

Sport education: fit for a purpose

Introduction

Sport is a major social phenomenon and transcends ethnic and geographical boundaries (Hastie and Buchanan, 2000). There has been an increase in research focusing on sport education as it enables instructions involving experiential and real-life learning methods (Jones *et al.*, 2017). This is due to there being limited research in the past in linking sport education to other education disciplines such as entrepreneurship education. Siedentop (2002, p. 410) states in sport education “the sports are modified to be appropriate for the skill levels and tactical competence of the students”. Sport education involves curriculum that incorporates authentic teaching methods about a physical or mental activity. The main feature of sport education is that it incorporates the cultural and societal context endemic in a sport context. This is important in appreciating the different ways sport is perceived in the community and the challenges of teaching sport. The aim of this paper is to review and suggest directions for sport education research.

The main goals of sport education are to instil enthusiasm, competency and literacy in students (Siedentop, 1998). Sport education was introduced as a way to change the traditional physical education program, which meant with the increase in educational technologies in the use of online and multimedia in sport students. More emphasis is now placed on student learning that takes a more individual perspective rather than the rote learning of the past (Ratten, 2017). Sport education promotes interpersonal development through encouraging social and team learning methods (Wallhead and O’Sullivan, 2005). The emphasis in sport education is to utilize cooperation amongst a set of individuals to instil a sense of social membership based on trust. This means that the core difference between physical and sport education is in the contextualization of the learning and teaching method (Siedentop, 1987). The reason for the shift from physical to sport education is due to in today’s society, the increase in adventure and leisure sports, has meant that there is a greater need to focus on sport education as a way to connect to the actual business of sport (Ratten, 2016). This allows for sport to be taught in a more progressive and meaningful way that captures the reality of how sport is conducted in the society.

Hastie and Buchanan (2000, p. 25) state “physical education, a vehicle for teaching children and inducting them into the sport culture, has rarely provided programs in which an authentic sport experience is presented to students”. Sport education tries to mimic the sport context by providing a more real-life teaching method. Dyson *et al.* (2004, p. 229) state “sport education is an institutional model which links the sport taught in physical education to the wider sporting culture”. The goal of sport education is to provide a meaningful learning environment that connects to the industry. Sport is practiced in different ways so it is important that education represents an authentic experience. This involves having purposeful tasks that engage students in a learning environment that is reflective of the real life.

Siedentop suggested that the main components of the sport education model are: seasons, affiliation, formal competition, record keeping, festivity and culminating events. Seasons refers to the concept of sport education focussing on a topic in-depth over a long time period. This enables the topic to be introduced then delved into allowing a more comprehensive understanding of its importance to sport. Affiliation refers to students becoming part of teams that enable social learning to take place. This is important as education about sport involves practicing certain techniques that require team participation. Competition refers to having



games in the sport curriculum that enable students to learn better. This sense of competition in sport education enables people to rate themselves compared to other students in terms of their learning ability. Record keeping means that there should be assessment that incorporates feedback to help students learn better. There needs to be a set of learning standards that enable students to be motivated knowledge recipients. Festivity involves celebrating learning successes through acknowledgment of the hard work involved. This can include awards ceremonies or certificates that mark events in the sport educational experience of students. Culminating events involve the end periods of the learning that occur when a certain capacity has been reached. These culminating events are important ways to recognize the attainment of certain learning goals or standards.

Siedentop (1998) suggests that the way sport education differs from institutionalized sport is via participation requirements, developmentally appropriate competition and diverse roles. Participation requirements mean that all students are required to be involved in the learning experience. This means dissemination of knowledge occurs via the classroom, which can occur online, indoors or in an outdoors setting. Developmentally appropriate competition means learning games are matched to the intellectual level of students. This means emphasizing ethical forms of competition that distinguishes students based on aptitude. Diverse roles mean teaching students different practices from the coach, athlete and fan perspectives. There are also other roles or stakeholder views that students need to consider that take into account amateur, professional and social forms of sport. This is important given the differences in private vs public forms of sport organizations.

Hastie (1998) suggests the main benefits of sport education involve an investment, learning and opportunities. Investment involves spending time acquiring knowledge about sport that will benefit them in the future. The key feature of investment is the enjoyment students receive about learning new knowledge about sport. Learning involves developing skills about sport, which includes strategies about how to perform in a sports context. Leadership is part of the learning experience as it involves students engaging in a new activity. Opportunities involve new ways of doing things from taking different perspectives into account.

Dyson *et al.* (2004) suggest that the pedagogical implications of sport education are facilitating learning, active engagement, group activity, challenging tasks and accountability. Facilitated learning involves teachers setting tasks but students completing them at their own pace. This helps students learning about issues in sport with the help of feedback from teachers. Active engagement refers to students taking an active role in the learning process. This is important in managing workloads in a way that helps students be more responsible. Group activity involves students playing games so they learn about communication, decision making and strategy.

As sport involves group work, it is a way students can practice negotiation and conflict management. Challenging tasks involves students doing activities that are hard and beyond their current capabilities. This helps them to utilize different skills that can contribute to knowledge development. Accountability involves assessing students at each stage of the learning process. This is essential for reflecting on topics taught and seeing how they align with the overall curriculum.

Overview of articles in the special issue

The first article titled “The flipped university: exploring student progression in football coaching and development” by Robert Griffiths, Jay Probert and Brendan Cropley focusses on how the nature of education in a sport context is changing. The paper discusses how there is more emphasis on interactive learning with students taking a more engaged role in the process. The flipped university is especially relevant to sport studies as they are usually more practical than other types of disciplines. The second paper titled “Sports university education and

entrepreneurial intentions: a comparison between Spain and Lithuania” by Maria Gonzalez-Serrano, Irena Valantine, Josep Cresp Hervas, Carlos Perez-Campos and Ferran Calabuig Moreno focusses on the issue of whether sport students are more entrepreneurial than other types of students. The paper focusses on a cross-cultural comparison of sport students in two European countries. This enables a better understanding of the internationalization of the sport education curriculum. The third paper titled “The ability to get a job’: Student understandings and definitions of employability in a marine sport science context” by Emily Beaumont and Sharon Gedye discusses the importance of vocational training for sport students. The paper discusses how sport students are focussing on subject areas that increase their employability in the marketplace. This is important in helping educational providers integrate more practical courses into sport studies. The fourth paper titled “Flipped learning and formative evaluation in higher education” by Jose Alvarez-Garcia, Fernando Otero-Saborido, Antonio Sanchez-Oliver and Moses Grimaldi-Puyana discusses the role of emerging learning approaches in a sport context. This is important in developing the field of sport education to take a more interdisciplinary approach. Recently more emphasis has been placed on entrepreneurship education in sport and this paper focusses on innovative teaching methods. The fifth paper titled “Motives and constraints of participants in running events” by Koronios Konstantinos, Marina Psiloutsikou and Athanasios Kriemadis examines the training approaches of professional sports people. More athletes are focussing on education and training to increase their performance outcomes. This paper enables a more holistic understanding about the role of participants in sport events in terms of training initiatives. The sixth paper titled “Sport education: towards an entrepreneurial learning approach” by Vanessa Ratten and Paul Jones focusses on integrating sport education into entrepreneurship studies. This enables more sport courses to utilize entrepreneurship subjects in their curriculum. As there has been a growth in entrepreneurship education courses worldwide there is likely to be more emphasis in sport education also on education. The seventh paper titled “Mind the gap: an auto-ethnographical analysis of the distance between sport management education and the sports fitness industry” by Steve Raven discusses the role of sport professionals in the education experience. The paper highlights how there needs to be more usage of sport practitioners in subjects in order to enable more practical training. This is important in fostering a more inclusive approach that takes into account emerging sport practices. The eighth paper titled “Why talented athletes drop out from sport? The Portuguese and Czech case” by Teresa Silva Dias, Katerina Novotna, Helder Oliveira, Carlos Azevedo, Nuno Corte Real, Pavel Slepicka and Antonio Fonseca focusses on the need for sport education to take a more entrepreneurial learning approach. The paper discusses the different approaches in two European countries in terms of sport pedagogy. This helps to understand the changing nature of sport studies in the international marketplace. The ninth paper titled “Sport events at the community level: a pedagogical tool to improve skills for students and teachers” by Dina Miragaia, Carla Daniela Moreira da Costa and Vanessa Ratten focusses on the linkage between sport studies and community sport events. This is helpful in bringing a societal approach into sport studies. As sport is a popular leisure activity, it can help sport educators to utilize community events in terms of training students for their future careers. The tenth paper titled “A new perspective: consumer values and the consumption of physical activity” by Nicola Williams-Burnett and Paula Kearns focusses on sport marketing from an educational perspective. This is useful in bridging the gap between sport education and practical settings. There is increased interest in co-creation in sport studies that is integrating the study of consumer behavior.

A research agenda

The papers in this special issue show that there are new and innovative ways of understanding sport education. Due to the increased interest in sport it is important to

highlight future research issues about educational matters. More interdisciplinary research is needed on sport education to link it to emerging areas such as entrepreneurship and innovation. This will enable different theoretical frameworks such as entrepreneurial learning to be utilized in a sport context.

We hope to stimulate further awareness and dialogue in sport education policy that will support future research. Education about sport is growing as more people are interested in the fitness and health areas for career reasons. The trend towards more awareness of the job prospects from sport education are predicted to continue. This trend matters as educators will need to keep up to date and current with market developments. Regardless of the economic impact of sport, the business activity at the social level for sport can be significant. To continue creating opportunities for all members of society to be involved in sport more emphasis on education initiatives are needed. This will result in the establishment of better pedagogical practices around sport education.

More research on this academically and practically important topic is needed to advance the field of sport education. Researchers need to take a more interdisciplinary approach to sport education. In particular, alternative theoretical perspectives including entrepreneurial learning need to be applied more to sport education. A key area of study needed might be the linkages of sport education to other emerging disciplines including sport entrepreneurship and sport for development. Possible topics need to focus on the public/private partnerships endemic in sport education. This will enable new research questions to be asked that allow a more deeper understanding of the antecedents and motivations for sport education. Potential research questions are how are innovative educational practices increasing the outcomes of sport education? And what are the outcomes of taking an interdisciplinary teaching model to sport education? The development of new theoretical and empirical approaches to sport education will influence the direction of sport education policies.

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Further reading

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