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What and How Should We Teach in Games Teaching of Physical Education Lessons?

— Focusing on the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach about games teaching in primary schools —

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This study aims to clarify significance and awaiting solution of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach (Thorpe,R. & Bunker,R. & Almond,L.,1986) about games teaching in primary schools. The following results were obtained: teachers which succeeded in implementing the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach improved their pedagogical understanding and teaching skills as follows: 1) more profound understanding about tactics and strategies peculiar to each game (Smith, M.D.,1991) 2) practice of high qualitative teaching skills (Butler, J.L.,1997) 3) deeper insight into the pupils (Butler, J.L.,1997). If these pupils-centred teaching styles and the aim of the construction of meaning for the pupils should be esteemed, it has to be inquired about 'the context' which is the process of forming the competence to be acquired, appreciated and shaped as a result of interactions with other pupils or a teacher (Almond, L.1997).

Key words : the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach, games teaching, physical education curriculum, teacher education, primary school.

Introduction

In 1982 new curriculum model about games teaching was expressed in England. The model was named the 'teaching for understanding' by the members of developing the model (Thorpe, R. & Bunker, R. & Almond, L.,1986). There are two concerns in the development of the curriculum model. One of them was the improvement of games teaching. Moreover the other of them was innovation of teacher education (Thorpe, R. & Bunker, R. & Almond, L.,1986). This study aims to clarify significance and awaiting solution of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach in games teaching.

For improvement of games teaching, this approach challenged solving the following problems. The pupils only do the games without understanding the rules and the tactics because the game and a technical practice are far apart in the process of the lesson and the unit. After all the pupils study motor skills and the knowledge of games rules for a technical practice or a skill test.

Most of the time the pupils strongly hope to play a game and not to practise the movement skills. The reason is that winning a game or being defeated deeply attract their interest. However if the pupils only play the game, the pupils weak in playing games fail to take part in scoring and become onlookers. On the other hand the pupils being good at playing games usually play an active part in the games. If the pupils go on being onlooker, they must be holding the belief that they are all the time poor at playing games. Besides they have to put up with being onlooker though they truly hope to score and play active part.

I The proposal of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach about games teaching (Thorpe, R. & Bunker, R. & Almond, L., 1986)

1. The improvement of games teaching

There are problems in games teaching which teachers instruct the task of techniques to pupils. The following points were pointed out as problems to be solved (Thorpe,R. & Bunker,R. & Almond, L.,1986).

1) a large percentage of children achieving little success due to the emphasis on performance, i.e. "doing". 2) the majority of school leavers "knowing" very little about games.

3) the production of supposedly "skilful" players who in fact possess inflexible techniques and poor decision making capacity

4) the development of teacher/coach dependent performers

5) the failure to develop "thinking" spectators and "knowing" administrators at a time when games (and sport) are an important form of entertainment in the leisure industry.

In order to improve those games teaching, it needed to answer the question "what to do?" and "when to do it?" and not just "how it is done?" So the new curriculum model of games teaching was proposed by Thorpe, R. & Bunker, R. in 1982 (Figure 1). This model outlines the procedure whereby the teacher helps the child to achieve a new level of skilful performance. So this model gives assistance in making a lesson plan and a unit plan. Each stage of that model were explained as followings (Thorpe, R. & Bunker, R. & Almond, L.,1986).

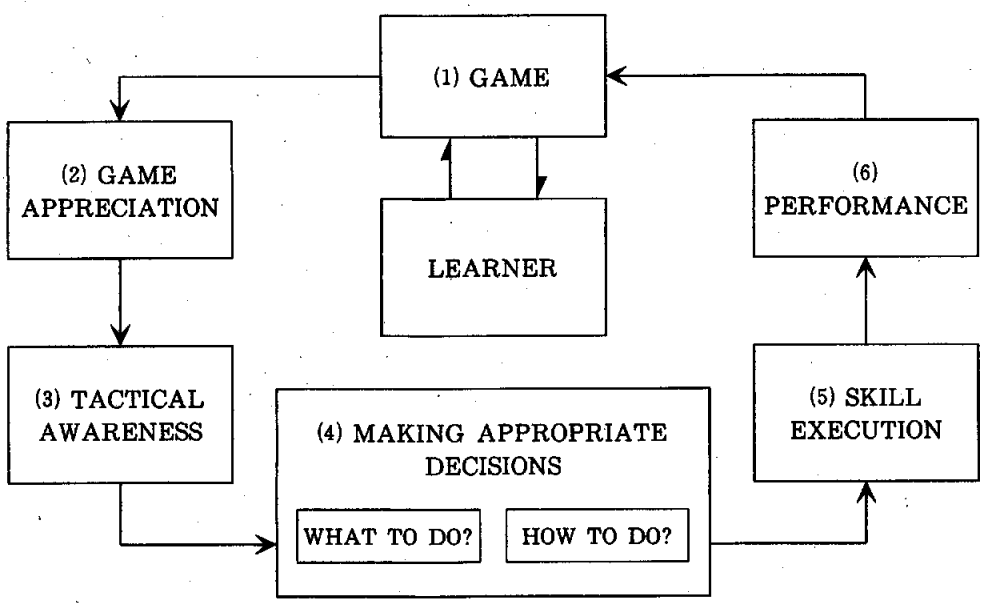

Figure 1. A model for the teaching of games
(first published Bunker and Thorpe, 1982)

1) GAME FORM. It is necessary, in the early years of secondary school, to introduce children to a variety of game forms in accordance with their age and experience. Provided that an appropriate game situation is set up, the pattern of a mini-game played by 11 and 12 year old can bear a close resemblance to the adult version of the game.

2) GAME APPRECIATION. From the beginning of game, children should understand the rules of the game to be played, no matter how simple they may be. The rules will place constraints

of time and space on the game, will state how points (goals) are scored, and more importantly, will determine the repertory of skills required.

3) TACTICAL AWARENESS. Ways and mean of creating space and denying space must be founded to overcome the opposition. Of course game plans don't always work and tactics must changed to meet the needs of the moment.

4) DECISION MAKING. a) "What to do?" In deciding what to do each situation has to be assessed and thus the ability to recognise cues and predict possible outcomes is of paramount importance. b) "How to do it?" There is the decision as to what is the best way to do it and the selection of an appropriate response is critical.

5) SKILL EXECUTION. Skill execution is used to describe the actual production of the required movement as envisaged by the teacher and seen in the context of the learner and recognising the learners limitations. It should be seen as separate from "performance" and may include some qualitative aspect of both the mechanical efficiency of the movement and its relevance to the particular game situation.

6) PERFORMANCE. This is the observed outcome of the previous processes measured against criteria that are independent of the learner.

2. Teacher Education (Almond, L.1986)

According to the idea of 'the teacher as researcher' which was proposed by the late Stenhouse,L., Almond, L. organized the small project team to monitor teachers' practice by themselves. Almond was interested in the idea of teachers undertaking research in their own classroom. He tried to involve teachers in reflection about their practice of teaching through the teaching of a changing focus in games.

In the project the following three stages were prepared for teachers.

1) an induction course lasting two days in Loughborough University.

2) exploring the use of the research techniques at the meeting arranged in their local authority after returning to their school.

3) monitoring their teaching and produce a case study of their work for discussion with their colleagues.

All meetings with teachers were recorded on audio tapes and field notes were taken by two research students and Almond,L.

Through the analysis of the teachers' monitoring of their practice, it was difficult for teachers to lose the constraints of a technique-oriented lesson. Moreover most of the teachers found great difficulty with invasion games, which proved to be more complex for teachers to devise ways of representing game forms. Besides when teachers worked in a group, the difficulty of creating game forms could be overcome. Sharing and discussing possibilities caused producing new ideas. However some PE teachers with little experience and knowledge of games didn't make further progress and they reverted back to their traditional practices. This pattern indicate the limit of the support for innovation in the departments and institutions.

As a result it was evident that most of the teachers felt more confident when they were asked to repeat or copy ideas presented to them rather than when developing their own ideas. Nevertheless all the teachers repeated that they had not tried this approach before, but they were very pleased with the result and surprised how well the pupils were able to devise their own games.

It was great difficult for teachers to monitor their own practice. The writing of field notes and any kind of report proved to be difficult to fit into a normal teaching day. Short questionnaires for pupils was more suitable than other techniques. Even though the teachers had been trained about research procedure during their College or University course, it didn't supply them with the skill or knowledge to monitor their own teaching.

However by asking teachers to reflect on their practice and discuss it with colleagues, they became more conscious of their teaching and aware that how they taught was open to some question. It was showed that teachers had to abandon their existing frame of reference and explore practices which required new skills. All the teachers had the view that monitoring had enabled them to learn more about themselves, their teaching, their pupils, and the games they thought they understood. This in itself encouraged teachers to engage in monitoring their practice, even if it is only of a limited kind and for a short period of time.

During the course of the project and in subsequent courses with teachers it became apparent that the presentation of an innovatory idea challenged a teacher's existing framework for conceptualizing games. Teachers had to abandon their existing frame of reference and explore practices which required new skills and in some cases a different working relationship with pupils. To help teachers reconstruct a new framework it was thus necessary to present ideas in a medium they understood and were familiar with game was chosen and key features were exaggerated to illustrate new ideas.

Besides in the teacher's own setting and opportunity for further practical work, the teacher needed the real support in the form of guidelines about the following points.

1) exactly what is involved in the new idea.

2) the progression of the ideas presented in the practical session with a clear identification of what is being attempted.

3) exactly what can be taught to young people over a clear time span.

4) alternative ways of developing the work further.

At the same time this support needed to be available in both written form and audio tapes with video recordings of work with children if possible. Once the teacher was in the practical situation they needed opportunities to discuss their work with colleagues and wherever possible provide situation for observation of their teaching.

Table 1. Elementary Teaching Games for Understanding Model

Step 1: Games Selection
Teacher selects/designs modified games from four categories: (1) Target (2) Net/wall (3) Fielding/runscoring (4) Invasion
Step 2: Games Playing
1. Games are played in small-sided and/or conditioned from. 2. Students are guided toward using correct strategies and tactics in each game type through questioning and answering techniques. 3. Students make rule and equipment changes to improve games. 4. Students are asked to transform games from one type to another.
Step 3: Games Invention
Using principles learned in step 2, students invent games in groups (1) with teacher as facilitator, (2) with teacher as advisor, (3) with teacher as observer and one student designated group leader, (4) with teacher as observer and all students given equal status.

II The influences of the proposal of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach

1. The Implementation of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach in primary schools

There have been some attempts to introduce the 'Teaching For Understanding' model in primary schools (Smith,M.D., 1991, 1996., Thorpe,R. & Bunker,R. 1997).

Smith has proposed the 'elementary teaching games for understanding model' which consisted of three steps (Smith,M.D. 1991). Moreover she has revised the model and explained the procedures about each step (Table 1) (Smith,M.D. 1996).

Smith has described that (step 1) how teachers could select and modify games from the games classification of the 'Teaching For Understanding' model; (step 2) how to teach these games with an understanding approach and guide students toward correct strategies and tactics; (step 3) how teachers could gradually allow students to invent their own games based on the principles, strategies, and tactics learned in step 2 (Smith,M.D, 1996).

When she introduced 'the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach into the elementary school, she proposed what guidance the teacher had to do at each steps. As the main guidance of the teacher there were modifying a ready-made full game and producing the rule of the game suitable for the elementary school at the first step. In the 'Teaching For Understanding' model full-game has been classified to the four game categories. Those were (a) invasion games, (b) net/wall games, (c) fielding/run scoring games, and (d) target games (Thorpe,R. & Bunker,R. & Almond,L., 1986). So the examples of modified games for elementary school has been classified to four categories.

In the second step, pupils played the games. Pupils began to play the net/wall games or fielding / run scoring games or target games before playing the invasion games with complicated strategies. Teachers should have guided students toward correct strategic and tactical decisions by occasionally stopping the action and asking pertinent questions. If the game broke down because of poor skill execution, most of the time technical skills may have been taught outside game play using conventional drills and practices. In some situations, however teachers could condition the game to avoid the skill problem and thus preserve the opportunity for full tactical participation by all students (Smith,M.D, 1996). In a word, the teacher tried to carry out the method of teaching in which the pupils practised and understood the tactics and the strategy of the game through the participation of playing the game.

In the third step, inventing their own target, net/wall, fielding,/runscoring, and invasion games was imposed on pupils. Pupils were provided with a variety of equipment, including different-sized balls, hoops, various striking implements, cones, and nets. In the first place the teacher helped pupils' games invention by making suggestions, ensuring that all pupils within a group have the opportunity to contribute, and keeping the proceedings safe. Examples of this were limit of pupils' choice by providing a playing area, deciding on the number of pupils per side, and restricting the choice of equipment. Gradually pupils became familiar with the task, and were given more freedom to invent their own games. Finally teachers became adviser when pupils needed to be helped about making their own games (Smith,M.D, 1996).

The following was the purposes of imposing invention of original games on students. The work helped student develop an understanding of games. It also was useful for testing whether or not pupils had understood the principles, strategies, and tactics taught in earlier steps. Moreover the task provided students opportunities to be creative, get involved in their own learning, solve problems, work with peers cooperatively, and learn responsibility (Smith,M.D, 1996).

2. Improving teachers' pedagogical skills

① Teachers' pedagogical skills for the implementation of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach in primary schools

Through theoretical reflections and her practices, Smith have suggested that the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach have required three pedagogical skills. First, teachers had to understand tactics and strategies peculiar to each category and sub-category of game and introduce them in language and through imposed conditions that could be clearly understood by the pupils. Secondly, the teacher must be sensitive to the pupils' improvement pace and individual differences and pupil interactions when grouping during three steps. Thirdly, the teacher had to be willing to discover new style of teaching, and introduce pupils-centred teaching style which the pupils are given freedom to make decisions about their own learning (Smith,M.D., 1991).

② Positive outcomes of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach compared with technical teaching

When teachers have implemented the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach in games teaching, they have held some attractions and some concerns. Butler,J.L. (1996) pointed out that the implementation 'Teaching For Understanding' approach produced some positive outcomes about teaching skills compared with technical teaching. In his study 10 seasoned teachers which consisted of 3 secondary and 7 primary teachers was selected. The 10 seasoned teachers began to teach one game with the technical approach. At the same time, their lessons were filmed. Then they attended in service training of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach and practised teaching it for one month. Finally, they were filmed using the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach to teach another game to the same class.

Through analysis of quantitive & qualitative data which were acquired by the action research, he found the following some positive outcomes about the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach compared with technical teaching.

1) The 'Teaching For Understanding' approach elicited more questions at higher cognitive levels.
2) The focus of the lesson changed from executing skills to understanding tactics.
3) The purpose of teaching was seen as the construction of meaning for the student.
4) Teachers' focus changed from a concern with control to concern with student understanding and learning.
5) Students were more emotional, engrossed, and on task in the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach lessons than in technical lessons.
6) Students were able to spend time involved in small group interactions rather than the limiting teacher/student interactions found in technical lessons.
7) Students were more involved in their own decision making. (Butler,J.I., 1997).

From 1) to 4) there were positive outcomes about teaching skills. The positive outcomes about students learning were pointed out from 5) to 7). All these things make it clear that through implementation of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach teachers turn to reflect their teaching style and be sensitive to students' understanding and learning in lessons. At the same time students come to be involved in small group interactions and their own decision.

It seems that the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach causes improving of teachers' teaching skills. However, some of teachers which experienced the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach had many cares (Butler,J.I., 1997). Therefore for the successful implementation of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach, we need to support teachers with preparing advisory staffs and materials, for example, tactical games teaching video tapes or a guidebook to embody this approach into lessons.

Some Remarks

In the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach by its innovators there was the induction course at Loughborough university, the meeting arranged at the local authority, and the case study of teachers' work with their colleagues. This approach needs the system of teacher training. Through that training, Almond intended to involve teachers in reflection about their practice of teaching.

Stenhouse,L., who proposed the idea of 'the teacher as researcher' supported by Almond had demanded the high level of teaching profession and teaching skills. In order to develop 'the process model' curriculum which he proposed, the project always had the induction course to train high level teachers' profession (Taniguchi,T., 1982). It is for this reason that the implementation of the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach required the high level of teaching profession and teaching skills.

In fact, as Smith, M.D. (1991) and Butler, J.L. (1997) supposed, teachers which succeeded in implementing the 'Teaching For Understanding' approach improved their pedagogical understanding and teaching skills. The improvement was described the following three points.

1) more profound understanding about tactics and strategies peculiar to each game (Smith, M.D., 1991)

2) practice of high qualitative teaching skills, for example, an increase in the number of questions suggesting that the teachers was trying to encourage the students to think at higher order levels (Butler, J.L., 1997)

3) deeper insight into the pupils, for example, teachers' focus changed from a concern with control to a concern with student understanding and learning, and the purpose of teaching was seen as the construction of meaning for the student (Butler,J.L., 1997).

If these pupils-centred teaching styles and the aim of the construction of meaning for the pupils should be esteemed, it has to be inquired about 'the context' which is the process of forming the competence to be acquired, appreciated and shaped as a result of interactions with other pupils or a teacher (Almond,L. 1997).

For example, there are many tasks in organising a group whose members were encouraged to learn and practise each other. Especially if the pupil weak in a game fail to pass, catch and score, the members of the group need to creating a pleasant atmosphere in which he try to practise once again without be ashamed of his failure. In order to create this atmosphere, it is essential for the members to find through lessons the way to improve their understanding of tactics and develop their motor skills. The first important point is training a leader who encourages the other members to practise and organizes the discussion about his members' success and failure in a game. Of course teachers have to become get skilful in guiding the leader and the members through questioning and ordering and explanation in the lessons.

I am not dealing with the system of the teacher education, but it is interesting to note that the role of the initial teacher education. For the most part the teachers in primary school are not trained about understanding tactics and strategies of games during the initial teacher education (Kihara,S., 1997). Besides they are not always sufficiently trained teaching skills which are required for implementation of pupils-centred teaching styles in games teaching at primary schools. Needless to say, the teachers profession was created through their reflection and efforts all their life. However the initial teacher education institute must be responsible to playing its

part through teaching the subject study of physical education, school experiences, and the curriculum study. Recently the reform of the institution of the initial teacher education has advanced. It is seems for me that physical education curriculum of the initial teacher education should be reconsider in order to train the basic teaching skills and understanding about the pupils-centred teaching styles in games teaching.

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