

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session 2: • Democratic processes in the classroom & Dialogical learning practice

Title Session 2: Using Sport Education model as a framework for democratic learning within Physical Education

Authors

Aspasia Dania, Assistant Professor, NKUA

Charalambos Anagnostopoulos, PhD candidate, NKUA

Within secondary education, students' socialization into the school culture should be enacted as an opportunity for them to learn through experience about those values, skills, which will afterwards support their identity as active members of society. Based on the principles of situated learning theories, child and youth development is connected with the circumstances of the context in which it occurs and thus is analyzed as a result of social practice in **supportive learning environments** (Lave & Wegner, 1991). Supportive learning environments are those that:

- Provide opportunities for acquiring knowledge that will be used in real-life
- Involve students in authentic activities that are relevant to their needs
- Provide access to expert performances and processes of modeling these performances
- Help students experience multiple roles and perspectives
- Support collaborative knowledge construction
- Provide coaching and scaffolding support
- Promote reflection and critical thinking
- Enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit
- Provide multiple opportunities for authentic and formative assessment of learning

In the name of educating youth for a democratic world, it is important for students to experience their participation in school learning environments as "...a way of life, behavior and interaction with others that requires people to be willing to talk to each other and to



negotiate, to be open-minded, to show mutual respect, to seek common ground and peaceful resolution of conflicts and to respect human rights, democracy, the rule of law and human dignity...” (Black, 2019)

Within the context of school Physical Education (PE), sport participation that is based upon the principles of freedom and equality, adheres to the practice of democracy. In terms of freedom, a student’s choice to participate in a sport learning environment is connected with his/her willingness to participate according to predefined rules, which, at a personal level, may involve benefits and/or burdens. Concerning the equality of participation, students in sport have to recognize that the rules of the game apply to the interest of all participants, bringing fairness and justness to all. It is important therefore that within the context of secondary education, students’ introduction to any kind of sporting activity should primarily offer them the opportunity to get involved into pursuits that help them develop holistically as democratic human beings.

For adolescent students, the desire for social contact and peer interaction lies at the heart of their participation in every form of physical pursuit, including sport. Research has proven that enjoyment, which derives as a result of sport participation, can be positively associated with adolescents’ desire to stay active after school (Garn & Cothran 2006). Sport-based Physical Education (PE) has the potential to provide adolescent students with opportunities for interaction and development of social bonds with others. However, if the outcomes of this interaction are to be in a positive direction, then attention should be paid on the establishment of a within-class democratic learning culture, focused on promoting sport rationality and morality. Associated with the idea of enlightened understanding, rationality concerns students’ ability to make sound choices and informed judgments regarding their participation (e.g. judging their own and others’ performance without uninformed passion or prejudice). Sport morality concerns students’ ability to safeguard group interests within games and not to act individually at the expense of other students’ needs (e.g. play according to the rules and avoid cheating, consider everyone’s welfare, distinguish right from wrong, etc.).

On this premise, issues and concepts such as team affiliation, gender equity and social hierarchy, could be communicated within classes that use sport as a means for education and democracy.

Does Sport build character?

Character and sportsmanship are two concepts closely related to sport. Educating the student as a whole personality has been a cornerstone in PE teaching and the use of sport as a way to support different aspects of students' moral development is widely suggested.

The social context of sport provides students with multiple opportunities to argue with team members or opponents, as well as other students that play referee or official roles during gameplay. This can be the source of many problems in cases when an overly competitive learning climate is established. The value that peers, or PE teachers place on sport (in terms of who is the winner of the game), may have negative effects on students' enactment of sport behavior. Indeed, the majority of students would be able to learn how to value sport from a moral perspective by the quality of the reciprocal relationships and social connections in their PE classes. Having considered all the above, it is important to analyze secondary school students' socialization in and via sport through relevant theoretical perspectives.

Allen's Social Motivation theory

According to Allen's theory (2003), students need to experience meaningful social connections and develop a sense of belonging in order to remain motivated and goal oriented for sport participation. Within sport environments, students may pursue the three following distinct social goals of:

1. **Affiliation**
2. **Recognition, and**
3. **Status**

The *social affiliation goals* concern the development of social connections and reciprocal relationships, which in the case of adolescent students may be intrinsic and adaptive in

nature. The opportunity to socialize with like-minded peers may be a worthwhile goal and an opportunity for them to combine social activities with personal relationships.

The *social recognition goals* focus on social validation, or otherwise individuals' need to receive attention from others for their demonstrating effort. In the sport context, social recognition concerns all the efforts for social acceptance, which in the case of adolescents it can be translated into the others' approval.

Finally, the *social status goals* concern the gaining of position within social hierarchies (i.e. team leaders). Both the social recognition and social status goals are extrinsic in nature, since they are controlled by other individuals' validation and/or opinions. In the case of youngsters, it is necessary to encourage their participation in sporting environments that support students' sense of belonging and self-validation, since the latter can lead to positive motivational and behavioral outcomes.

Research has shown that social status and social recognition goals (Garn, Ware, & Solmon 2011) are the strongest predictors for sport-based PE. However, negative outcomes (i.e. students' disruptive behaviors) can be accumulated, when the PE learning climate promotes social validation and status roles, for the sake of affiliation goals. Considering these elements, it appears it is necessary to invest in **supportive PE learning environments**, which use sport as a context to cultivate in students the feelings of social relatedness and belongingness.

Social learning theories

According to Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), individuals learn from one another via observation of attitudes, as well as via the outcomes of these attitudes. It is about a reciprocal interaction between the individual, the environment and the observed behavior, which ultimately leads to the modeling and imitation of behaviors that are observed or perceived as effective (Figure 1). PE settings provides optimal venues for educating students into the concepts of social and moral development, through observing and modeling behaviors that adhere to sportsmanship and character development.

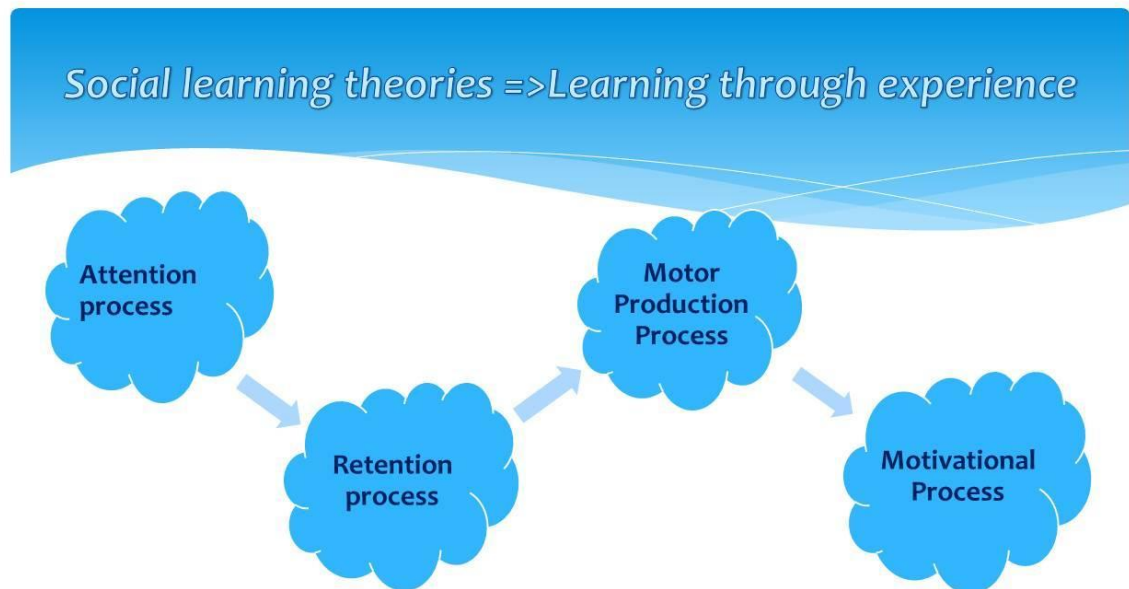


Figure 1. *Process of Observational learning*

As such, it is important that students' participation in PE learning environments should help them to evolve into capable, sports literate and enthusiastic sportspersons. Research has also shown that when sport participation is experienced as a form of fruitful social interaction and cooperation with peers, then situated and democratic learning is further encouraged (Lave & Wegner, 1991).

The Sport Education Curriculum model (SPM)

Within PE teaching, the use of the Sports Education model (Siedentop, Hastie & van der Mars, 2011) provides an authentic context for situated and democratic learning to occur. Sport Education is a PE curriculum model designed to provide students with educationally rich sport experience, through their participation in game-like situations of cooperation and interaction with peers. With a focus on authentic sport experience, the primary objective of Sport Education is the development of physically skilled and socio-emotionally competent sport participants who understand what it means to choose between good and bad practices, regardless of school, neighborhood, after school or organized sport environments. The key features of Sport Education are: ***seasons, affiliation, formal competition, record keeping, culminating event and festivity***. These features distinguish

the model from traditional forms of PE teaching and set the circumstances for situated and democratic learning to occur. Particularly, within the Sport Education model:

- Units, or seasons, are longer than typical physical education units.
- Students are organized into mixed-ability teams at the start of a season and maintain their affiliation throughout the season.
- Students on each team learn multiple roles.
- Activities are typically modified so that all students can learn and be successful.
- Teams are gradually introduced to the activity for the season, focusing on the techniques and tactics needed to perform adequately in the activity.
- The season typically consists of a series of competitions; for instance, a soccer season might start with 1v1 competitions, then 2v2, and finish with a 4v4 final competition.
- The most typical organizational format is mixed-ability teams.
- In Sport Education seasons, records of performances are kept and made public throughout the season not only to determine seasonal standings and championships but also to inform students of their own development within the season
- Seasonal champions are typically determined by a point system that can include points for items such as daily teamwork, fair play, duty-team performance, and tournament performance.
- The entire season is designed to be festive, culminating in the final event, which celebrates the season with awards for competition standings, student performance roles such as duty-team performances, and fair play points.

Sport Education helps adolescent students to develop leadership skills, experience co-operation and teamwork and adopt multiple roles – apart from the athlete’s role – (e.g. statistician, referee, coach roles, etc.), all of which promote inclusivity, sportsmanship and responsibility. Particularly, the longer *seasons* (PE units) enable students to be competent as they interact within modified games, which allow authentic competition to be experienced as a form of affiliation and recognition from peers, regardless of their ability levels. With students being members of equal ability teams throughout an entire season, multiple opportunities are offered to observe and enact “duty team” roles (i.e. team player, referee, score keeper, or non-playing roles such as captain, trainer, publicist, equipment manager, etc.). The latter helps students to take responsibility for all aspects of planning and running the season, so that every student’s learning and development is promoted.

With ***practice and competition*** being in the center of learning (i.e. competition that is progressive, in terms of difficulty such as singles competition, pair competition or 4 v 4 and 6 v 6 competition), players and teams begin to consider their progress and performance as mutually beneficial and intrinsically oriented. ***Record keeping*** as a method for determining team efforts and ranking across the season, encourage individual determination and recognition of issues that adhere to democracy such as fair play, teamwork, and role performance. The ***culminating event***, as a form of closing up the sport learning experience and learning itself, includes ceremony awards that recognize team effort, skill performance, teamwork and aspects of the learning context that were successful and important for all students' progress and development. Finally, ***festivity*** allows sport to be experienced as an opportunity for excitement and commitment to the idea of sport participation and not to a win/lose ideology. Teams are committed, fans come to cheer on their team, PE venues are filled with slogans and fans that in the name of sport take full responsibility of their personal and social behavior. This is possibly the most relevant democratic aspect of the Sport Education model, since it helps youth to enjoy taking part and being successful in and through sport. The above circumstances are fruitfully met when PE teachers manage to balance content instruction with students' sharing of responsibility for their sport experience (Siedentop, Hastie and van der Mars, 2011). The below presented strategies and components can be easily accommodated by any PE program that uses sport as a means to this end:

➤ **Teacher modeling of positive behaviors**

Modeling the ideals of honesty and ethics throughout the lesson.

➤ **Teacher-Led Discussions**

Explanations concerning game rules, classroom routines and teacher expectations, use of guided-discovery questions (i.e. did you observe positive/negative sportsmanship behaviors from your classmates today? If so, tell us your feelings/opinion about these behaviors).

➤ **Sport Scenarios focusing on real-life dilemmas**

A common situation that may be experienced within modified Sport Education games is when offensive and defensive players catch a ball simultaneously. In order to avoid conflict and teach for democracy, PE teachers could use the above scenario as a teachable moment for students to express their feelings. Discussion could focus on hearing others' opinions, and encouraging thought-provoking debates about fair and unfair or right and wrong practices.

➤ **Use of student-centered teaching styles**

Student-centered teachings are essential for promoting within class democratic behaviors and prepare students to enact leadership skills and responsibility that is needed to experientially learn democracy within the sport curriculum. Although it is difficult for PE teachers, "to give up the reins", the use of indirect teaching styles is a prerequisite for promoting the ideals of sportsmanship and moral behavior.

With a focus on the creation of a task-oriented climate, the PE teacher could incorporate the following strategies within a Sport Education unit:

- Activities that help students to focus on the task versus the outcome.
- Creation of diverse groups in terms of gender and ability level.
- Creation of well-defined classroom rules and routines for class and stick to them.
- Focus on effort, respect and cognitive ability versus win at all costs competition.

➤ **The Hand of Fair Play**

The "five-finger contract" (Frank, 2013) and "fair play contract" (Siedentop et al., 2011), can be used at the beginning of a PE season as a democratic learning contract between students and the PE teacher. The five-finger contract is viewed as a guiding set of principles to support students' prosocial interactions and can be reinforced, defended and referenced at different times within the PE lesson. As the Sport Education unit progresses, the lines in the hand could focus on different aspects of the game (e.g. being a good teammate, taking full commitment and participation, winning and losing with grace, etc.) (Figure 2).





Figure 2. *Fair play*

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