ENSINO E APRENDIZAGEM DOS JOGOS DESPORTIVOS

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Teaching Games in Physical Education: Towards a pedagogical model

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KEY-WORDS:
Physical education. Games.
Pedagogical model. Practice architecture.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to propose a pedagogical model for teaching games in school physical education as a solution to the original problem Bunker and Thorpe were seeking to solve, which I will argue remains current today. In pursuit of this purpose, I elaborate on the nature of the problem of games teaching as Bunker and Thorpe understood it, and thus the nature of the solution they offered in the form of Teaching Games for Understanding. Next, I spend time outlining the nature of pedagogical models and their key features. In the penultimate part of the paper, I make some proposals for what the 'practice architecture' of a pedagogical model for teaching games might look like, in terms of a Main Idea, Critical Elements and Learning Outcomes. Finally, drawing on an ongoing collaboration with colleagues in Spain, I outline briefly how we might measure and thus provide evidence of the effects on student learning of this approach to teaching games in physical education.

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Ensino dos jogos em Educação Física: Rumo ao modelo pedagógico

RESUMO

O propósito deste artigo é promover um modelo pedagógico para ensinar jogos em educação física escolar como uma solução para o problema original que Bunker e Thorpe visavam resolver, que argumentarei ser válido ainda hoje. Na busca deste propósito, elaborei sobre a natureza do problema do ensino de jogos como Bunker e Thorpe o entendiam, seguindo a natureza da solução que eles ofereceram na forma do Ensino dos Jogos para a Compreensão. Seguidamente, desenvolvi a natureza de modelos pedagógicos e suas características-chave. Na penúltima parte do artigo, elaboro propostas para um esboço duma 'arquitetura prática' dum modelo pedagógico para ensinar jogos, em termos duma Ideia Central, Elementos Críticos e Resultados de Aprendizagem. Finalmente, recorrendo a colaboração com colegas de Espanha, delineio brevemente como poderemos medir a, assim, providenciar evidência dos efeitos da aprendizagem dos alunos com esta proposta de ensino de jogos na educação física.

PALAVRAS CHAVE:
Educação física. Jogos. Modelo pedagógico. Arquitetura prática.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of games in physical education is in turmoil. There has been a proliferation of approaches since publication of the original Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model over 30 years ago [3]. Any newcomer to the field must be bewildered by the sheer number of variations on this original theme of TGfU and the detailed and sometimes heated debates among advocates for one version or another [eg. 13]. In a recent paper, Stolz and Pill [14] sought to cut through some of the confusion and controversy surrounding games teaching. In a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical studies, they conclude that there is much agreement among researchers concerning the need for TGfU, and that the differences authors often claim for their own favoured theoretical approach is a more a matter of nuance than substance. On the other hand, they claim that empirical studies reveal a range of often competing findings about the efficacy of these approaches to games teaching, to an extent that there is no secure basis on which to inform teacher practice.

Stolz and Pill [14] very helpfully contribute to making sense of the cacophony of voices surrounding teaching games, their conclusions contain the same ambivalences and slippages as the wider literature they analyse. What is missing from their and others' contributions to and accounts of the debate is an appreciation of the particular problem the originators of the TGfU model were seeking to solve. Even though Bunker and Thorpe were undoubtedly influenced by Alan Wade's and others' work in the 1950s and 1960s that took place mainly in sports coaching contexts, their focus was quite clear, specific and unique. It is no accident that the title of their original 1982 paper is 'A model for the teaching of games in secondary schools'. The problem was what they perceived to be unsatisfactory practice in the then current teaching of games, and their proposed model was intended as a solution to this problem. Before we go on to examine this problem in a little more detail, suffice it to say here that failure to recognise this point and its many implications is one of the main reasons why we are where we are with the debates around teaching games in physical education today. To those advocates of TGfU derivatives that seek to produce excellent games players in specific sports coaching contexts, such as Games Sense, Bunker and Thorpe were not, at least originally, ever concerned with sports coaching pedagogy. For those who claim that TGfU emerged without a substantial theoretical framework [eg. 13], the problem Bunker and Thorpe were seeking to resolve was practical and pedagogical, concerned with institutionalised school physical education.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a pedagogical model for teaching games in school physical education as a solution to the original problem Bunker and Thorpe were seeking to solve, which I will argue remains in play today. In pursuit of this purpose, in the next section of the paper I will elaborate on the nature of the problem of games teaching as I think Bunker and Thorpe understood it, and thus the nature of the solution they offered in

the form of TGfU. Following this, I outline very briefly the nature of pedagogical models and their key features. In the penultimate part of the paper, I will make some proposals for what the 'practice architecture' of a pedagogical model for teaching games might look like. Finally, drawing on an ongoing collaboration with colleagues in Spain, I will provide a sketch of how we might measure and thus provide evidence of the effects on student learning of this approach to teaching games in physical education.

THE PROBLEM OF GAMES TEACHING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND TGFU AS A SOLUTION

The problem of games teaching in the secondary school that Bunker and Thorpe were responding to was put simply by Rod Thorpe in the video made for Game Sense in 1997 [1]. Thorpe said that he often saw the layup shot in Basketball practiced in physical education lessons and performed effectively, but then never saw the shot being used in the game that followed. This is the nub of the problem, simply expressed, but its source is deeply rooted in the history of physical education in the UK and elsewhere, and in the nature of the school as an institution. We need to make a short journey back in time to explore this history in order to understand the scale of the problem the example of the layup shot in Basketball expresses. Bunker and Thorpe [3] in their original paper refer to the secondary school, and this is no accident. Why is this? Sport-based physical education was born in secondary schools in England following the end of WW2. The 1946 Education Act raised the school-leaving age to 15 and introduced mass secondary education. These policy initiatives provided the impetus for the development of the school curriculum and physical education emerged as a curriculum topic that was required for all students from the ages of 11-15 years of age. Because young people came to puberty during these years, the dominant and deeply gendered form of physical education at this time, based on gymnastics and movement, made single sex classes seem highly appropriate. Women had dominated physical education teaching as a profession until the 1940s in England, but these post-war developments required the training of a large number of male physical educators. The men preferred a sport-based form of their field in contrast to the female-dominated gymnastics past, and a massive reconfiguration and reconstruction of school physical education was underway. David Munrow [12] captured the immediate difficulty faced by this shift in focus to sport-based physical education for schools in his question of how a head-teacher was to schedule different games and sports that required different durations and different facilities, such as court games, field games and outdoor activities. Munrow recognised a crucial difficulty facing the new sport-based physical education if it was to be taken forward in forms that remained faithful to the practice of these sports outside of the school. This provided to be impossible, however, in the State-funded mass secondary schools at least. Instead of physical education lessons being timetabled in ways that suited the requirements of the activity – be it squash, soccer or canoeing – physical education was shoehorned into the existing academic timetable organised around periods of up to 50 minutes.

Rather than fight this somewhat obvious restriction on their developing sport-based subject, physical educators instead embraced it. This was in part due to their concerns about their status within the academic curriculum and their desire to be viewed 'just like any other subject'. And in part they had a long history of pedagogical work based on gymnastics that suited this institutional context perfectly. As I have argued at length elsewhere [eg. 6, 7] schools as institutions appeared in the Industrial Age of the late 19th century as State instruments of social regulation. The schools' institutional imperatives, coordinating time and space through the timetable and the classroom, were the generation of compliant and productive citizens and workers. Early forms of gymnastics-based physical education used command style teaching and prescribed activities performed in unison by whole classes to contribute to these institutional imperatives.

What this meant for games teaching in secondary schools in post WW2 England was that physical education was not so much sport-based as sports-technique based [7]. Given the constraints of the curriculum and other factors such as inevitable limits to the subject matter knowledge of teachers, and large classes of children with wide-ranging motivation and motor ability, lessons took the form of the practice of decontextualized sports techniques. The basketball layup shot was only a slightly more sophisticated form of these techniques, often practiced in unison. With the subject matter of sports and games as the 'organising centre' [11] of school programmes, the multi-activity curriculum became over time the dominant form of school physical education. This curriculum form promoted superficiality where, as Siedentop (in 7) noted, the same introductory lesson gets taught 'again, and again and again'.

This is the problem with games teaching that Bunker and Thorpe were seeking to revolve. Their solution, in the form of TGfU, implicitly accepted the nature of the school as an institution and its timetabling and curriculum organisational arrangements. TGfU-informed games teaching was intended to fit into the same spaces that sports-technique based physical education occupied. We might ask then, what kind of a solution to the problem of sports-technique based physical education *was* TGfU?

The TGfU model was not a prescription for how to teach games, and herein lay at least one of its shortcomings. The model was never intended as a guide to what teachers might do to help children learn to play games. It was instead a way of thinking about teaching and learning games, a reminder to teachers that games were exercises in tactical problem-solving as well as skilful performance, and that mere mastery of techniques by themselves could not guarantee that students would be good games players. Bunker and Thorpe with

Len Almond's facilitation developed principles for teacher practice informed by this way of thinking, such as the extensive use of modified games shaped by exaggeration and representation. But the TGfU model was never developed to such an extent that it could deal with the 'Iron Law' of curriculum innovation and change, 'that the innovative idea will always and inevitably be transformed in the process of implementation' [8]. It is for this reason that a pedagogical model is required, which I will come to in the next part of the paper.

My argument thus far is that much of the turmoil in the field of teaching games in school physical education stems from a lack of understanding of the problem Bunker and Thorpe perceived and sought to solve through TGfU. All of the elements for the development of a pedagogical model for teaching games in school physical education are, I would argue, contained within the original work of Bunker, Thorpe and Almond. What is required to move us beyond the current chaos in this field is the reorganisation of these elements in a way which more explicitly addresses the original problem TGfU was intended to solve, but also recognises the need to manage the tension between prescription and adaptation.

THE NATURE OF PEDAGOGICAL MODELS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Pedagogical models have their own distinctive 'practice architecture' [4]. There is according to Metzler [11], an overarching idea that captures the main focus of the model. In addition, a pedagogical model identifies distinctive student learning outcomes or aspirations and shows how these might be best achieved through their tight alignment with teaching strategies and curriculum or subject matter. The model becomes the 'organising centre' [11] for physical education programmes rather than the currently dominant multi-activity subject matter focus (eg. Games, Aquatics, Gymnastics, etc.).

Moreover, each pedagogical model is a *design specification* that can be used by teachers to create programmes for their schools that are suited to the specific circumstances of their local contexts. This is the crucially important feature that allows us to manage the tension between external (to the school) prescription and internal (within the school) adaptation if we are to address adequately the Iron Law of curriculum innovation. Each model, thus, prescribes some specific 'non-negotiable' features that make it distinctive. I prefer the term critical elements for these non-negotiable aspects of the model in contrast to Metzler's [11] 'teacher and student benchmarks'. Without these non-negotiable features it could be argued that the stated learning outcomes are less likely to be achieved. In its original form TGfU along with its many more recent variants lacks this practice architecture.

THE 'PRACTICE ARCHITECTURE' OF A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL FOR TEACHING GAMES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

A preliminary point we must make about the development of any pedagogical model is that the initial formulation is merely a prototype. That prototype must then be tested in school practice in order to confirm (or otherwise) the robustness of the main characteristics of the model's practice architecture. Moving beyond the prototype requires the co-construction of the model with both teachers and students.

The theory of practice architecture, originally derived from the work of Stephen Kemmis and colleagues, suggests that every practice enacted in classrooms is a result of semantic (e.g. language), social (e.g. power relations) and physical (e.g. materials) spaces [4]. The use of particular 'technical' language (e.g. The main idea), the requirement for specific social relations (e.g. Student-centredness) and the designation of particular physical spaces for teaching and learning (e.g. Playing fields) *taken together* make particular pedagogical models possible. Within this concept of practice architecture, and as we just noted, all pedagogical models contain three key features, a main idea, critical elements and learning outcomes or aspirations.

I propose the main idea for this pedagogical model for teaching games in schools is 'The production of thinking players'. This particular language of course is not new and features in the Game Sense approach. It does however have considerable support in my own early work on 'intelligent performance' in game[s] [5] and in more recent developments [eg.2]. I am also suggesting that the notion of a 'player' presupposes a set of physical competences for engaging in game play, and so there is no need to state explicitly 'the production of thinking and physically competent players'; these competences are implied, as will become clear in the statement of the main learning outcomes.

The critical elements, the non-negotiable aspects, of the model are: student-centred pedagogy, the use of modified games, and the setting of problems to be solved. Student-centredness has several dimensions, including the notion of readiness that is the first aspect of the TGfU model, and the authorizing of student voice that gives learners choices about what and how they learn together and individually. Modified games are already a key feature of TGfU. In this pedagogical model they are required to be present, but the form they take will be entirely up to teachers and students in each local context. Finally, and further extending the notions of student-centredness and game modification, the setting of problems to be solved by the students, appropriate to the game form, clearly highlights the 'thinking player'.

The learning outcomes for the model reflect both the critical elements and the forms of assessment (to be outlined briefly in the final section of this paper). These outcomes can be specific in three broad contexts, at an individual level, in a small group context and in relation to a whole (modified) game. An example of learning at an individual level would be making an appropriate choice to shoot, dribble or pass the ball in Basketball. An example of learning in a small group context would be support play or retaining possession of the ball. An example of learning in the whole game context would be changing roles from offence to defence when possession is turned over, or maintaining tempo appropriate to a good contest between well-matched teams. Learning outcomes are strongly context-bound. They reflect both the physical-perceptual and social-interactive dimensions of the situatedness of learning to play games [9].

ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING

The final feature of the pedagogical model is assessment of student learning. Assessment is essential if both teachers and students are to be able to account for progress of learning in the school physical education setting. This has however been a particularly fraught topic for researchers and practitioners of games. Early assessment techniques involved the use of paper and pencil tests of knowledge of game rules and standardised but decontextualised skill tests. While there have been advances on these early approaches using video capture of game play the issue of the unit of analysis has remained problematic.

Probably the best known and most widely used assessment tool, the Game Performance Assessment Instrument (GPAI), is able to measure only the individual level of learning [10]. Currently, work is progressing with colleagues Carmen Barquero and José Luis Arias Estero from the Universidad Católica de Murcia to develop a tool which takes the individual, small group and whole game as three nested units of analysis. The instrument is comprised of four categories of criteria for game assessment: Contextual Criteria, Individual Criteria, Small Group Criteria and Team Criteria. There are 26 criteria over all, six or seven in each category. The instrument is currently undergoing expert validation prior to fieldwork testing. Once it is ready, the aspiration is that it will be able to be adapted for use by researchers and practitioners to focus on the specific aspects of learning required in any given site and context.

CONCLUSION

My purpose in this paper is to propose the development of a pedagogical model for teaching games. The key feature of my argument is that this model must take into account the nature of the school as an institution, and physical education's part in it, in order to be feasible in this context. I argue that this was the problem Bunker and Thorpe originally attempted to solve, with TGfU providing only partial success.

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Pedagogia do Jogo:
O processo organizacional dos Jogos Esportivos Coletivos enquanto modelo metodológico para o ensino

PALAVRAS CHAVE:

Pedagogia do esporte. Jogos esportivos coletivos. Metodologia de ensino/treinamento.

RESUMO

A pedagogia do jogo parte do princípio que todo os jogos esportivos coletivos (JECs) são antes de tudo Jogo, e que mantêm um padrão de estruturas que interagem entre si, engendrando emergências, intensificando emoções, evidenciando, assim, suas características imanentes e irredutíveis. Assim, só podem ser compreendidos à luz do emergente paradigma ecológico, alicerçando-se na teoria sistêmica e no pensamento complexo. Com esta base teórica podemos compreender o processo organizacional sistêmico da família dos JECs, descrevendo seu princípio organizador, em meio à construção de um modelo metodológico para o ensino/treinamento de jogadores, da iniciação ao alto rendimento, que permita o desenvolvimento de ativos (valores), junto às competências essências, ao longo da vida.

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