Published in Bunker, B., & Thorpe, R. (1986). The curriculum model. In R. Thorpe, Bunker, D., & Almond, L (Ed.), Rethinking games teaching (pp. 7-10). Loughborough: University of Technology, Loughborough.

THE CURRICULUM MODEL

David Bunker and Rod Thorpe

The model as outlined and explained in this paper, is fundamental to our understanding of what 'teaching for understanding' is about. Not only does it provide a theoretical base from which to work, it also gives guidance for those planning sessions insofar as it places its elements in temporal sequence. When we are asked to present lectures, to lead seminars and to conduct practical sessions, the model represents the starting point for our preparation.

Observation of present games teaching shows at best, a series of highly structured lessons leaning heavily on the teaching of techniques, or at worst lessons which rely on the children themselves to sustain interest in the game. This paper is based on the opinion that these approaches have led to:

a) a large percentage of children achieving little success due to the emphasis on performance, i.e. "doing"

b) the majority of schoolleavers "knowing" very little about games

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

d) the development of teacher/coach dependent performers

e) 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.

As a large amount of time is given over to the teaching of games within the programme of Physical Education, it is surprising that little or no attention has been given to the ways in which they can be taught in schools. It is of particular concern as games, unlike other activities in the Physical Education Curriculum, present problems of "what to do?" and "when to do it?" and not just 'how it is done?"

It could be said that traditional methods have tended to concentrate on specific motor responses (techniques) and have failed to take account of the contextual nature of games.

For example, it is usual to teach a very prescribed response, say, the overhead clear in badminton, before the children have grasped the significance of the shot within the game, which in this case is to drive the opponent to the back of the court. The tendency is for teachers to teach "how?" before they teach "why?". It is our belief that if the emphasis shifted to tactical considerations in a game children will recognise that games can be interesting and enjoyable as they are helped and encouraged to make correct decisions based upon tactical awareness. At this point children should begin to see the need for, and relevance of, particular techniques as they are required in the game situation. Whereas the typical reaction to a lesson based on the teaching of techniques is "when can we play a game?" this new approach should (p. 7) elicit the response "how can we do it?" - the child is beginning to appreciate the tactical necessity for improving the specific technique required in a particular game situation.

The following model outlines the procedure, step by step, whereby the teacher helps the child to achieve a new level of skilful performance. While absolute levels of performance will vary, each and every child is able to participate in decision-making based upon tactical awareness thereby retaining an interest and involvement in the game.

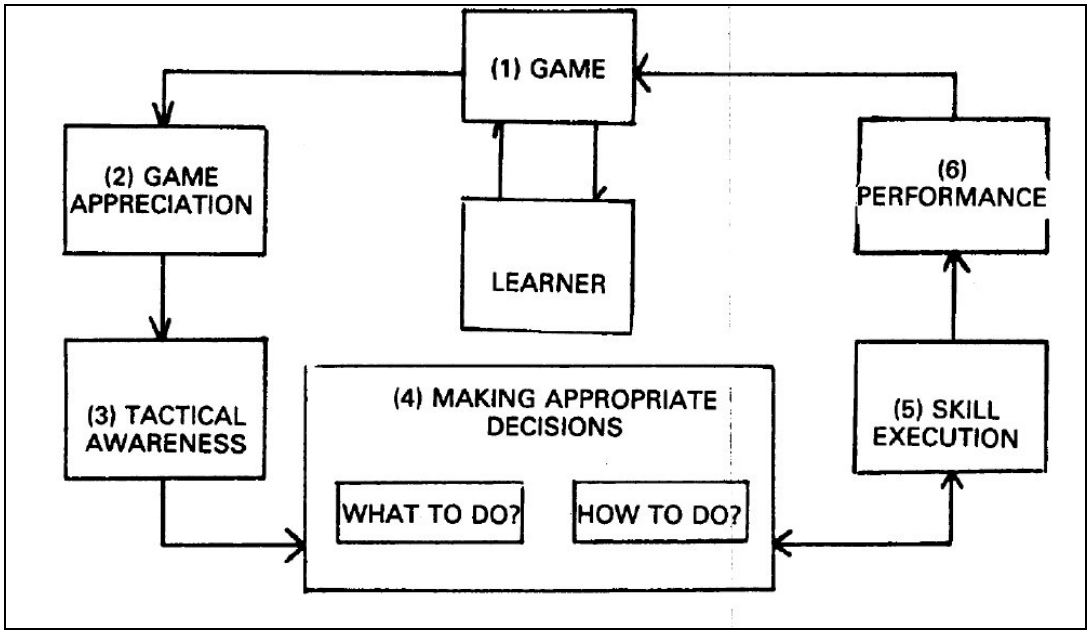

Figure 1 The curriculum model.

1. GAME FORM. While the full adult version of the game presents a long term goal at which to aim and provides guidelines for teachers, it is necessary, in the early years of the secondary school, to introduce children to a variety of game forms in accordance with their age and experience. In doing so it is important to give careful thought to the area of the playing surface, the numbers to be involved and the equipment to be used in the attempt to present children with the problems involved in playing games, fundamentally, creating space to attack a target while being denied space by the opposition. Provided that

an appropriate game situation is set up, the pattern of a mini-game played by 11 and 12 year olds can bear a close resemblance to the adult version of the game.

2. GAME APPRECIATION. From the outset children should understand the rules of the game to be played, no matter how simple they may be. It is important to remember that the rules give the game its shape. Increasing the height of a net slows the game down and increases the duration of rallies; reducing the number of fielders in a striking game increases the chances of scoring runs; increasing the size of a target in an invasion game makes it more difficult for defenders to protect their goal. Additionally the rules will place constraints of time and space on the game, will state how points (goals) are scored, and more (p. 8) importantly, will determine the repertory of skills required. It is axiomatic that alterations to the rules of a game will have implications for the tactics to be employed.

3. TACTICAL AWARENESS. Given some involvement and an under- standing of the rules, it is necessary to consider now the tactics to be used in the game. Ways and means of creating space and denying space must be found to overcome the opposition. The principles of play, common to all games, form the basis for a tactical approach to the game, e.g. achieving more penetration as a result of practising fast-break attacks. Of course game plans do not always work and tactics must be changed to meet the needs of the moment.

It should be added that tactical awareness should lead to early recognition of opposition weaknesses e.g. a poor backhand, a dislike of tackling, a reluctance to catch a hard ball, but this should not be allowed to destroy the game which should be modified to restore the competitive nature of an evenly matched game.

4. DECISION MAKING. Proficient games players take only fractions of a second to make decisions and they would see no value in distinguishing between the "what?" and the "how?". In this approach to games there is a difference between decisions based upon "what to do?" and "how to do it?" thus permitting both the learner and teacher to recognise and attribute shortcomings in decision making.

a) "What to do?" Whilst it is obvious that tactical awareness is necessary if decisions are to be made, it is in the very nature of games that circumstances continually change. In deciding what to do each situation has to be assessed and thus the ability to recognise cues (involving processes of selective attention, cue redundancy, perception etc.) and predict possible outcomes (involving anticipation of several kinds) is of paramount import- ance. For example, there is no value in understanding that attacking a space near the goal in an invasion game may be highly desirable but may carry the risk of losing possession, if the" cues cannot be recognised in the first place.

b) "How to do it?" There still remains the decision as to what is the best way to do it and the selection of an appropriate response is critical. For example, where a large space is available but time is limited a quickly executed response may be appropriate whereas when time is available but accuracy is vital some element of control prior to execution may be necessary. Such situations often arise in the shooting area of invasion games.

5. SKILL EXECUTION. In the model 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" (see 6 below) and may include some qualitative aspect of both the mechanical efficiency of the movement and its relevance to the particular game situation. For example, a young child may well produce an excellent defensive clear in badminton in that there is efficient racket head speed and a good angle of contact which puts the shuttle behind the opponent. The shuttle may not reach the back of the full size court due to a lack of strength and/or a lack of technical (p. 9) development but would still be classified as an excellent defensive clear. Skill execution is thus always seen in the context of the learner and the game.

6. PERFORMANCE. This is the observed outcome of the previous processes measured against criteria that are independent of the learner. It is that by which we would classify children as good or bad players whether at school or international level and should be a measure of appropriateness of response as well as efficiency of technique.

CONCLUSION. The sequential aspects of the model are critical. Unlike traditional teaching methods this approach starts with a game and its rules which set the scene for the development of tactical awareness and decision making, which, in their turn, always precede the response factors of skill execution and performance. Satisfactory completion of the stages as outlined will necessitate modification of the game leading to a careful re-appraisal of the requirements of the new game. The cycle has begun again. While children may be pre-occupied with anyone component of the model at anyone time this will always be in the context of an appropriate game with the result that many of them will experience some of the satisfaction of the skilful player.

Reference

Bunker, D. and Thorpe, R., *A Model for the Teaching of Games in Secondary Schools* in the Bulletin of Physical Education, Volume 18 No.1, Spring 1982.