

THE BAD AND THE UGLY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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This opinion paper presents the present ambiguous status of Physical Education in the USA. The intent of this paper was to present The Good The Bad and The Ugly, but it is not the Good that is threatening the existence of the field, rather the Bad and the Ugly. The field must begin to address the causes that are threatening its survival. Presently in the USA, required public school physical education is in jeopardy due to the fact that in too many classrooms the teaching is inadequate. Students are not engaged in tasks that are sequential or developmental, nor are students engaged in active time on task. Several actual classroom video tapes are presented through quotes (and actually shown during the presentation) revealing the low time on task and the lack of meaningful selection and sequencing of the tasks. Students are idle, waiting in lines, obeying the singular commands of the teacher while all other learns observe the singular action of each student. Each teacher was taped in two different teaching episodes in order to examine the statement that teachers teach in many different ways. This study revealed that even when teachers change tasks, the teaching behavior remains the same. Expanding the conception and behavior students have about teaching is one of the urgent tasks addressing the field of physical education.

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Introduction

The original title of this paper was The Good The Bad and The Ugly of Physical Education. But, I decided that it is not the GOOD that is threatening the existence of our field, but rather the bad and the ugly.

Education is a political issue in the USA. Even our President has entered the world of education by proclaiming himself the Education President. We have Governors trying to improve the educational system of their states in order to attract big industry. We have local business leaders who are organizing to assist in the improvement of the local school systems so they will be less burdened with retraining. The energy is high in the USA to improve the questionable status of our schools. This process for improvement is confronting physical education with two options: Reform or Eliminate the program. PE is in jeopardy. Presently, certain states are purposing the elimination of mandatory physical education.

Why?

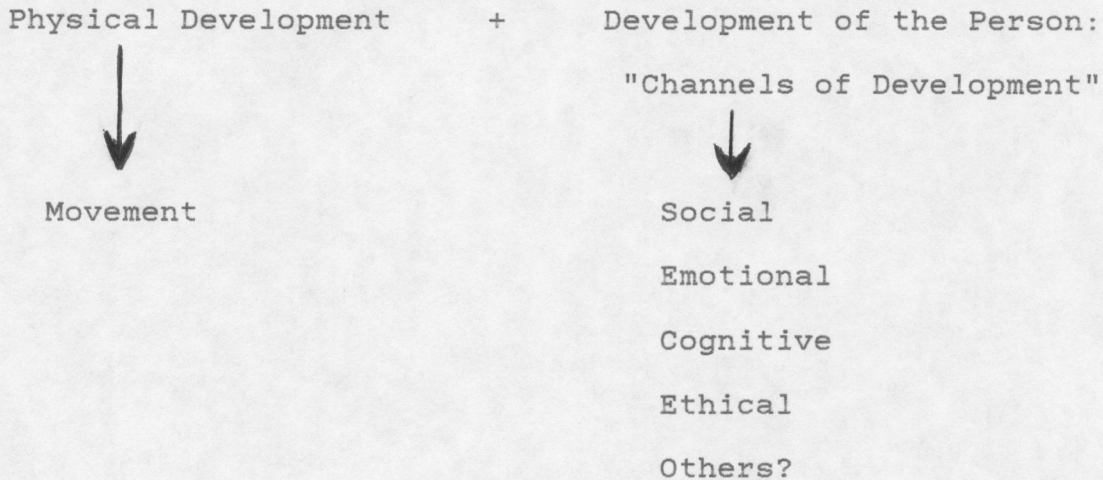
This paper attempts to identify the issue that is causing the threat to our survival. It is a difficult paper to write for I am casting judgement. Judgement not towards the potential of physical education, nor judgement towards the teachers in

our schools - they are the implementors of our programs. Yet, it is today's classroom teachers who are creating the threat for our tomorrow's survival. It is their conception of teaching that is threatening the survival of physical education. This threat - this gap between the goals of physical education and the actual classroom reality - is the issue that challenges our existence. Therefore, this paper is a judgement directed towards Teacher Training Programs and it is a plea for a new awareness of teaching physical education.

To lecture the ills of teaching would be nonproductive - we each envision the act of teaching personally. Therefore, I have gathered several small episodes to illustrate my labeling of the bad and the ugly. The criterion I will use to judge is The Good of physical education.

Simply stated the goal of Physical Education is to develop the physical domain - the body - through movement. Physical education also claims to develop the PERSON through movement; such as, the development of socialization skills, emotional confidence, cognition, ethics and character strengthening, etc. And so, The Good of Physical Education has the capacity, as no other field, to develop the body, mind and self concept through movement.

Physical Education
Objectives



This assumption implies that at any given moment in the teaching of physical education one can see the development of the physical through movement AND at least one of the channels of development in focus. We have all witnessed moments of this union - moments when movement and personal development merged. This intoxicating experience underscores the power of our field. Our "field is intrinsically laden with great potential" (Mosston, 1969). What other field can boast about monopolizing the television on Saturdays, Sundays and Monday nights or every claim to have a cable station totally devoted to their best interests? None. We stand alone in our victorious conquest of infiltrating the fabric of our society.

With this as our potential power, why is the field of physical education so threatened in many schools in the United States? Simply stated, there is little congruence between the objectives of the classroom teaching and the overall objectives of physical education. We are not doing in the classroom what we say the field is about. In 1968 Muska Mosston predicted in his papers "Physical Education -No More" and "Mission, Omission and Submission in Physical Education" (1969) that we needed to look at teaching. The field did not listen. And today many classrooms are an abomination to the idea of DEVELOPMENT through MOVEMENT.

Lets watch. This 5 minute video presents the issue better than words. While watching these actual classroom teaching episodes, look for the learners engagement in movement and for a specific channel of development.

In this first video taped episode the students are "learning how to bowl". (The following is a description of the video-taped teaching episode that accompanied this presentation). Students are divided into groups of four. One student rolls the ball once and each of the remaining students rolls the ball until all the pins are down. If a student strikes them all down, the pins are replaced. All 25 students sit in a line waiting their turn to bowl once. Four students are identified as pin and ball retrievers. Now, watch for movement and for a specific channel development.

Well? You may say for an occasional episode this may be all right. Although we only watched for a two minute span, this teacher took the entire class of 45 minutes for this activity. This experience was a "unit" in bowling. Class period after class period was spent rolling the ball perhaps 10 times towards the pins per student. Well? Perhaps you are saying this episode does not represent this teacher's teaching repertoire. The assumption is, in a different activity he will teach differently.

Let's watch another episode. (The following is a description of the video taped teaching episode that accompanied this presentation). Students are divided into two equal teams, and seated facing each other with approximately 15 feet between them, each team counts off and each student is to remember his/her number. In the middle of the distance separating the teams a scarf is draped over a bowling pin. The teacher randomly calls out a number, each team member with that number is to dash to the scarf, grab it and return to his/her seat without being tagged by the opposite team member.

As we look at this teacher again, we notice the activity is different but his conception about teaching remains the same. There is minimal movement, no developmental movement, no skill focus, no development on any of the channels of development. This teacher prepares activities in baseball,

soccer, gymnastics etc. using this same teaching behavior. (Notice the door behind the teacher. It opens into the equipment room. The shelves are overflowing with bats, balls, hoops, pins, ropes, flags, mats, balance beams, etc, etc, etc. Why was this teacher unable to adjust this activity, using the available equipment, to maximize more student active time on task?) It is his conception about teaching which prevents him from designing physical education activities which include movement and which focus on any of the developmental channels. This teacher's teaching is threatening the existence of physical education. What relationship does this teacher's teaching have to the objectives of physical education? There is a discrepancy and that discrepancy is the threat to the field's survival. Would you be surprised by the fact that this teacher is ranked as a GOOD teacher in his school? He is the coordinator for elementary physical education in his school district.

Lets look at another teacher. Look again for movement and a specific channel development. When more movement occurs in the classroom it often becomes difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the classroom. Focus your attention on two students and watch for movement and for development in a specific channel - social, emotional, cognitive, ethical. What are the students learning?

(The following is a description of the video taped teaching episode. The quotes represent the teacher's statements - no deletions or additions were made. What follows is an exact replication of the viewed video episode). This lesson in soccer, to second graders, presents the teacher standing in one spot, each learner with his/her own ball scattered about the field in front of the teacher. The teacher calls out a "thing to do" and the learners do it. The following are his statements: "Stand over the ball." -"Sit on the ball." -"Walk around the ball, do not get up." -" Face the fence and stop." "Stop when you face the fence." -"Now, put your back on the ball." " Put your hands out to the side and do not sit down." "I want your back on the ball." -"Now, turn over and put your belly on the ball." "Keep your head up and your arms out." -"Stand up. Face the fence. Put your knee on the ball. Get your hands out. Face the fence." -"Stand up, put your feet out wide." -"Now, take your head and roll the ball forward." "Don't put your hands on the ground." "Just roll the ball forward." -"Stand up. I want the girls to go to this goal the boys to this goal. Don't pick the ball up."

What are students learning? Development through movement? Development of the person? Lest you think this teacher's conception of teaching is isolated to this one activity, watch another episode. ...

Students are seated on their own color space at the end of a brightly-colored opened parachute. Two parachutes are used. The teacher calls out one color and tells the students to "crawl to the center". -"Now, crawl backwards." The teacher calls out another color and tells those learners to "crawl to the center." -"Backwards." Yellow, crawl backwards" - "Red, crawl ... backwards" -"Blue, crawl ... backwards" - "Get on your hands and knees. Raise position, get set, head down, up in the middle."

Exact duplication of his previous episode. Students wait. Students are not active, nor are they developing on any of the possible channels of development. They do the singular activity when told. Obedience is their physical education lesson. Again, the teacher's conception of teaching prevents him from reaching the potential objectives of physical education. Unknowing to this teacher, he is contributing to the decline of the physical education program.

One more tape with even more movement. This teacher's conception (philosophy) about teaching is that students can discover movement. Therefore, this teacher predominantly designs lessons whereby students "discover" movement. This teacher's dialogue: "You are allowed to do any roll you want as long as your body is tight in a ball and you are using good arm and leg strength to help your body roll smoothly and also don't flop on the ground. Are there any

questions? ... You may begin." - "As soon as you get to your mat, begin showing me different types of rolls." ... Several minutes later... - "Everyone stop. What were you doing, Ryan? Was that a roll? That was a balance move, you are now working on rolls. Lets work on rolls. Show me your best rolls. Concentrate on your arm and legs. Go ahead." Watch for movement - the quality of the movement - and the specific skill development. This tape, unlike the others gives the impression of movement and development. Yet, when scrutinized, the individual learner is not obtaining skill acquisition nor discovery. Neither are the learners deliberately developing socialization skills, cognition, or ethics. They are perhaps enjoying the emotional choices of "Just exactly what will I do?" "How much will I do?" "What amount of effort will I put into this task?" They like this class. "Oh, we get to do what we want." (Is this the new definition of discovery???) They like this teacher. He is very popular. This teacher is heralded as an exemplary teacher in the school district. His classes are video taped for replication by other physical education teachers. Where are the objectives of physical education being met in this episode? Where did he learn to teach this way and only this way? Where did he learn to call this discovery?

This presentation today does not carry a gentle message. I acknowledge the purported crisis in physical education as real. I am suggesting that our university students are not

able to replicate the objectives of physical education in their teaching. Conceptually and behaviorally they misrepresent our professional goals. Such teaching examples as these we have seen today will lead to the demise of the program. Unless the teacher training programs alter and focus on pedagogy plus skill acquisition we will continue to see the attack and possible decline in the physical education program. More and more the shift from schools to private organizations and institutions will take over the physical training of our children. Spas and children's clubs are on the rise in the USA. Memberships and enrollments are higher than ever. Aerobics, beauty and health video tapes continue to be best sellers. Everybody but the physical educator is the expert in body awareness and health. Jane Fonda continues to be the aerobic queen and now Racquel Welsh is moving in to encourage the young and tempt the 45+ year-old females that continuous movement and health consciousness can enhance the body, the emotions and one's socialization. It seems as though the videos and the spas are able to project the objectives of our field better than our university and college programs. They - the spas and clubs -are at least, in a singular manner, providing movement and quality of performance and perhaps even socialization. We are the ones who design the programs. It is up to us to redesign and refocus our teacher training programs. We must create programs that approach our objectives and reduce the gap between intent and reality.

This decline in physical education is perhaps a problem more specific to the USA. Not all countries face this encroaching dilemma in physical education. You have the chance to prevent the spread of this decline.

In conclusion: Movement is our legacy. Development is our power. You have the task of designing programs for the masses. Physical education is for all, sport is for the few. If the teaching of physical education is to survive in the schools, we can not create programs that benefit only the better athlete. It is the majority who sit on the sideline as the rope is raised for the best to continue; it is the uncoordinated who is excluded in the first round of kick ball; it will be these students who have experienced exclusion and inactivity for years in our classrooms who will vote PHYSICAL EDUCATION - NO MORE.

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