Bridging the Gap—New Interpretations of Tactical Games

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More than a decade ago Tinning (1991) suggested that Performance Pedagogy dominated the discourse of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE). He suggested that performance pedagogy alone had limited use in addressing the changes necessary to educate in an ever-changing social world. He challenged PETE programmes to consider discourse from the critical paradigm and engage in a discourse of critical and postmodern pedagogy, with a view to utilise physical education programmes as a means of “deconstructing” the existing social inequities. Culpan & Bruce (2007) draw on the writings of Kirk & Tinning (1990); Apple (2003); Brookfield (1995); McLaren (2003) to define critical pedagogy as “understanding the relationship between power and knowledge. It is also about identifying inequalities and empowering individuals and groups to take social action to achieve change (p 5).” Tinning was writing from an academic yet provocative and challenging perspective.

A decade later Rossi (2000) suggests that “the growing call for physical educators to move beyond the bounds of performance has been a powerful discourse. However, it has been a discourse that has tended to be heavy on theory and light practical application (p 43).” The discourse has seen changes in thinking by some, including curriculum writers from both New Zealand and Australia. Rossi (2000) suggests “this is evident in the Queensland 1-10 Health and Physical Education curriculum and also in the New Zealand curriculum document” (p 43). He differs from Tinning (1991) in that he offers some practical “tools” for empowering students and teachers in a physical education medium. Teaching Games for Understanding, TGFU (Thorpe & Bunker, 1982) and the use of Mosston’s (1986) Guided Discovery and Divergent teaching and learning styles can address the issues raised by a socially critical pedagogy. He suggests that the “shift” in power allowing the student and teacher to share the teaching and learning responsibility indeed is using physical education as a socially critical and moral tool.

Similarly, Kirk (2006) talks of “a major concern of critical pedagogy is emancipation from unjust and inequitable practices, (p 256).” and in previous writing Kirk (1988) suggests that “a critical pedagogy concerned with ‘emancipation, empowerment, and a cultural critique are key features of an educational rationale for physical education [in Kirk (2006) p. 256].” Kirk (2006) suggests that sport, which has come under criticism (Penny & Chandler, 2000) within physical education curriculum, still has a major part to play in a critical pedagogy within physical education. He proposes that sport, properly conducted in a Sport Education Model (Seidentop, 1994), engages learner-players in a “process of emancipation (including inclusion and equity), empowerment, and critique as a constituent part of playing sport” (p 257). The suggestion being that sport in physical education programmes can successfully challenge the criticisms levelled at it, and in particular challenge the values demonstrated by the elite sport model, (e.g. drug use, cheating, hegemonic assumptions of masculinity, etc.). Similar to Rossi (2000), Kirk (2006) offers a practical application for implementation of a critical pedagogy in physical education, differing subtly in this instance in the form of Sport and the Sport Education Model (Seidentop, 1994).

This discourse is not unique to this part of the world. Penny & Chandler (2000) writing on the English and Welsh Physical Education Curriculum suggest that sport in its contemporary elite form may not have a place in future physical education curricula. It is suggested that the profession requires pedagogies other than the traditional performance pedagogy as suggested by Tinning (1991). Physical Education needs to “redefine itself” and “show a commitment to addressing social justice” (p. 76). Similar to Rossi (2000) and Kirk (2006) it is suggested that TGFU and the Sport Education model, as previous physical education initiatives, may have some use as a morally educative tool. But it is suggested that “although Sport Education has been valuable in extending student roles, we do not know enough about students views of these experiences and furthermore see the model as failing to adequately embrace a socially-critical agenda” (p 84).

Since Tinning’s (1991) thought provoking article, critical pedagogy in the New Zealand Physical Education Curriculum has become seriously evident. As Tinning (1991) suggested:

“the ideas we use and the ways in which we think about pedagogy are necessarily interrelated to our practice as teachers or teacher educators. Moreover, the way we think about physical education is, to some extent at least, influenced by the discourses used to describe it, and those who dominate the discourse have considerable influence on its practice” (p. 2).

Fortunately, those who “dominate the discourse” in New Zealand have had “considerable influence on its practice” (Tinning 1991, p. 2) and as stated in Culpan and Bruce (2007) “a socio-critical perspective was introduced into physical education for the first time through Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand curriculum [Ministry of Education, (1999)]. This is demonstrated clearly in the following curriculum statement:

“Students will develop the skills that will enable them to enhance their relationships with other people and they will participate in creating healthy communities by taking responsible and critical action [Ministry of Education (1999) p. 5]."
Whilst the New Zealand Health & Physical Education Curriculum Document is widely received and accepted, teachers and teacher educators are still "grappling" with practical ways of applying it. Recent literature, [Rossi (2000), Penny & Chandler (2000) and Kirk (2006)] suggests that previous physical education initiatives such as TGFU, the Sport Education Model and Mosston’s spectrum of teaching and learning can indeed be used as socially critical tools in a critical pedagogy within physical education. These initiatives have been around for well over a decade, but still the traditional model and its preoccupation with skill development dominates most physical education programmes. Kirk (2006) suggests that “this approach to teaching sport may have persisted in schools because many teachers lack the knowledge of specific sports and games (p.258).” This becomes a tremendous barrier for physical educators wishing to include such models in their praxis.

If the full benefits of a curriculum underpinned by a socially critical pedagogy are to be seen then greater exposure to these tools and increased knowledge of their application in a socially critical way becomes of paramount importance to Physical Educators and PETE programmes.

References


