

Moving and Learning in Physical Education: An Interdisciplinary Approach



What We Teach Is as Important as How We Teach It

PHILLIP WARD

*Does the social environment support instructional engagement?
Will the lesson content lead to the desired outcomes?*

When one observes the video there are certainly issues here that one can point to as problematic. These issues include a lack of accurate demonstrations, the absence of frequent feedback, wait time in lines, low time on task, minimal levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, and a high number of unsuccessful performances by students relative to the stated task. These are certainly important issues, but all of these behaviors can be, and in fact are, addressed quite successfully in teacher education programs. As new teachers gain experience in the field, many of these teaching skills will improve. More important, at least in my view, is that improving these pedagogical skills does not contribute to a literate, competent, sportsperson who could play this activity competently at a family picnic or at a park and have an appreciation of this activity both in terms of its place in culture and its characteristics as a sport.

I agree with my colleagues about the pros and cons of football as the chosen content both in terms of gender and culture. I consider this issue an important piece of the analysis here. That being said, I am left to examine the way in which football has been taught. My primary concerns focus on representation of the content, or the manner in which football is presented to these students, both in terms of how it is structured as a set of experiences (the social activities that support the instructional goals of the lesson) and of the actual tasks that students learn.

Social Environment

What I see in the video is social engagement that often runs counter to the instructional activities in the lesson, which is not particularly motivational. The video gives little evidence that this lesson was constructed in a manner that took into account what we know about secondary school students. Secondary school students value choice and responsibility and have a need for affiliation as well as for personal identity. What is important here is to create a social environment that supports instructional engagement. The social environment will support the instructional goals of the lesson better when there is cooperation among students in small teams. To achieve this, the teacher could adapt the environment to include sport education (Siedentop, Hastie, & van der Mars,



Trotting out short distances at half speed, the preservice teacher gave brief demonstrations of the pass patterns

2004) or cooperative learning. In sport education, lessons are adapted so that (a) students are placed into teams, (b) the teams participate in a season of the sport with a culminating activity, and (c) during this time students have opportunities to participate in different roles, such as coach, captain, or referee. Similarly, in cooperative learning when students are presented with a particular problem, they must work collectively to generate solutions. The net effect of such instructional arrangements is to create interdependence among students by creating a social environment that supports instruction.

Performance Outcomes

A second area of concern is that the content used in this lesson is unlikely, both in its presentation and selection, to produce the outcomes that are desired. Acquisition of skills that can be used both correctly and appropriately in a game of football (particularly by those students who are less skilled) ought to be a major outcome of this lesson. Although the teacher gives some indication of where students are to run their routes, there is little or no evidence in the video of such

tactical issues as when to run the route or which route to run under certain conditions. What we know from approaches such as teaching games for understanding (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982) is that an understanding of these critical issues ought to precede performance.

Content Knowledge

The challenge faced by the student teacher in the video is likely an issue of content and pedagogical content knowledge. Helping a teacher to acquire content and pedagogical content knowledge, unlike fundamental pedagogical skills, is not an easy or a quick fix. But considerable resources are available for this teacher to gain this information, such as Launder's (2001) *Play Practice* and Griffin, Mitchell, and Oslin's (1997) *Teaching Sport Concepts and Skills*.

Final Comments

I certainly have no wish to chastise a young teacher's efforts. However, we cannot continue to teach secondary physical education in this manner, and by extension we cannot continue to train preservice teachers to teach in this manner.

References

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 Phillip Ward (ward.116@osu.edu) is an associate professor in the School of Physical Activity and Educational Services at Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210.

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