Chapter 2
Valuing Learning in, through, and about Sport– Physical Education and the Development of Sport Literacy

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ABSTRACT

This chapter offers a clear and convincing argument for reconceptualising current approaches and dominant paradigms at play in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE). Throughout the study reported in this chapter, the author draws on his experience as an early career academic that came to PETE with 18 years of experience in teaching and developing Physical Education (PE) curricula in schools. This research is, therefore, an example of reflection in action requiring a reflexive standpoint acknowledging that he is included in the subject matter that the author was trying to understand. As he interrogated the autobiographical data and research literature, theoretical concepts emerged to inform his theorising and to expand his thinking about the practice of sport teaching in PE. The author confronts the models, metaphors, and images that had been part of his apprenticeship of observation and pre-service teacher training.

INTRODUCTION: AN APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

I grew up in a sporty family. Dad was a successful league footballer, accomplished squash player capable of matching the state grade players he hit with during his Monday and Friday evening games to keep fit, and a more than handy opening bowler and bat during his company's internal cricket matches. Mum was also a capable sportsperson. Like Dad, she was a squash player, engaging in mid-week ladies' competitions, playing once a week against my Aunty who was a club player, as well as playing mid-week ladies tennis. I grew up around football ovals, tennis courts and squash clubs. And back in the day before mobile gaming devices, to keep myself busy I picked up

a racquet or a ball and hit or kicked with anyone that would indulge me, or I hit or kicked against a bare wall engaging in an imaginary squash game against the great Australian squash player Geoff Hunt, or pretending to be my football hero Kevin McSporran from West Torrens.

With "sporty" parents, it was always going to be that I was encouraged by my parents to play sport. I enjoyed school PE and eventually, I represented the school in 1st XVIII football, 1st XI cricket, Open A Squash, Open A Tennis and athletics as well as playing all these sports in community club settings. By my final year of school I thought becoming a PE teacher would be "cool" and would enable me to share my interest and joy in sport with others. As it turns out, my "sporty" profile and interest is somewhat typical of those entering PETE courses (Valtonen, Kuusela, & Ruismäki, 2011). This profile of experience influences PETE candidates to think that a career in PE teaching involves teaching others to play games (Dewar & Lawson, 1984) and they therefore bring a custodial orientation that favourably directs them to follow teaching styles and programs that are similar to their school and community sport experience (Morgan & Hansen, 2008).

PE teachers are influenced throughout their careers by a range of factors, including an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) from their years of having been in PE lessons (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000) and prior experiences of home and family life, cultural and social practices. This forms their value orientation and these experiences have a distinct and traceable influence in shaping PE teachers' perspectives through their PETE and beyond (Crum, 1983). Sikes (1988) suggested that potential PE teachers have typically spent much time as members of sports teams in addition to their many years as students of PE.

My experience of PETE in the 1980's confirmed the primacy of games and sport teaching in PE. I did not think to question the "ideal" lesson and unit plans we were taught, which emphasised PE as sport-as-techniques (Kirk, 2010) (refer to

Figure 1) as it was consistent with my experience of community sport coaching and school PE. When I undertook my professional experience placements, the expectations of mentor teachers were consistent with the planning design and enactment of PE experienced at teachers college.

TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ARE INFLUENCED BY THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH THEY WORK

After completing my degree I moved to Western Australia to start my teaching career and it was then that I was exposed to ideas that had not been canvassed during my teacher training. My first Head of Department had completed his pre-service PETE in England and was a devotee of a game-based approach to sport teaching. There existed a contradiction between my linear practice-to-game PE teaching, predicated on an assumption that students needed to learn the specialised skills of the sport before playing the game, and the game-based PE teaching. The contradiction encouraged me to question the basis of what I taught and also the prescriptive "ideal" unit plans that were based on a "notion of progression as an additive process" (Kirk, 2010, p. 85), which had been instilled in me during my pre-service PETE.

According to Curtner-Smith (1999), many teachers adapt the curriculum to fit their beliefs about teaching. However, it is possible that influences impact at different times in a teacher's career, and it follows that the beliefs and curriculum value orientation of a teacher can change over time if the teacher is influenced by the contexts in which he or she works. While the "sporty" students in my classes appeared to thrive in the sport-as-techniques (Kirk, 2010) direct practice "skill and drill" structure I was reproducing, many students appeared to learn more about what they could not do, rather than what they could achieve. I began to search for alternative theories to inform my

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