

# A complete Student Sport Experience: Curriculum issues

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Sport has pervaded our culture, and is a valued leisure activity for many young people. Therefore, it is not surprising that a greater number of people experience sport during their youth than at any other stage of the life cycle.

They are encouraged to participate in sport by parents and peers but, because of the altered nature of the nuclear family many can no longer rely totally on traditional ties that support access to sport (Brettschneider, 1994).

For many youth, in particular those who are viewed as underserved, the school may offer the only opportunity to engage in sport as an active participant. Gilroy (1993) and others have argued this is desirable as teachers can provide sport in a caring and safe environment that is guarded from the perils of adult agendas. However, the pressure from such things as reduced budgets and transportation difficulties has prevented many schools from offering the range of sports and the number of teams to cater to the needs of all students.

In spite of the pressure, it is imperative that opportunities are found to allow young people continue experiencing sport.

## Sport in Education

There has been plenty of rhetoric about who controls sport within education, who delivers it, the traditions upon which it is based, its focus within this country and its affect on the young people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, however it has seldom been the subject of serious critique from educationists and academics who, for whatever reason, have been reluctant to

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evaluate how sport is projected to students in our schools.

The discussion that has occurred tends to be a dialectical relationship maneuvering between advocates claiming it deserves elevated status within the curriculum and opponents claiming that it already receives too much attention. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, as in other Western countries, sport remains outside the formal school curriculum and beyond the reach of many students (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Although the importance of sport to the culture of this country is accepted by many, the need to educate young New Zealanders about sport is seen as extraneous to the formal educational process. The existence of such a position prevents a considerable number of students from being participants, as for many school provides the best opportunity for them to experience all that is associated with being a sport participant.

The need for schools to act as purveyors of sport is housed within the tenets of the UNESCO International Charter which states:

*The role of the school is to ensure that opportunities are provided for children, regardless of their abilities, to participate in sport. It should offer opportunities in addition to the physical education programme. The school should also liaise with sports bodies*



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and individuals in the community to assist those students who wish to continue their participation in sport outside school hours, and for whom no voluntary coaches make themselves available. (UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport Article 1,1.1.,1978)

The evolution of sport within school would appear to have only observed this recommendation in part. A complete school sport education programme should really teach students how to compete, how to win and lose, how to understand the sport culture, how to prepare for participation and how to analyse sport in a variety of settings [(Murdoch, 1990). To learn about aspects of sport students need to be presented with opportunities that are available within a safe and controlled environment. The new *Health and Physical Education Curriculum* published this year includes Sport Studies as a means of addressing student needs. The challenge for educators is to change from the traditional delivery agent of co-curricular sport beyond the classroom which only satisfies the needs of some students. The exclusion model has meant physical education may be the best opportunity for some students to experience sport. Given that many physical education programmes are multiactivity, then this is an unlikely solution.

*“The multiactivity programme is supported because of its characteristics of diversity, novelty and interest.”*

### **The Multiactivity Programme**

The object of the multiactivity programme is to offer students a smorgasbord of activities (e.g.. hockey, softball, fitness) that are generally presented in a format whereby students receive several

lessons (e.g.. 4-6) in each activity. The assumption behind such a strategy is that students will remain interested and upon completing each ‘unit’ and they will develop a desire to pursue the activity outside the subject at school or community level. However, there is no evidence to support such an assumption. As Hoffman (1987) asserted, the effectiveness of the multiactivity programme can be disputed, as it provides “a broad range of skills at an introductory level in environments that promise little hope of success” (p.128).

The multiactivity programme is



*Team ‘warm-up’*

supported because of its characteristics of diversity, novelty and interest. It will often reveal teacher and student interests and reflect available resources and new activities. This form of programme dominates structures within intermediate and secondary schools within Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, a benefit of the multiactivity programme is that it is flexible and adaptable and hence an attraction for many teachers. Its retention is defended primarily because it allows students to have a variety of experiences. The variety would appear to be a selection of individual, team and recreational

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sports that are often repeated in a similar form from one year to the next.

Although many physical education programmes are dominated by short units of activities based around sporting experiences, the context within which they are delivered does not resemble a representation of sport. It is unclear what students actually learn about sport in many multiactivity programmes by merely pursuing sport (Evans, 1990). Some (e.g.. Siedentop, Mand & Taggart, 1986) argue that many see sport as a series of skill drills and activities culminating in a game played in a form that often fails to reinforce the acquisition of newly taught skills .

Critical of the multiactivity approach is Murdoch, (1990) who believes the role of physical education should be to present sport in such a way that it is a learning experience for students. The failure of teachers to follow such a strategy has seen the relationship between sport and physical education characterized by a lack of co-ordination between programmes at class, intraschool, interschool and community level (Evans, 1987).

The confusion between sport and physical education may be compounded by physical education teachers who often establish programmes that use sporting activities in a way that are divorced from their natural context. If sport is the real subject matter of much of what occurs in physical education it would be appropriate to offer it in a more befitting context that could educate students about sport. This would involve allowing students the opportunity to experience sport in the fullest sense of the term and be involved in such things as organized competition, managing and coaching roles as well as learning about the traditions and rituals of sport.

Although concern has been expressed about the gap that has developed between physical education and sport (Grant & Stothart, 1994) teachers have been reluctant to embrace sport in its fullest sense as a component of the physical education programme.



*In Sport Education everyone gets involved*



*Plotting strategy for the next big game*



*Plotting strategy for the next big game*



*An aspiring 'Touch' referee*

Such a stance has failed to provide students with the experiences that constitute a complete education in and about sport. While physical education programmes have well intended outcomes the reality is they do not promote successful experiences in sport for many students. This has seen the emergence of an alternative curriculum called the sport education model to promote sport to students in a more realistic and meaningful way.

*“Sport education provides a more concentrated and diverse examination of the sport culture than does the multiactivity programme.”*

### **The Sport Education Curriculum Model**

Within the sport education model (Siedentop, 1994) students are included in the design, monitoring and evaluation of selected sporting experiences. Through the nature of their participation in sport education students are able to achieve the objectives posited in the new *Health and Physical Education Curriculum..* In particular, this model allows the enhancement of their understanding and skills as well as personal qualities like self-esteem, cooperation and self-knowledge. The primary objective of sport education is to help students become:

**Competent:**

the acquisition of skills, executing strategies and becoming more knowledgeable games players.

**Literate:**

learn to understand and appreciate the value of roles, traditions and rituals of sport.

**Enthusiastic:**

learn to want to participate in sport develop tendencies to

preserve, protect and enhance the sport culture.

Sport education provides a more concentrated and diverse examination of the sport culture than does the multiactivity programme. This is possible through the principle characteristics of the sport education model which are:

1. Sport education uses longer seasons than traditional units used in physical education.
2. Students remain as members of teams throughout the season. Team selection and affiliation are critical aspects of the program.
3. The season includes practice sessions, pre-season games and a formal competition.
4. The season concludes with a suitable culminating event.
5. Records are kept and publicized, adding meaning to what takes place during the season.

The many roles that are required

*“Students are... encouraged to pursue greater responsibility for the operation of the model by their teacher who assumes a role more like a facilitator than teacher”*

to operate a sport season are filled by students. These might include selector, referee, coach, manager, umpire, statistician, first-aid person or a publicity officer. Students are, therefore, encouraged to pursue greater responsibility for the operation of the model by their teacher who assumes a role more like a facilitator than teacher. The level of intensity is therefore controlled by the students who share ownership for the way the model is implemented. In so doing students are able to determine the nature of their sport experiences.

The context of sport education is based on the allocation of teams



FOR LEADERSHIP/ACHIEVEMENT IN  
SPORTS EDUCATION

TEACHER

DATE

*Wilson Whineray*

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who participate in “friendly” playing conditions marked by games in small groups; modified rules and equipment; high opportunities for success and participation and a high profile allocation to “fairplay” which is incorporated into accountability and achievement systems. The sustained affiliation to season long teams is coupled with a festive atmosphere which is illustrated through notice boards, team names, awards, player portraits, pictures and newsletters.

The sport education model has been successfully included within physical education programmes at both the high school (Grant, 1992) and intermediate school (Pope & Grant, 1996) within this country. The curriculum initiatives implemented within this country have created considerable international interest. However, there are many physical education programmes where the multiactivity programme is still dominant. Siedentop (1992) reminds us, that we must think differently about physical education to make it more meaningful to students while at school. The challenge for teachers and educators is to seek and implement better approaches for implementing the aims and objectives of sport activities within the context of the new *Health and Physical Education Curriculum*.

## Conclusion

Education can play an important role in the transmission of this part

of our culture by creating opportunities for students to experience and understand what good sport is and how it can strengthen a culture. However, sport is becoming an increasingly complex part of society and can be difficult for many young people to fully understand. Consequently, the outcome is often a decision to withdraw from sport or to be excluded by the selective practices of those who are charged with or volunteer to promote sport. One of our challenges is to look to alternative ways to allow and encourage greater numbers of young people to both experience and form a relationship of sustained participation with sport.



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