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## On practising in physical education: outline for a pedagogical model

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### Abstract

**Background:** Models-based approaches to physical education have in recent years developed as a way for teachers and students to concentrate on a manageable number of learning objectives, and align pedagogical approaches with learning subject matter and context. This paper draws on Hannah Arendt's account of *vita activa* to map existing approaches to physical education as oriented towards: (a) health and exercise, (b) sport and games, and (c) experience and exploration.

**Purpose:** The aim of the paper is to outline a new pedagogical model for physical education: *a practising model*. We argue that the form of human activity related to practising is not well represented in existing orientations and models. To sustain this argument, we highlight the most central aspects of practising, and at the same time describe central features of the model.

**Relevance and implications:** The paper addresses pedagogical implications the practising model has for physical education teachers. Central learning outcomes and teaching strategies related to four essential and 'non-negotiable' features of the practising model are discussed. These strategies are: (1) acknowledging subjectivity and providing meaningful challenges, (2) focusing on content and the aims of practising, (3) specifying and negotiating standards of excellence and (4) providing adequate time to practising.

**Conclusion:** The practising model has the potential to inform new perspectives on pedagogical approaches, and renew and improve working methods and learning practices, in physical education.

**KEYWORDS:** Models-based practice; pedagogical model; practising; philosophy of physical education

## Introduction

The general purpose of this paper is to broaden the scope of pedagogical interventions in physical education. Specifically, our aim is to make a case for a new pedagogical model in physical education, a model which puts human practising in the foreground.

The logic behind a models-based approach is that through the use of different modules of work, each with their own distinct features and specific learning outcomes, PE can meet various objectives (Casey 2014). Dyson, Kulinna, and Metzler (2016) contend that models operate on two levels, the curricular level and the instructional level. At the curricular level, a models-approach ‘provides a program with its mission, primary content, identity, and infrastructure—all for the purpose of allowing more students to achieve its priority longterm learning outcomes’ (297). Instructional models, on the other hand, promote learning outcomes of a shorter duration with the intention of aligning ‘key instructional practices like class management, learning activities, social learning, pedagogical decisions, and assessment with specific unit and lesson objectives’ (297). When outlining curricular models, Dyson, Kulinna, and Metzler (2016) list no less than 12 models. They also note that this list is not exhaustive. Some of those models are also considered instructional models, meaning that one and the same model can be both curricular and instructional. Adding to this, there are also attempts at hybridization of models, for instance, Hastie and Buchanan’s (2000) combination of the *sport education* and *teaching personal and social responsibility* (TPSR) models.

Kirk and colleagues (Kirk 2013; Haerens et al. 2011) make a case for *pedagogical* models, an idea based on Jewett, Bain, and Ennis (1995) work with ‘curriculum models’ and Metzler’s (2011) work with ‘instructional models’. Kirk and colleagues contend that curricular models put too much emphasis on subject matter and instructional models ‘retain too much of a teacher focus’ (Haerens et al. 2011, 324). By using the term pedagogical, they seek to underscore the irreducible relationship between teaching, learning subject matter and context. Kirk (2013) suggests that:

A models-based approach to physical education would make use of a range of pedagogical models, each with its *unique and distinctive learning outcomes* and its *alignment of learning outcomes with teaching strategies and subject matter*, and each with its *non-negotiable features* in terms of what teachers and learners must do in order to faithfully implement the model. (979, emphasis added)

In some respects, pedagogical models are similar to academic sub-disciplines that fit together under an umbrella discipline. Like sub-disciplinary thinking, a models-based approach has several potential benefits. It can allow teachers and

students to concentrate on a manageable number of learning objectives and therefore reduce the risk of educational objectives becoming mixed up, unclear or ‘diluted’. Such an approach also encourages teachers to adopt a range of pedagogies and to tailor teaching methods to the content with which they are dealing. Using pedagogical models compels teachers and students to work for extended periods of time in an in-depth manner.

## **Mapping contemporary approaches and models**

To prepare the grounds for, and indicate the relevance of, a practising model for physical education, this section outlines key existing approaches to, and models for, physical education. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to provide an exhaustive review. Rather, we seek to clarify some tendencies that we see in the literature and in order to organize the presentation of these trends, we draw on Arendt’s (1958) account of *vita activa*.<sup>1</sup> Arendt distinguished between three forms of activity fundamental for the human condition: *labour*, *work* and *action*. This distinction is useful for our present purpose, as these forms of activity correspond with three dominating orientations towards physical education: (a) health and exercise, (b) sport and games and (c) experience and exploration.

### ***Labour, health and physical activity***

Arendt describes labour (*ponein*) as the activity of *animal laborans* to sustain and maintain the needs of biological life. The human condition of labour is life itself. This form of activity is forced upon us by vital necessities, for example, the needs of our physical body require monotonous performance of daily repeated chores to protect against natural processes such as atrophy.

The aim of *animal laborans* is to make life easier and longer. Labour involves effort, burden and toil (*pónos*), which can be related to exercise of the human body to prevent its decay or it can involve regimes of healthy lifestyles. These regimes may also relate to nutrition which supports and sustains human metabolism, fertility, reproduction or other ends related to our biological life. The toil and trouble of labour is the prerequisite for both natural pleasures of biological life and the liveliness and vitality of human life in general. Arendt even describes how pain and effort are what makes life felt. The reward for this is the joy and sheer bliss of being alive, along with the opportunity to rest with confidence that one has done his/her part in the natural cycle of life.

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1. Needless to say, our brief description of the three forms of activity in *vita activa* here does not do justice to Arendt’s rich treatise on the human condition and we do not include her political ambitions. Our aim is merely to provide an outline of the three forms of activity to serve our present purpose.

Labour has no beginning or end (except for death). The product of it is the biological adaptations related to the sustenance of the body, but this is not a fixed end state of vital health. It should rather be conceived of as a cycle of exhaustion and pleasurable regeneration: ‘happiness is a concomitant of the process itself, just as pleasure is a concomitant of the functioning of a healthy body’ (Arendt 1958, 108).

### ***Health- and exercise-oriented physical education***

In physical education, labour corresponds with health-oriented approaches that have a focus on exercise and physical activity. Tinning (2010, 169–183) has described a Health-Oriented Physical Education. The same acronym is used by Metzler et al. (2013), as they introduce a curriculum model for Health Optimizing Physical Education with the overarching goal ‘to help P–12 students acquire knowledge and skills for lifelong participation in physical activity for optimal health benefits’ (42). Another health-related model is Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK), which was specifically designed as a curricular model to promote health and physical activity and thus combat low levels of fitness in (American) children (McKenzie, Sallis, and Rosengard 2009). The content of the model is partly fitness-related activities such as aerobic dance and rope jumping, but the model also contains sport skills. Of importance is that the choice of activities is determined on the potential that an activity has to promote cardiovascular fitness. This means that low-active games are modified so they increase participants’ physical activity. The model is concerned with knowledge about the necessity of being physically active. The need to exercise our biological and physical body, and the many health benefits related to such exercise, is the key focus/content in SPARK, even to the extent that modifications of games and activity is undertaken with that purpose in mind.

### ***Work, sport and game playing***

Work (*poiesis*) is the activity of *homo faber*, the fabricator of the world. The main aim of work is to provide an unnatural and artificial world of things and constructs, distinctly different from our natural life. The human condition of work is worldliness. It consists in the reification, making and bringing forth of objects, instruments and equipment. These products are tangible results, durable and lasting, and the ideals of *homo faber* are permanence, stability and durability. In addition to this, work is prompted by utility; for the *homo faber*, ‘usefulness and utility are established as the ultimate standards for life and the world of men’ (Arendt 1958, 157).

Work has a definite beginning and a definite and predictable end. The process of making is also instrumental; it is determined by the categories of means and ends. Work is a means to produce an end product, which marks the

end of the process of making. It is guided by a model, something outside the fabricator which precedes the work process. A classic example of this is the relation between a master who educates an apprentice in his or her craft, and governs the process from being unskilled to skilled. The workmanship of the craftsman is often used to describe this form of activity, but it applies more generally to any process of bringing forth, for example, in the skilful work of artists, scientists, athletes and others.

### ***Sport and game-oriented physical education***

In physical education, this form of human activity corresponds with a focus on skilful participation in established sports and games, which is a key focus in, for example, physical-education-as-sport-techniques (Kirk 2010), Sport Education, Teaching Games for Understanding, Game Sense and Tactical Games (see Metzler 2011, for a review of these). The most prominent and perhaps most well researched of these is Sport Education, which is a model that aims to induct (and uphold) a sport culture as students learn skills and tactics of sports, as well as taking up various roles related to sporting culture (Siedentop, Hastie, and van der Mars 2011). Game playing and skilful participation in sports correspond with the human activity of work in the sense that both are activities that make up an artificial world. In Arendt's sense, the activities represent an element of 'worldliness', which is distinct from natural movement and activities for biological purposes.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Action, experience and bodily exploration***

The third form of activity is action (*praxis*), which is the free process in which we express ourselves to reveal our uniqueness and distinctness. The human condition of action is plurality. Through expression we communicate and distinguish ourselves and reveal our unique personal identity, that is, *who* we are and not *what* we are. This revelation of who we are is implicit in what we say and do, and may even remain hidden from oneself.

Through this revelatory quality, action also plays a central part in our intersubjective being with others. Action is not possible in isolation. It involves a human togetherness that precedes, for example, being for or against each other. Arendt (1958, 182–184) analyses this as the enactment of life stories that make up a web of human relationships and binds us together in an 'inter-est' or 'being in-between'. By establishing relationships action tends to force open limitations and cut across boundaries. This boundlessness of action is related to its inherent uncertainty and unpredictability of outcome.

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2. This analysis builds on the concepts of game playing in Suits (2005, 55), where it is defined as 'the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles', and Gadamer (2004, 108), where play is analysed as a matter of (self-)presentation, as a contrast to life function and biological purposes.

Actions are not fully predictable, but we can make promises to others. This relational aspect of action is also important when it comes to past actions. They are irreversible, that is, they cannot be undone or forgotten, but they can be forgiven by others.

To act means to take initiative and spontaneously begin new processes, and the purpose or aim of action is not to produce something. It does not pursue an end and the outcome of action is not a lasting state of being; it leaves no work behind, but exhausts its full meaning in its performance itself. Arendt (1958, 206) draws on Aristotle's notion of *energeia* to describe action as full actuality, where 'the end (telos) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself'. Hence, action is autotelic, is an end in itself.

### ***Experience and exploration-oriented physical education***

In physical education, this form of human activity corresponds with a focus on bodily experience, exploration, expression and interaction, which is a key focus in models such as *TPSR* (Hellison 2011), *Cooperative Learning* (Casey, Goodyear, and Dyson 2015; Dyson, Kulinna, and Metzler 2016) and *Movement literacy* (Standal 2015). In these approaches the focus is on experiential and social aspects of learning in and through movement. They tend to foster an understanding among students about who they are, rather than what they are. For instance, in *TPSR* responsibility for one's self is embedded into all activities. Also, social responsibility for others' rights and fostering feelings and caring for others (values that are connected to social well-being) must be embedded in the activities that are taught in PE. Similarly, in movement literacy the aim is not so much to develop skills (c.f. work), but to enable and empower students to experience and express their own ways of moving. This is akin to Arendt's understanding of action in the sense that the ultimate aim of movement literacy is for students to reveal who they are as moving human beings.

In order to highlight the differences between the various models for physical education, we can use the activity of running as an example. In health-oriented models that we have mapped as *labour* in Arendt's conceptualization, the teacher would focus on the intensity (anaerobic or aerobic exercise in sprint or long distance running), frequency and duration. In other words, it would be the physiological qualities of running that would be emphasized. In the models mapped as *work*, the teacher would focus on skilful ways of performing specific runs in particular sports and games, such as a run-up in high jump, a fast break in basketball or a hurdle race. These are conceptualized and standardized ways of running that lend themselves to quantifiable, measurable and comparable skills, allowing the students to compete with each other. Finally, in the models mapped as *action*, the teacher would emphasize qualities such as personal meaning and lived experience. The teacher would invite students to

explore a variety of qualitatively different ways of running. It would also be relevant to explore running identities, social settings for running, as well as personal running styles and preferences.

## **A practising model for physical education**

These three approaches and the related pedagogical models for physical education are each in their own way relevant and important. They may not, however, exhaust the forms of activity that physical education teachers and students can focus on and experience. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2012, 2013) has argued that Arendt's accounts of human activity are incapable of grasping essential aspects of a fourth form of human activity: practise. It is through the use of this concept that we wish to outline a need for an additional pedagogical model for physical education. The model builds on Aggerholm's (2015b, 2016) analyses of practise, which draws in particular on Sloterdijk's (2013) treatise on 'the practising life' ('das übende Leben') as well as Foucault's (1986, 1990, 2005) late works on 'techniques of the self' and 'care of the self'.

An initial clarification of practising concerns the language. The precise nouns and verbs that describe this form of activity in German (Übung/üben) and Scandinavian languages (øvelse/øve, øving/øve and övning/öva) easily lose their meaning when translated into the British English verb practise [with s] or the American English verb practice [with c], which is similar to the noun practice. Especially the latter easily confuses the human activity of *practising* (related to *askesis*) with taking part in a practice, for example, a community of practice (Wenger 1998), with particular logics of practice (Bourdieu 1990). In the following, we use the active present participle form, *practising*, in an attempt to avoid this sort of confusion.

### ***The human activity of practising***

Practising can initially be described as the form of activity in which we seek to improve our capabilities through repeated efforts. In this section, we want to clarify the most central aspects of practising, which we suggest to be agency, content, goal, verticality, effort, uncertainty, and repetition. Through this, we describe how it is both similar to and different from the three forms of human activity outlined above.

#### *Agency*

Practising involves agency because it is an active process in which the protagonist is, at least in a minimal sense, aware that he or she is practising. This phenomenon cannot be determined from a third person perspective and is not restricted to particular areas of activity. Rather, it depends on the



human attitude to the activity one is engaged in. Consequently, it cannot be understood without considering the experience and subjectivity of the practising person. Agency distinguishes practising from labour. It is grounded in human freedom and volition, and even if passions and desires for practising can be strong, one is not practising out of necessity (e.g. biological needs). This, at the same time, indicates a critical potential of practising as it can involve an active relation to social norms and discourses. It is, however, not to say that practising must involve reflection and mental representation, but to stress that practising is an active pursuit of qualitative self-transformation, the awareness of which can be both implicit and explicit.

### *Content*

Practising is always practising *of* something; it is not possible to imagine a process of practising without a content. But this form of activity does not prescribe any particular content. Though some activities are arguably more suitable to facilitate practising than others, the content of practising can relate to all parts of the content of physical education, for example practising a particular move or technique (doing a handstand), practising ways of engaging in a game (playing fair), practising to trust the receiver when performing a salto mortale, or practising ways of perceiving phenomena in nature (being receptive), for example.

### *Goal*

Practising is also a goal-directed activity; it is always a process of practising *towards* something, for example holding a handstand longer and in a more controlled way, or moving the hands while doing a handstand. The goal of practising is ambiguously positioned somewhere between being internal and external to the activity. Since a practising person is practising towards something, the activity is not completely autotelic like action (in Arendt's account), but since the goal of practising is intimately related to the process of practising (qualitative refinement of what is practised) it is also unlike work, which is concerned with the production of external and measurable products and/or results.<sup>3</sup> In this way the goal of practising is self-referential, since it involves a self-forming activity. This implies that the product of practising is not external to the process like the product of work. Neither is it an objective circumstance related to biological adaptations (e.g. strengthened muscles) like the product of labour. In contrast with these, the goal and product of practising concerns one's own comportment and being-in-the-world, which can be

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3. In this sense Hurka's (2007) analysis of game playing between the Aristotelian concepts of *energeia* (has its end internal to it) and *kinesis* (aimed at end-state separate from it) holds for practising as well. The goal is what makes the activity possible, but reaching the goal does not necessarily bring the activity to an end.

described as improved habits. These habits can relate to new developed movement capabilities, or they can relate to perception and involve, for example, a more refined receptiveness and openness. In outdoor education, this may be an important result of practising: to be open for, and able to dwell on, experiences in and with nature. Also, like the product of labour, the product of practising is processual rather than a permanent end product. Habits and capabilities that are not nurtured will deteriorate. At the same time, reaching the goal of practising is commonly accompanied by a sense of new room for improvement and refinement. A final aspect we want to highlight in relation to the goal of practising is that like work, the process of practising can be inspired and guided by the conduct of other persons, who can give direction to the process and serve as models to which the practising person(s) can aspire. It may involve masters or experts, but also other students with more experience and special capabilities, who can inspire and encourage imitation and mimicry. This makes practising closely related to, and a central part of, apprenticeship learning. The importance of relations to others is an aspect that practising shares with action, but it involves a different form of intersubjectivity with more ‘vertical relations’, which points to the next feature of practising.

### *Verticality*

A central aspect of practising is *verticality*. This describes how practising involves qualification, improvement and refinement of what is practised. In Sloterdijk’s (2013) account, there is a vertical tension inherent in all aspects of human existence: doings can be ranked as better or worse. Practising is a form of activity where one engages in this tension, senses a potential for qualitative improvements and strives towards being better at something. The production related to work is here substituted by perfection. Drawing on perfectionist ethics, in particular Stoic and Aristotelian virtue ethics, Sloterdijk (2013) describes how the movement towards perfection can be an embodied sense of what is good. In this perspective, practising doesn’t make perfect, as the saying goes, and perfection is not to be understood as an objective entity or end state. Rather, it describes how the practising human aspires towards excellence, the standards of which can be set both individually or in the socio-cultural context. This vertical tension also distinguishes it from action, where a person for example explores different ways of moving and experiences different meanings in movement. As suggested, there is a great variety of things that students can be practising to improve in physical education, for example more refined bodily expressions, openness and responsiveness in nature, respecting, trusting and including others, or performing certain skills, and the notion of practising does not prescribe any specific standard of excellence.

## *Effort*

Vertical tension is also associated with *effort*, which is an aspect that is shared with labour. But it has a different and more edifying meaning in the process of practising. Here effort is not something negative to be reduced or avoided. For the practising human, the sense of perfection continuously becomes a source for further efforts.<sup>4</sup> In line with Stoic philosophy as well as some branches of existential philosophy (e.g. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus), effort and struggle can be seen as meaningful and can provide a source of intense passion (see Aggerholm 2015a, 2015b, 2016). The aim of practising is not ease or absence of struggle. Rather, the efforts of overcoming challenges and striving for refinements comprise an intrinsic good of practising. This can describe cases where the intense process of practising new tricks in parkour, for instance, become the take-off for practising new and more challenging tricks (see Aggerholm and Larsen 2017). Such efforts are, like agency, far from always observable from a third person perspective; they describe the attitude a person engages in an activity with, as he or she, for example, spends time on practising a skateboard trick or pays special attention to difficult aspects of a swimming stroke.

## *Uncertainty*

The experience of effort is also related to *uncertainty* because practising occurs on the border between ‘I can’ and ‘I cannot’. It is directed at what is not-yet-possible and involves the possibility of failure and errors. This element of uncertainty can also be related to the existential risk of not reaching your goal. To be practising takes courage because it reveals a desire for improving your abilities. Hence, having practised something can put one in a vulnerable position.

## *Repetition*

Finally, the self-shaping activity of practising is rooted in what Sloterdijk (2013, 320–322) calls the anthropotechnic law, which describes the repercussions of all actions and movements on the actor. Repetition is thus a requirement for growth and development. But the repetition involved in practising is not perfunctory. It is not the relentless and compulsory repetition of labour. Neither is the process repeated for reasons outside itself, like the process of work. Practising comprises sequences of agentive and self-transformative repetitions for intrinsic reasons. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Kierkegaard,

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4. We want to highlight here the contrast with the understanding of effort in the ‘deliberate practice’ paradigm (see for example, Anders Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer 1993), where the experience of effort is described as a necessary evil, the awareness of which should be avoided through a motivational focus on external and instrumental aims (for example, achieving goals or improving skills).

Aggerholm (2015b, 170–196) has described this kind of practising repetition as a movement forward, at the service of what is not yet repeatable. The student practising a salto mortale engages in repetitions towards the completion of this move, rather than repetitions of the same, that is, the performance in earlier attempts. Practising repetition is consequently a source of difference and improvement, a path somewhere between habit and spontaneity because it is through repetition that we build up new and better habits.

## **Relevance and implications**

From these clarifications of the form of activity related to practising, with its most central aspects outlined above, we wish to propose what a practising model might entail by pointing out some general pedagogical implications. Following Kirk's suggestions referred to at the outset of this paper, this section will explicate central learning outcomes and teaching strategies. The section highlights four essential and 'non-negotiable' features of what we call the 'practising model': (1) acknowledging subjectivity and providing meaningful challenges, (2) focusing on content and the aims of practising, (3) specifying and negotiating standards of excellence, and (4) providing adequate time for practising.

### ***Acknowledging subjectivity and providing meaningful challenges***

The phenomenon of practising first of all implies that teachers must be attentive to the subjectivity of the pupils in physical education. It is not enough that students are physically active and exercise their biological bodies. Neither is practising compatible with teaching based on understandings of learning as conditioning or socialization. If physical education teachers aim to stimulate and facilitate the process of practising, then they must be attentive to the meaning of activities and find ways to help students become interested in practising.

The phenomenon of practising thereby draws attention to a fundamental problem of pedagogy originally formulated by Kant (2007, 447) and often referred to as 'the pedagogical paradox': how can one intervene to cultivate another person's capacity to use his/her freedom? This is not an easy pedagogical task, but the ambition can be informed by indirect and Socratic pedagogical methods (Sæverot 2013). In general terms, it describes an approach where no specific instructions and explanations are given. Rather the content of movement activities is presented with the aim of triggering a desire and passion in the students to practise and refine what they do. It can also be inspired by the existential and hermeneutic pedagogy developed by Bollnow (1959, 1987). In his view, education is an effortful and discontinuous progression, where challenges and resistance are important sources for development.

Physical education might be a particularly suitable venue for this kind of learning process. After all, a significant part of activities in this domain/subject concern bodily problem-solving and overcoming obstacles in a broad sense (c.f. Suits' [2005] account of game playing as overcoming unnecessary obstacles). Here students get to experience the value of making an effort as they are rewarded in a direct and corporeal way. Making an effort to ignite alterations, for example, to learn a new trick in parkour or on the skateboard, can open up a whole new field of possible moves that can provide a new qualified stance, and enrich the students' experiences with the activities.

Still, how can teachers help students make an effort by providing meaningful content? There can of course not be one 'magic recipe' for this. To accomplish such an ambition teachers must seek to provide meaningful and well-adapted challenges, so all students have opportunities to work in their space between 'I can' and 'I cannot'. Physical education teachers should aim to enact an openness for the presence of uncertainty in classes, and make challenges appropriate and within reach for the students, if they are to experience a 'sweet tension' of uncertainty of the outcome (c.f. Kretchmar 1975). Differentiation is thus a central feature of the model.

### ***Focusing on content and the aims of practising***

Since the process of practising has content (it is always practising *of* something) and at the same time describes a process of qualitative self-transformation, a pedagogical focus on practising can inform a position between material and formal theories of education (Klafki 2000, 2001). Material approaches focus on an objective and general content that must be learned. In physical education, this could be specific skills or knowledge about specific games. Formal theories on the other hand focus on the development of the individual subject. In physical education, this could be the development of a person's strength, resilience or ability to cope with complex game situations. These two educational aims are ideally merged in the process of practising where students develop their capabilities (the formal side) as they are practising something (the material side) within an area of activity.

Practising can thus be seen as a corrective to approaches that neglect the content of learning, because practising is indeed meaningless if considered detached from what is practised. Although corporeal experiences with practising may inspire ways of practising in other areas and school subjects, one cannot be 'practising to practise'. This point can reveal how practising is a less ambiguous concept than learning, which is today often described as an end in itself, as indicated by the popular term 'learning to learn'. In the same way, the practising model can mark a contrast to pedagogical aims related to metacognition, which has also found its way into physical education (see e.g.

Chatzipanteli et al. 2016). A focus on practising implies that teachers pay attention to the content and what students do, rather than focusing on reflective processes detached from their doings. This is not to say that reflection cannot play a constructive role in the process of practising. Teachers can help students reflect on the felt difficulties of experience and guide their process of practising by providing constructive feedback. But reflection must be closely related to what is practised.

Though the practising model underscores the role of content, it does not prescribe a particular content. Consequently, it can form part of any national curriculum. In Sweden, for example, a central purpose of physical education is to help students develop all-round movement capability. The curriculum documents say little about *the kinds of* movements the students should be practising and teachers and students have room for negotiating and deliberating over what to be practising. At the same time, the goal-directed dimension of practising implies that teacher and students need to be attentive to the aims of practising. Teachers should engage in dialogue with students on an individual level to clarify meaningful aims. This makes practising different from exploring various forms of movement or exercising the physical body with no qualitative purpose. The goals that practising is directed towards do not, however, need to be objective aims such as the accomplishment of a specific time or distance or the performance of a technique. It can be more or less subtle qualitative aspects that can both relate to action and perception, as well as both personal and cultural knowledge. Working with aims related to trust, teamwork, as well as acceptable or appropriate ways of enacting fair play values of particular games, could be examples of this. This would imply an appreciation of a broader range of virtues that are part of physical education, which connects to the question of standards of excellence in this context.

### ***Specifying and negotiating standards of excellence***

In physical education, the process of practising has to do with becoming better at what one is practising and encompass better and more refined ways of acting or perceiving. Since all pedagogical work is normative, it is important for teachers to determine and explicate the criteria for what counts as better or worse in physical education, even if this is often a delicate issue. The vertical dimension can be analysed through MacIntyre's (2007) notion of standards of excellence, which Kirk (2010) has brought into discussions on physical education to describe the abilities and actions that are valued in the school subject. These vary over time and as outlined by Kirk (2010, 111–114) it can be challenging to find agreement on what exactly they entail. A number of scholars have argued that performances in typically masculine sports and games have traditionally been accorded high value (Tinning 2010) and have tended to constitute ability in physical education (Annerstedt 2008; Evans 2004). In contrast with

such measures, the phenomenon of practising invites for standards of excellence from a greater range of physical cultures than those oriented towards strength, speed and comparing skills as we see in sport. It also invites, and can help explicate, more balanced and qualitative approaches than medically informed campaigns for more physical activity.

In our view, the standards of excellence should not be too general or universal. They often emerge as general norms and values, but the qualities that constitute excellence can be discovered, negotiated and determined within the social context of physical education classes. Students should agree on, for example, the kinds of behaviours that constitute excellence in the module. Also, to ignite a sense of attraction that can give energy to the process of practising, students should be allowed to establish their own relation to those excellences and be able to determine the meaning of excellence individually.

This subjective take on the standards of excellence and the fact that the product of practising is, like that of action, not tangible and objectively measurable, can pose a problem for physical education teachers when it comes to assessment in a school context. Drawing on Elliot Eisner's distinctions between different educational objectives, *behavioural*, *problem-solving* and *expressive*, Prøitz (2015) shows how these three forms of objectives must be pursued with different forms of assessment. Given that practising cannot be understood as a measurable behaviour (i.e. behavioural learning outcome), we would indicate that the learning outcome is more akin to problem-solving and expressive. Indeed, as Prøitz points out, we might have to disconnect the relationship between preconceived learning objectives and observable results. Instead, assessment should be more process-oriented. In alignment with this, a pedagogical focus on practising implies that more emphasis is given to formative assessment that supports the students' process of practising rather than summative assessment of learning as a product.

### ***Providing adequate time for practising***

A final feature of the practising model concerns the temporal aspect. Since practising involves repetition, it is important that teachers provide students with adequate time for practising. Unlike Sport Education where the duration of the unit can be modelled on sporting practices outside of PE, the practising model has no such template. Indeed, how much time to spend practising is an open question the answer to which depends on the content one is practising and the transformation one seeks to undergo. At the same time, if practising should involve repetitions and lead to personal change, then longer periods of time than are often spent on teaching units in multi-activity programs are necessary. It would consequently make sense for teachers to negotiate the length of practising modules with class members individually with reference to

students' aims. Building up good habits takes time, and to become persistent and patient, for example, one needs to persist and be patient. As Kretchmar (2006) takes pains to emphasize, this is also how students become able to grow playgrounds. Without adequate time, 'much of the good stuff of movement remains hidden [because] these achievements take commitment, time, effort, and persistence' (349). Our practising model can thus inform an approach to teaching in physical education that facilitates 'deep learning' through bodily refinements, which can help physical educators avoid teaching content that is 'a mile wide and an inch deep' (Kirk 2010, 7).

## **Concluding remarks**

This paper has proposed a new pedagogical model for physical education: a practising model. We identified three orientations to map existing approaches to, and models for, physical education: (a) health and exercise, (b) sport and games, and (c) experience and exploration. On this basis, we argued that the form of human activity related to practising is not well represented in the existing orientations and models. To outline central features of the model we described the most central aspects of practising to be agency, content, goal, verticality, effort, uncertainty and repetition. Acknowledging these dimensions of human activity has, we argued, pedagogical relevance and implications for physical education teachers. To expound these implications, we discussed central learning outcomes and teaching strategies related to the model, and we pinpointed four essential and 'non-negotiable' features of the practising model. These are: (1) acknowledging subjectivity and providing meaningful challenges, (2) focusing on content and aims of practising, (3) specifying and negotiating standards of excellence, and (4) providing adequate time for practising.

We believe that the practising model, as outlined in this paper, has potential to inform new perspectives on pedagogical approaches, and renew and improve working methods and learning practices, in physical education. In a separate paper, we outline how the model related to movement capability could be enacted in physical education (Aggerholm, Standal, Barker and Larsson 2017). Still, we recognize that there is more 'work to be done' when it comes to practical and detailed considerations of ways in which the practising model could be applied in practice. This work could, for example, examine how teachers in the context of physical education can acknowledge students' subjectivities and provide meaningful challenges, and how standards of excellence can be specified and negotiated in educational settings. If practising is to inform new approaches in physical education there is a need to go beyond general discussion and try it out, to see if it actually has the capacity to renew and revitalize physical education practices.



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