

**Butler, J. (1997). How would Socrates teach games? A constructivist approach. JOPERD, 68(9), 42**

Scholarly Summary by Sarah Honkanen

Issue/Focus

Because their “construction of understanding is never checked”, students commonly go from one level to the next before they have a full understanding of the previous material. This article explains how the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGFU) model, having a constructivist underpinning, can address this issue in Physical Education (PE). The use of the Socratic questioning method can be used in lesson planning and applied to teaching games as a part of TGFU to check for understanding of material before progressing.

Reasoning

The Socratic Method involves analysing a statement to reveal its inconsistencies and then questioning the person who made the statement to help find the essential components (“the truth”). Using this method, PE teachers can help students develop their understanding of games by realising and focusing on the essential components. The games classification model divides games into categories based on these essential components allowing teachers to teach concepts that are transferable to more than one game.

Assumptions

This article assumes that by questioning the students the teacher will promote students being active and seeking solutions for themselves, therefore allowing the learners to develop an understanding of the material. However in a classroom situation often all learners are neither at the same cognitive level nor do they each have the same level of motivation, therefore the questions posed by the teacher may not stimulate all students effectively. This article states that to address this you may have to look to the different behavioural domains (Cognitive, Psychomotor, and Affective) for the solution.

Conclusion

Using questions within TGFU not only allows the teacher to promote active learning, but also allows her to check for understanding and assess cognitive, psychomotor and affective abilities of her students. Using this Socratic Method during lesson planning and content development allows the teacher to focus her lesson on the essential components and concepts of a whole group of games rather than on just one.

Significant information

“The construction of understanding is the core element” of learning and the TGFU model provides students with a constructivist learning environment.

Personal Comments

Using a constructivist approach in lesson planning could be very helpful to a teacher who is trying to teach a sport that she herself is not that familiar with. By analysing a game and breaking it down to its key components the teacher may realise that it is similar to a sport that she is familiar with.