorian schools, a text that was also widely used in other states. This textbook was to be known as 'the Grey Book' in contrast to the 1933 British Syllabus, 'the Green Book'. One of the purposes of the Grey Book was to break away from British influences in physical education by presenting material that was appropriate for Australian and Victorian schools. In the foreword to this new textbook, the Chief Medical Inspector of Schools, H.P. Kelly, contrasted the new physical education with the drilling and exercising form of physical training the Grey Book sought to displace arguing that 'formal exercises are artificial, unrelated to life situations, and generally lacking in interest'. Kelly went on to map out the key dimensions of this new definition of physical education in which enjoyment and enthusiasm are recognised as beneficial outcomes of participation in physical activity.

This new textbook and the liberalised notion of physical education it promoted formed the basis of the work of growing numbers of specialist physical educators after the war. In 1944, 24 women and 6 men formed the staff of the Physical Education Branch in Victoria. By 1946, these numbers had grown to 35 women and 25 men and by the end of the decade the staff comprised 30 women and 44 men. This emerging body of specialist teachers of physical education very quickly saw their main role as developers of the skills pupils would use to participate in the team games offered by schools. Within this view of their role, physical education began to be positioned towards the end of the 1940s as the 'foundation stone' for children's participation in sport, as the site in which the skills required for sports participation should be developed, and for the first time making an explicit connection between school physical education and lifelong participation in physical activity.

Who can do what to make this a defining time? The role of ACHPER and individual activism

One of the brochures advertising this conference asks the question of prospective delegates 'at a defining time.... What role will you play in shaping the future of Health & Physical Education – active or passive?'. On the face of it this question seems straightforward – will you get involved as a doer and make things happen, or will you sit back and let things happen to you? But as with many apparently straightforward questions, things are often more complex than this either/or choice suggests. In reality, what options do members of ACHPER and of the wider community of physical activity professionals have in order to make the implementation of the new curriculum a defining time for health and physical education?

The purpose of my historical example was to suggest that the period leading up to and following the passage of the National Fitness Act of 1941 was a defining time for physical education that had a profound impact for the 40 or 50 years that followed. What made this a defining time? I suggest there are at least four reasons. First, new liberal ideas about the purposes of national fitness were accepted by government and began to gain purchase among professionals and the general public, purposes that related to the quality of life rather than fitness for work, war or breeding a super race. Second, with these new ideas came a new sport-based form of school physical education that superseded a former drilling and exercising form. Third, there was an influx into the field of trained teachers and organisers, with Duras's biographer Gertrude Kentish recording that in 1962 the University of Melbourne course alone produced 88 new teachers. And fourth, as an outcome of the Act, physical education as a field and the education of physical education teachers was established in Australian universities.

And it is no coincidence that these events took place just as Fritz Duras arrived in Australia. As I hope my historical example showed, Dr Duras did none of this alone. Many other people were involved, some hotly contesting others' values and ideas about national fitness, and the national fitness campaign experienced setbacks as well as triumphs. There is no question that Dr Duras found himself in the right place at the right time for a man of his experience and abilities. So while he did not make the conditions into which he arrived, he made the best of them, working with other individuals and groups 'to sew together with many stiches a very large, elaborate, polychrome quilt'. Given the range of organisations he served, there is no question that Fritz Duras was an active contributor to change for the

better. But then his position afforded him access which would have been denied to others. And at the same time, Kentish records many tributes to Duras's diplomacy, his tact, his ability to win support through discussion, persuasion and compromise. And while the new physical education that was born during this era was undoubtedly a better experience for many more young people than the regime of drilling and exercising it replaced, many of the ideals that inspired it have not necessarily been implemented uniformly to benefit all young Australians of the several generations that followed this defining time, something I will return to towards the end of this lecture.

With the benefit of this lesson from history, what could be the opportunities for active participation in change that the new curriculum for Health and Physical Education might make possible, and how can an organisation such as ACHPER and its members contribute to change for the better, particularly towards the aspiration that all Australians value the physically active life?

The national council of the Australian Physical Education Association (APEA) voted at its annual general meeting in August 1970, held during the ICHPER-APEA International Congress in Sydney, to change its name, and after a number of iterations ACHPER was the outcome (Kirk and Macdonald, 1998). The APEA itself had been formed in 1954, with Fritz Duras as its inaugural president, to provide national coordination and representation to the various state Physical Education Associations. These, in turn, had been formed in the 1940s to represent the interests of the graduates of the new university programs of physical education teacher education. As we noted, these programs were funded through a national fitness initiative which was broadly conceived across the fields of physical education,

recreation and health. Since they were so few in number in the early days through the 1940s and 1950s, the physical educators produced by these programs worked in each of these fields, though they were first and foremost physical educators. So the motivation to change the APEA's name to ACHPER acknowledged a long term involvement of physical educators in these three fields.

The Martin Report of 1964 on Australian universities caused considerable anxiety for physical educators since it recommended the removal of all sub-degree programs from Australian universities and their banishment to colleges of teacher education (Kirk, 2000). Bert Willee, a colleague of Dr Duras at Melbourne and his successor as Director of the University of Melbourne program, responded to Martin that 'while it is true that the majority of physical education students become teachers, there are many who do not', and so for this reason it was essential that 'the training of physical educators remain in the universities, where they could be exposed to a range of fields of knowledge, rather than be transferred to teachers' colleges, designed for no other purpose', claimed Willee, 'than to train teachers'. At the same time, Willee's concept of a physical educator was rooted in the pre-1970s and pre-degree era. The consequences of the Martin Report were another defining time for the field of physical activity in higher education. ACHPER came into being just as the 'degree decades' of the 1970s and 1980s were beginning. An unforeseen consequence of the profound changes to the field wrought by this process was something for the most part unknown and unimaginable to men of Duras's and Willee's era: academicisation, specialisation, and fragmentation.

Writing in 1983 in a special issue of the *ACHPER National Journal*, Tom Thompson, for many years President of the Queensland Branch and one of two founding Vice-Presidents of the APEA in 1954, wrote of the organisation's need for 'unity in the face of diversity' (Kirk and Macdonald, 1998). His analysis of ACHPER's mission recognised that the field it served had changed since the name change in 1971. He believed that diversity of interests and expertise was important to a professional body such as ACHPER, since it signalled 'vigour and growth'. But he expressed concern that diversity could also become divisive and in the longer term lead to conflict and fragmentation. Unity was important, according to Thompson, because 'it gives strength to the organisation' in terms of its ability to 'speak from a position of prestige and authority on public issues'.

Managing the tension between unity and diversity continues to be a major task for an organisation such as ACHPER. As I wrote with my colleague Doune Macdonald in 1998, we remain today as we were then, a 'profession in process' (Kirk and Macdonald, 1998). One of the ways that unity can be achieved in the face of diversity is, I believe, to identify the touchstones, the shared interests, of the organisation, the things we have in common rather than the special interests that make us different. One such touchstone, I have already suggested, is facilitating all Australians to value to the physically active life.

At an organisational level, then, the identification of touchstones and securing the buy-in of all members is in my view an important action that could contribute to making this a defining time for health and physical education. One of ACHPER's strengths is that its members have expertise across the major physical cultural fields of sport, exercise and active leisure, within sites of pedagogical activity such as schools, after school programs,

sport clubs, exercise, adventure and dance settings, and across the age range, from early years to the elderly. Programs that promote valuing the physically active life may take different forms in each of these fields, settings and age groups, but unity is to be found in the pursuit of common goals. It is within this context of unity in diversity, with unity focused on ACHPER's touchstones, that issues of representation and advocacy on behalf of members, on the one hand, and services to members, on the other, can be best managed.

For individuals, my feeling is that the choice between taking an active or passive role, while serving as a helpful rallying cry, is somewhat misleading. In order for this to be a defining time for health and physical education in Australia, an activist role is the only choice that is tenable. Part of being an activist is to recognise the touchstones within organisations such as ACHPER, to understand what the common ground means for me as an individual and how my contribution makes a difference in terms, for example, of helping others come to value the physically active life. For individual activists, part of the process of recognising the common ground is also understanding the bigger picture, or where my specific expertise fits alongside others'.

Realising the legacy of Duras et al.: Five things the new curriculum must facilitate

As I near the conclusion of this lecture I want to argue that Fritz Duras's legacy and the legacy of that defining time of the late 1930s to the late 1940s has yet to be fully realised. I think for all sorts of reasons, some good and some bad, many beyond our control as a professional community, the new physical education that was being shaped by Duras and his peers such as Rosalie Virtue and his students such as Huck Hamilton, expressed so eloquently in the Victorian Grey Book of 1946, has not taken the shape they might have

hoped for (Kirk, 1998). Yes, there was a fundamental shift in the field of school physical education from drilling and exercising to a sport-based curriculum. But as I have argued in my 2010 book *Physical Education Futures*, the daily practice of physical education in many (though not all) schools is based in the teaching of sports-techniques for the most part. This form of physical education, innovative as it was in the first few decades following the end of the second world war, has rarely reached its full potential and as a result, both here in Australia and elsewhere in the world including the UK, physical education punches way below its weight in terms of assisting all young people to value the physically active life.

So what can this new curriculum do to bring us closer to realising the legacy of this earlier defining time? I suggest that for this document to be a catalyst in creating a new defining time for the physical education dimension of the field, and considering the body of research evidence that has accumulated in physical education and sport pedagogy for at least 50 years, it must facilitate several things.

First, it must assist teachers to be student-centred. Drawing on the activist research of scholars who have worked with girls in physical education such as Kim Oliver (eg. Oliver and Oesterreich, 2013) to be student-centred has at least four characteristics. It requires not just listening to student voices, but listening to respond, a preparedness to act on what we hear. Closely linked to this process of listening to respond is the disruption of traditional power relations and a willingness of adults to work *with* young people. A third characteristic is the investment of trust in young people, understanding that they have opinions, knowledge and experiences that matter. A fourth characteristic of student-centredness from this activist perspective is that it assists both teachers and young people to see beyond the obvious in

order to imagine new possibilities, essential to maintain relevance in response to the fast changing and increasingly interdependent worlds of digital technology and popular physical culture.

Second, the new curriculum is right to place an emphasis on primary schools. This is not to say that physical education in secondary schools is no longer required, but it is to note that for the reasons recently given serious recognition by a House of Commons Select Committee in the UK, age 12 is too late to be introducing young people to specialist teaching in physical education. This is particularly so for those young people who have limited access to junior sport experiences outside of school, where school is their first and sometimes only point of access into the physical culture of Australian society. We know from research by US scholars such as Jackie Goodway (Goodway et al., 2010) that delayed motor development among under 5s is most prevalent in poorer communities, and that these children, arguably the most in need, gain least from secondary school programs. And if all primary school children receive a high quality physical education then there are serious implications for change in secondary school programs.

Third, one of the unintended consequences of the new physical education as it took shape in the post-second world war years was that physical educators sought to achieve a range of educational benefits from a multi-activity, one size fits all, sport-technique based curriculum. I believe the recent development of a models-based approach to physical education acknowledges the wide range of legitimate educational benefits that can accrue from physical education, where the subject matter and student-centred teaching-learning strategies are tightly aligned with specific learning outcomes. A range of models already

exist, such as Sport Education, Games Sense, Personal and Social Responsibility and Cooperative Learning, or are under development, for example, Health-Based Physical Education, Physical Literacy for the Early Years, Outdoor Adventure Activities, and a model for working with Socially Vulnerable Youth. A models-based approach, I suggest, can assist us to better work towards young people valuing the physically active life and so it is important that the new curriculum can accommodate and indeed promote such an approach.

If we are serious about young people valuing the physically active life then a fourth factor is that physical education programs need to go beyond the school to reach into community contexts, and communities need to reach into schools. Recognition of this issue featured in some of the developments in England during the last decade in association with the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links strategy and I am aware that similar needs are perceived here in Australia. If valuing physical activity is something young people only do in school, particularly where there is little support for this in the home or local community environment, then it is unlikely to be sustainable beyond compulsory education.

Last and not least, we must continue to recognise that teachers are vital to successful implementation of this new curriculum. Clark in a book called *Thoughtful Teaching* wrote “Teachers are the human point of contact with students. All other influences on the quality of education are mediated by who the teacher is and what the teacher does.” (Clark, 1995, p. 3) How teachers are educated initially accounts for part of what they do and who they are. But this doesn’t account for the whole of what they do and who they are. We need to continue to recruit people who are able to inspire all young people, but particularly those

from underserved communities, to value the physically active life. Such teachers will be enthusiastic learners themselves, in a process of becoming better teachers. In terms of the issue of who we are as physical educators and this process of becoming, Fritz Duras said in his closing remarks at the end of the 1956 pre-Olympic International Congress

One question is usually asked when a Congress such as ours comes to an end, 'What did we do?' Today, let me ask a different question, more searching and perhaps more important 'What did we become?' Did we become more thoughtful? Did we become more aware of our problems, our tasks, our duties? Did we become more able to do justice to our profession? Did we become – and that perhaps is the deciding question – did we become more as human beings? (in Kentish, 1984, p.75)

Who teachers are and their on-going capability to become more as human beings is often overlooked or forgotten in the bureaucratic and managerialist regimes that recently have infected education systems around the globe. But for the new curriculum to contribute to a defining time for health and physical education we need teachers who have not lost sight of their qualities as the 'human point of contact with students'.

Conclusion

The people who knew Dr Fritz Duras personally such as his biographer Gertrude Kentish and the individuals who provided her with testimonies to him tell us that he was a remarkable man and a consummate physical educator. By remembering and honouring him in this lecture ACHPER helps us all to understand that anything we achieve now and in the future is

at least in part due to the fact that we are standing on the shoulders of giants such as Fritz Duras.

I believe this could indeed be a defining time for Australian health and physical education.

But a curriculum document, no matter how good, cannot create that defining time by itself.

What is needed is leadership, activism on everyone's part, alignment of our efforts, a shared aspiration, and an understanding that change for the better happens in increments as we sew together with many stitches the polychrome quilt that is the field of health and physical education. We must ask and ask again the pragmatic questions of this curriculum, 'can we make the situation for young people better than it is currently?', 'what would better be?' and 'how might we go about this task?', understanding that there is no nirvana at the end of the process but a need to continue to meet new challenges and contingencies on the road to assisting all young Australians to value the physically active life.

That, I believe, is the legacy of Dr Fritz Duras and his many colleagues and friends.

Understanding this legacy creates the possibility that this could be a defining time for health and physical education.

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